

# The Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation (Wales) Bill: Can it really end homelessness in Wales?

30 July 2025  Victoria Searle

According to [Crisis' Homelessness Monitor Wales 2025](#), in the three years to July 2024, estimated levels of rough sleeping in Wales rose by 86%.

The total number of homeless households owed prevention or relief duties remained relatively static at 12,939 (in 2023/24), but the effectiveness of these interventions has declined significantly.

This has led to an increase of 189%, from 2,232 to 6,444, in the number of households residing in temporary accommodation in the three years to March 2024. The use of bed and breakfast accommodation rose fivefold (452%) over the same period.

This has placed significant financial strain on local authorities. According to Shelter Cymru's October 2024 report, [The Cost of Crisis](#), the total cost of temporary accommodation rose from £41m in 2020/21 to more than £99m in 2023/24.

During the same month that the report published, the Welsh Local Government Association (Welsh LGA) warned that councils across Wales were grappling with extraordinary budget pressures, totalling an estimated £559m in 2025/26 which, if left unfunded, would significantly impact their ability to deliver essential local services. The Welsh LGA identified housing and homelessness as one of five priority budget areas that were critical for addressing the needs of communities across Wales.

The 2021 [Programme for Government](#) set out the Welsh Government's intention to reform housing law and homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing.

In August 2022, the [Welsh Government](#) convened an expert review panel to review existing legislation and evidence from services and people with lived experience of homelessness, as well as experts in homelessness practice, policy and research.

In October 2023, the Welsh Government consulted on its [White Paper on Ending Homelessness in Wales](#). This White Paper set out the following working principles:

- Homelessness should be rare, brief and unrepeatable.
- Homelessness services should be trauma informed and person-centred.
- Those who are homeless should be able to obtain long term housing quickly, increase their own self-sufficiency, and stay housed.
- Preventing homelessness is the responsibility of the Welsh public service.

## The purpose of the Bill

The explanatory memorandum to the [Homelessness and Social Housing Allocation \(Wales\) Bill](#) (the Bill) explains that:

*"The Bill reforms existing homelessness and housing legislation in Wales by amending Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 (Homelessness) and Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 (Allocation of housing accommodation) to enhance the prevention and relief of homelessness in Wales."*

The Bill will:

- Expand access to homelessness services and provide additional support to those who need it most.
- Widen responsibility to certain specified public authorities to identify individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and respond effectively.
- Prioritise allocation of social housing to those most in need.

The Bill was introduced in May 2025, and is currently at Stage 1 in the Senedd with committee scrutiny of the general principles of the Bill ongoing.

## Key provisions

### Earlier intervention and more effective prevention

The Bill extends the period during which someone should be treated as threatened with homelessness from 56 days to six months. It expands the definition of threatened with homelessness to include two new statutory triggers; receipt of a notice to quit and commencement of possession proceedings.

The aim is to shift the emphasis to earlier intervention by local authorities, enabling a more proactive approach to homelessness prevention.

The existing duty to assess homelessness applications under section 62 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is retained but strengthened.

### Introduction of prevention, support and accommodation plans

Personal housing plans will be expanded and put on a statutory footing. New prevention, support and accommodation plans will require local authorities to assess an applicant's barriers to independent living and communication preferences as well as their housing and support needs, always taking account of that person's views.

Plans must document the actions that may be taken by the applicant, the local authority (in the performance of any of its functions) or any other public authority for the purpose of establishing that the applicant is able to secure or retain suitable accommodation.

There is a marked shift away from sanctioning applicants who fail to take agreed steps.

### Abolition of priority need and intentionality

The Bill abolishes the existing relief duty and differential entitlements based on whether a person is in priority need or intentionally homeless.

### Additional grounds for discharge the main housing duty

Local authorities may in future end the main housing duty where an applicant is no longer homeless, where suitable accommodation is available and is likely to remain available for at least 12 months (with the applicant's agreement) or where an applicant is serving a custodial sentence and there is no reasonable prospect that they will be released within six months.

### Focus on vulnerable groups

Statutory protocols will be introduced, mandating joint working in relation to care leavers and other vulnerable individuals. Protections for those fleeing domestic violence, exploitation, harassment or stalking have also been strengthened.

### New “Ask and Act” duty

The Bill introduces a statutory “Ask and Act” duty, requiring specified public bodies (including social landlords, health boards, and prisons) to seek consent to refer individuals they suspect may be homeless or at risk of homelessness to the local authority.

This measure is intended to facilitate early identification of those at risk of homelessness and strengthen cooperation and coordination across the sector.

### Allocations of social housing

The Bill will give local authorities greater discretion to set their own criteria for allocation of social housing. Local authorities will be able to deny a reasonable preference to those who have deliberately manipulated the housing system in the past.

Registered social landlords and private registered providers of social housing will be required to allocate properties through a common housing register maintained by the relevant local authority.

# Will it work?

The Bill represents a significant step forward in Wales.

The strengthening of local authorities' obligations in relation to homelessness prevention is to be welcomed. More timely and more effective interventions should result in fewer people becoming homeless and thereby fewer people overall residing in temporary accommodation.

The duty to “Ask and Act”, the expanded scope of prevention, support and accommodation plans, and the new Joint Working Protocols should result in more effective collaboration between authorities and services and a more holistic, person-centred approach to those experiencing homelessness.

The abolition of the relief duty should mean that those who present as homeless can be settled in suitable temporary accommodation quicker.

However, some of the measures in the Bill may create perverse incentives – such as the abolition of the test of intentional homelessness. And the new arrangements will only truly be effective in local authorities who are funded and resourced to make timely and effective interventions in every case.

# Contact

Victoria Searle  
Principal Associate

victoria.searle@brownejacobson.com  
+44 (0)330 045 2363

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