



Housing Policy

Introduction

The *One Wales* agreementⁱ places housing at the heart of its programme for government, with commitments to:

- Meeting housing need;
- Improve access to housing;
- Increase the supply of affordable housing; and
- Ensure 21st century housing is available in Wales.

The current national housing strategy for Wales, *Better Homes for People in Wales*,ⁱⁱ was published in 2001. In January 2008 the Deputy Minister for Housing, Jocelyn Davies AM, announced that the current strategy was to be updated. The intended launch date for the new strategy is March 2009.

- At 31 March 2007 there were estimated to be 1.32 million homes in Wales, 73 per cent of which were owner occupied;
- Since 1991-92 the number of dwellings rented privately has increased by 38 per cent to 135,000;
- Since 1991-92 the number of dwellings rented from local authorities has fallen by 30 per cent to 154,000.ⁱⁱⁱ

Stock transfer continues to be promoted by the Assembly Government as a way to allow local authorities meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS). For further information on this please see the MRS Topic Brief on WHQS.

The Assembly Government announced that it was to provide £5million funding for its [Mortgage Rescue Scheme](#), allowing homeowners facing repossession to sell all or part of their property to a housing association. This would mean that either mortgage payments are reduced, or if the property were sold completely the owner-occupier would become a tenant of the housing association.

Research carried out by the Members' Research Service estimated that as of summer 2008, approximately 90,000 households were on Welsh local authority housing waiting lists.

Current and proposed legislative competence of the Assembly

Under the *Government of Wales Act 2006*, the National Assembly for Wales can seek legislative competence through Acts of Parliament or Legislative Competence Orders (LCOs) to make a piece of law in the form of an 'Assembly Measure'. Measures can only be made in a specific policy area (or 'Matter') added to one of the 20 'Fields' (or broad subject areas) which are contained in Schedule 5 of the Act.

As "Housing" is Field 11 of Schedule 5 to the Act, the National Assembly for Wales can seek Measure-making powers in this area. There are currently no Matters in this Field.

During the Third Assembly, one LCO in the field of housing has been sought: the National Assembly for Wales (Legislative Competence) (No.5) Order 2008 (Affordable Housing). This LCO was proposed by the Welsh Assembly Government and, if approved, will allow the Assembly to pass a Measure allowing the Right to Buy (in relation to local authority housing) and Right to Acquire (in relation to RSL properties) to be suspended for a set period of time in areas of housing pressure.

Matters relevant to Housing Policy, that are reserved to the UK government include:

- Housing Benefit

Forthcoming EU and UK primary legislation

Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 received Royal Assent on 22 July 2008. Parts 1 and 2 of the Act mainly apply only to England. Part 3 of the Act applies to England and Wales, and covers a range of matters including, for example, non-secure tenancies for families referred to Family Intervention Projects; minor amendments to the Right to Buy scheme; preventing the creation of further tolerated trespassers; and the ability of local authorities to apply to the Welsh Ministers to opt-out of the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy system.

Key Welsh Government strategy documents and action plans:

Better Homes for People in Wales: The current national housing strategy for Wales.

Better Homes for People in Wales: The 2006 update of the action plan to implement the national housing strategy.

Race Equality Housing Action Plan: The aim of the action plan is to promote equality and achieve social inclusion in Wales through responsive and accountable housing and related services.

Useful links

- Welsh Housing Statistics is published annually by the Local Government Data Unit Wales: www.dataunitwales.gov.uk and is also available in the Members' Library.
- Community Housing Cymru is the representative body of housing associations in Wales: www.chcymru.org.uk.
- The Welsh Assembly Government has a housing section on its website: www.wales.gov.uk/housing and also publishes **decision reports** relating to housing policy.

Further information

Topic Briefs are also available from the Members' Research Service on **Affordable Housing**, **Homelessness** and the **Welsh Housing Quality Standard**.

For further information on housing policy, please contact Jonathan Baxter, Members' Research Service, (Jonathan.Baxter@wales.gsi.gov.uk), 029 2089 8993

ⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, **One Wales: A Progressive Agenda for the Government of Wales**, June 2007

ⁱⁱ Welsh Assembly Government, **Better Homes for People in Wales**, 2001

ⁱⁱⁱ Local Government Data Unit, **Welsh Housing Statistics 2007**, March 2008