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1. A Framework for a National Housing Strategy for Wales

Introduction

1.1 This document presents the National Assembly for Wales ("the Assembly") with a framework for a national housing strategy. The framework sets out the key issues in Welsh housing and considers some broad options for consideration by the Assembly in determining its housing policies and priorities. The framework is intended to help the Assembly to make an early start on developing a national housing strategy for Wales.

1.2 The framework has been developed in partnership with the National Consultative Forum on Housing in Wales. The Forum, which was established in 1998, comprises representatives of a range of key organisations associated with housing in Wales, including local authorities, housing associations, the voluntary sector, the private sector, tenants' groups, professional bodies and academia. The purpose of the forum was to enable Welsh Office Ministers to:

Exchange ideas and views with a range of organisations associated with housing in Wales on the development of strategies and policies relating to housing and the role of housing in the wider social agenda.

The Assembly would like to thank Forum members for their constructive contributions to the preparation of this document. A list of the Forum members is at Annex A.

1.3 The process of developing the framework also involved wide-ranging consultation across the Welsh Office, to ensure that the Assembly's housing policies will link effectively to its other social, economic and environmental policies. This approach is based on the aim to deliver "joined up" and sustainable policies for the people of Wales.

2. Purpose of a National Housing Strategy

2.1 Everyone has a fundamental need for an affordable and decent home. A home provides shelter, security, privacy and underpins people's personal and family lives. The quality of people's homes and neighbourhoods can have a significant impact on the quality of their lives.

2.2 People's housing needs and preferences, and their ability to meet them, differ according to personal circumstances and values. They may live alone, with a partner or with their family. They may work, be unemployed or perhaps retired. They may prefer a stable home base, or require temporary accommodation as they move from place to place with their work.

2.3 The great majority of households are able to meet their housing needs and, in most cases, can work progressively towards achieving their individual housing aspirations with little or no assistance from the Government (though household aspirations are likely to change with circumstances). Some might, however, benefit from specific assistance to enter the tenure of their choice while others, such as the disabled or elderly, may require some degree of specific support to help them to live more comfortably, or to remain in their own homes. But others are unable to meet even their very basic housing needs

without significant help.

2.4 A national housing strategy should seek to ensure that people have access to, and choice over, housing to meet their needs. Achieving this requires a strategic approach which encompasses all tenures, and seeks to maximise the contribution of all those involved in housing to encourage:

- sustainable home ownership;
- a thriving well managed private rented sector with good standards of accommodation;
- sufficient high quality social housing, managed efficiently and effectively; and
- the location of homes in areas where people want to live.

2.5 In the broader context, a national housing strategy should be integrated with the Assembly's other policies and programmes. This "joined up" approach is the foundation for improving people's quality of life, promoting social inclusion, improving public services and increasing economic prosperity throughout Wales.

2.6 At the local level a national housing strategy will provide the context for the preparation of local authorities' own housing strategies aimed at identifying local needs and priorities, and action for tackling them.

Making a National Housing Strategy Work

2.7 In order to be successful, it is generally accepted that a national housing strategy needs to be:

- Evidence based, e.g. it needs to reflect a comprehensive and robust assessment of housing need and demand across all tenures in Wales;
- Reflective of local needs and priorities. The strategy needs to encompass objective and holistic approaches to local priorities, rather than offering "one size fits all" solutions;
- Based on partnership with a range of public, private, voluntary and tenant/resident organisations whose activities impact on housing in Wales, particularly local authorities who should have the lead role in drawing up evidence-based assessments of priorities for housing investment in their areas, with clearly identified objectives and outputs;
- Designed to ensure the effective targeting of public expenditure and to maximise private sector investment in support of strategic priorities;
- Underpinned by monitoring and review of the impact of policies.

Housing Research

2.8 The Centre for Housing Management and Development at Cardiff University and the Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales have undertaken an audit

of housing research in Wales. The report, which is currently being finalised, will assist in informing a programme of research to fill gaps in knowledge of housing so that appropriate information is available to the Assembly and Welsh housing organisations on which to base policy.

2.9 The Assembly will give detailed consideration to the research programme. Meanwhile a study has been initiated into the problem of low demand for existing social housing in selected localities, including the investigation of tenants' perceptions.

Future Housing Requirements

2.10 Ensuring that Wales' 1.2 million households have the opportunity of accessing a decent home is a formidable challenge, and one that is set to become more challenging as Wales' household population increases significantly in the early decades of the new millennium. In the twenty years 1996-2016, the population is projected to rise by around 3 per cent (95,000), while the number of households is projected to grow by around 12 per cent (138,000). This disproportionate increase in the number of households partly reflects a significant increase in the proportion of single person households and a reduction in married couple households. There are, however, significant variations between local authority areas in both projected overall household growth and by type of household.

2.11 Ensuring that these households have access to good quality housing to meet their needs, with greater choice over tenure, will require the support of a complementary and effective planning system. Local authorities' Unitary Development Plans (UDPs) provide forecasts of household numbers and housing demand in their area up to fifteen years ahead. 'Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy First Revision' encourages authorities to work together to ensure forecasts at the sub-regional level are consistent.

2.12 A national housing strategy, local housing strategies and the planning system should work effectively together to maintain and create sustainable communities – communities where people want to live. Such communities will be places where:

- everyone has a decent home (e.g. a home that is warm, well maintained, fuel efficient and affordable);
- people feel safe;
- people have access either to work, to training or education, or to another meaningful activity (such as community or voluntary work);
- everyone should be able to lead healthy lives and to have good access to appropriate health care;
- all children in the community should feel safe and should be provided with appropriate education and opportunities for play;
- young people have opportunities for constructive association so that the problems of boredom are addressed and juveniles are discouraged from disruptive or offending behaviour;
- there is access to local amenities and transport infrastructure; and
- people have access to advice, information and support and are empowered to voice their views and contribute to decisions made about their community.

Sustainable Development

2.13 The range of strategic options for meeting the housing needs of Wales set out in this framework will help to promote sustainable development in Wales. For example, the "*Sustainable Communities*" programme will support initiatives that add value to public housing investment through schemes which provide community facilities and services, and training to enable tenants and residents to play a meaningful role in their community's development. In the environmental context, central government initiatives, such as those on home energy efficiency, are helping to promote more sustainable use of

fossil fuels, and reduce output of air pollutants which can have a detrimental impact on Wales' biodiversity.

2.14 The Government of Wales Act 1998 places a statutory duty on the Assembly to make a scheme setting out how it will promote sustainability in the exercise of its functions. The Secretary of State for Wales held a National Conference on Sustainable Development in February 1999 to help develop advice for consideration by the Assembly about how it may fulfil this responsibility. A report of the Conference has been published.

2.15 At the local level, 'Local Agenda 21', provides the focus for local authorities in developing local policies for sustainable development and building partnerships with other sectors to implement them.

2.16 A key role of the planning system is to provide homes, investment and jobs in a way which is consistent with sustainable development. The planning system should ensure the availability of sufficient land in the right place and at the right time to provide sites which are both suitable and available for house building. This is important not only to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of a decent home, but also to maintain the momentum of economic growth. This should not be frustrated by a lack of homes for those wishing to take up new job opportunities: policies aimed at generating new employment need to take account of the consequences they will have for local housing requirements. However, providing for high and stable levels of economic growth needs also to be balanced against the need for social and environmental sustainability objectives.

2.17 The development of a national housing strategy, together with the existing 'Planning Guidance (Wales): Planning Policy First Revision', will provide the national context for the development of local policies aimed at addressing housing need and demand. Local planning policies have a crucial role to play in informing the preparation of local authorities' strategies for meeting housing requirements in their areas and vice versa. Guidance issued to local authorities on land-use planning and on the preparation of Housing Strategies and Operational Plans (HSOPs) encourages joint working between local authority housing and planning departments. Local authorities are also expected to consult widely with relevant partner organisations and communities. In the case of the preparation of UDPs, consultation is a statutory requirement, while guidance on the HSOP process calls for local authorities to consult as a matter of good practice. The relationship between housing and planning departments needs to be underpinned by local housing strategy and land use planning policy frameworks (through the UDP) which:

- plan to meet the housing requirement of the whole community, including those in need of affordable and special needs housing;
- ensure that sufficient land is genuinely available or will become available to provide a 5-year supply of land for housing judged against the authority's UDP, through co-operating with the Welsh Development Agency which organises land availability studies;
- take account of the scope and potential for rehabilitation, conversion, clearance and redevelopment. Maximising the use of appropriate vacant land within urban areas for housing development can assist regeneration and, at the same time, relieve pressure for development in the countryside. In particular, local authorities should take account of the contribution reclaimable or reclaimed urban land and disused or underused buildings can make to the overall provision of land for housing;
- create more sustainable patterns of development and seek to reduce car dependency by ensuring that new housing developments are well integrated with the existing patterns of settlement, and with existing or new economic development, education, health and community facilities, local amenities and public transport;
- reinforce the benefits of mixed use development and mixed tenure in creating sustainable communities;
- in rural areas where there is an unmet need for affordable housing, make use of 'rural exception' sites which provide a mechanism for bringing forward the provision of such housing; and
- encourage housing layouts which promote good design and community safety and put the interests of people before cars, to create attractive, high-quality living environments where people will choose to live.

2.18 It will be important for the Assembly to consider appropriate mechanisms for delivering these objectives, particularly the re-use of previously developed sites and empty or under-used buildings.

2.19 The performance of the construction industry also impacts on social, economic and environmental sustainability as recognised in the Department of

the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) Construction Taskforce's 1998 report *'Rethinking Construction'*. Issues raised by the report included: waste produced, quality achieved, profitability, adequacy of training and health and safety standards. In England, the Government has started to address the report's targets for improvement through a variety of channels aimed at developing and disseminating best practice. The Assembly will be responsible for the significant public sector annual investment in both new construction, and maintenance and repair, of which housing is a major part.

2.20 The Assembly, in consultation with the construction industry, might consider how it can contribute to improvements in the performance of the industry through the activity it funds. This could include development of policy on procurement practice aimed at promoting long term partnerships and wider definitions of value for money and demonstration projects aimed at improving understanding of the mechanisms for improving performance.

The Contribution of Housing to Meeting the Assembly's Overall Aims and Objectives

2.21 Meeting the housing needs of future households is not just a "bricks and mortar" issue. Tackling social exclusion and building sustainable communities requires:

- co-ordination of housing policy with other social, economic and environmental policies at all levels of government;
- effective joint-working between public, private and voluntary sector organisations; and
- the involvement of communities.

2.22 At a national and local level there will be many policies and programmes which, although not housing centred, will nonetheless contain a strong housing component, or impact upon housing. This is because a lack of housing, poor house conditions or otherwise inappropriate housing can be a contributing factor to:

- a higher incidence of physical and mental health problems;
- under-achievement in education;
- poor access to employment opportunities;
- increased levels of crime and disorder;
- failure to achieve target reductions in emissions of CO₂; and
- communities becoming stigmatised.

2.23 Housing policies, that are part of a national strategy, need to complement policies and initiatives in other social, economic and environmental fields. Notable examples are:

'Strategic Framework for Better Health – Better Wales'

2.24 This document, published by the Welsh Office in October 1998, recognises housing as one of five key factors affecting people's health. This was also supported by the *"Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health"* in England which found that health problems are related both to the availability and

quality of housing. The Inquiry pointed to evidence which showed that, for example:

- mental health problems can be up to three times higher among homeless people, and ten times higher among rough sleepers, than among the general population;
- young single homeless people are at a higher risk of bronchitis, tuberculosis, arthritis, skin diseases, infections, and problems related to alcohol and substance misuse;
- poor housing design can contribute to major accidents among older people and seemingly minor accidents which may have grave consequences; and
- poor house conditions are linked to poor health: for example, dampness is associated with increased prevalence of allergic and inflammatory lung diseases, while cold housing can lead directly to hypothermia and may contribute to the excess of winter deaths seen in older people.

2.25 Under the *'Strategic Framework for Better Health – Better Wales'*, local authority-led *'Health Alliances'* will protect and improve health, living conditions and life chances, and will contribute to the work of *'Local Health Groups'* (introduced by the 1998 White Paper *'Putting Patients First'*). A significant example of progress in this direction can be seen in the close co-operation of health, social services and Care & Repair agencies in the successful application of *'Safety at Home'* projects.

2.26 In the research field, the Wales Office for Research and Development (WORD) for Health and Social Care is supporting a number of projects exploring the links between housing and health. In the Riverside community in Cardiff, for example, a project has been set up to research the effect of housing renovation on health.

'Social Services – Building for the Future' White Paper

2.27 This White Paper sets out the key aims for social services in Wales as: making a contribution to achieving social inclusion; supporting individuals and families towards greater independence; providing services which meet individuals' needs and choices; and supporting carers. Housing polices have a key role to play in supporting social services to realise these aims.

Housing and Education

2.28 The *'1998 Omnibus Survey of Secondary School Pupils'* (carried out by MORI for the National Housing Federation) looked at how issues at home affects pupils ability to do well at school. The results showed that the school performance of around a third of pupils has been affected by problems in their current home, and the three most frequently mentioned factors were housing-related, i.e.:

- sharing a bedroom;
- having nowhere suitable to do homework; and
- living near noisy neighbours.

2.29 Housing polices designed to improve house conditions and tackle neighbour nuisance can support policies and measures within the *'Building Excellent Schools Together'* programme aimed at raising educational standards in Wales.

'Pathway to Prosperity – A New Economic Agenda for Wales'

2.30 The housing sector has a role to play in improving Wales' economic competitiveness and achieving the vision set out in *'Pathway to Prosperity'*. In addition to housing related employment, investment in housing can create increased employment opportunities in ancillary industries. A 1995 report by the National Housing Forum *'Building Homes Building Jobs: Housing and Economic Renewal'* found that government investment of £2 billion in housing over

two years would create up to 30,000 jobs in the construction industry and related employment – up to 50 per cent of this investment would be recouped by government through taxes on income and the reduction in welfare benefits. There may also be opportunities for housing to contribute to initiatives aimed at getting people into work such as the *'New Deal'*, by linking housing investment to training and work experience opportunities.

2.31 The availability of an adequate supply of appropriate housing can make an important contribution to the economy by facilitating labour mobility across all tenures. Economic investment, and associated job creation, needs to be underpinned by efficient housing markets, supported by a thriving private rented sector and access to adequate social housing. Initiatives such as the Government funded Housing Organisations Mobility and Exchange Services (HOMES) 'Mobility Scheme', which assists councils and housing associations to help people move from one area to another to take up employment, is an example of how government housing policy can support labour mobility.

2.32 Conversely the Assembly's economic development policies will be inextricably linked to achievement of the aims of a national housing strategy. Changes in employment levels and average incomes will directly impact upon the level of demand, need and affordability of housing.

Anti-Social Behaviour

2.33 Many social landlords have taken effective action to tackle nuisance and anti-social behaviour in their communities. In particular they have strengthened their tenancy agreements and made greater use of mediation services to settle disputes. Furthermore, following the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, housing authorities have played a key role in developing local area crime and disorder reduction strategies. Action taken in the housing sphere can contribute to, and be informed by, wider initiatives aimed at protecting and supporting particular groups, such as policies aimed at tackling domestic violence and abuse or racial harassment. The 1998 report *'Tackling Violence Against Women'* summarised information from local authorities on examples of good practice on tackling violence against women including giving extra priority to rehousing women escaping domestic violence and the establishment of domestic violence fora to provide a focus for inter-agency working. Again, the HOMES Mobility Scheme can help people move from one area to another to escape domestic violence, abuse or harassment.

The Home Energy Conservation Act

2.34 The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 requires local authorities to develop and manage a strategy to improve energy efficiency in their area by 30 per cent over the period 1997-2007. Given that domestic energy consumption accounts for over 25 per cent of CO₂ emissions, energy efficiency targets at the national and local level need to take the domestic housing sector into account.

Area Based Renewal

2.35 Area based renewal can be an integral part of local authorities' private sector renewal strategies. This approach has been particularly successful in Wales with 22 renewal areas already declared and more in the pipeline. Within these areas local authorities have adopted a holistic approach to regeneration which has resulted in economies of scale and better co-ordination of investment. The wide ranging activities not only tackle housing problems but the related and underlying social, economic, environmental and health issues which contribute to social exclusion. Public investment in these areas, with a particular emphasis on local community involvement, restores confidence and there are good examples of increased private sector investment as a result. The approach to area renewal adopted in Wales was commended in a report on renewal areas in Wales and England commissioned by DETR.

3. Wales' Existing Housing Stock

3.1 This section gives a brief overview of the current housing situation in Wales as a background to the issues covered in section 4.

3.2 The total housing stock of Wales is approximately 1.25 million. The proportion of these by tenure is shown below:



Dwelling Stock Estimates by Tenure, 1997

3.3 Owner occupied homes currently make up 71 per cent of all dwellings in Wales (this is the highest rate of any part of the UK). Home ownership remains the tenure preference of almost nine out of ten Welsh households.

3.4 Each year around 10,000 new homes are built in Wales. The figure overleaf shows the numbers of new houses built in Wales since 1980:

New Dwellings Completed 1980 - 1997



3.5 The extent to which existing housing can contribute to meeting housing need is influenced by a variety of factors. Among the most important of these are age and condition of stock. In Wales, the housing stock is on average older than that in England: 36 per cent of the existing housing stock was built before 1919, compared to 25 per cent in England. Nevertheless, successive Welsh house condition surveys have shown that the condition of homes in Wales has been improving, but the cost of this both in public and private investment is considerable. Over the 12 years from the 1986 Welsh House Condition Survey to the latest one in 1997-98, over £2.9 billion (at 1998 prices) was spent by the public sector on repair/improvement. The figures for private investment are not known but are likely to be at least to the same level. While this has reduced the repair costs from £2.6 billion in 1986 to £1.1 billion in 1998, it also shows that the rate of deterioration is considerable and is unlikely to diminish.

3.6 Initial results of the 1997-98 Welsh House Condition Survey, published in May 1999, show further improvements in the levels of unfitness overall, with 8.5 per cent (98,000) of the stock now estimated to be unfit. This compares with 13.4 per cent in 1993 and 19.5 per cent in 1986. Although the percentage of unfit homes has fallen since 1993, at 8.5 per cent it remains above the comparable figure for England of 6.7 per cent. While around 8 per cent of owner occupied and social houses are unfit, the rate rises to over 18 per cent in the private rented sector. This compares to rates of unfitness in 1993 of 11.6 per cent in the owner occupied sector, 14.5 per cent in social housing and 25.6 per cent in the private rented sector.

3.7 A national housing strategy would have to take realistic account of the scale of public expenditure resources which the Assembly can make available for housing, and create options for supplementing them with private sector investment.

3.8 The table below shows public sector housing investment in 1998-99 and 1999-2000 and indicative provision for the following two years, following the 1998 "Comprehensive Spending Review" (CSR). The CSR replaced the previous system of annual review of spending plans with fixed 3 year spending plans controlled directly by Government Departments, giving more certainty and flexibility for long-term planning and management of resources.

	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02
	Forecast Outturn	Provision	Provision	Provision
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Local authority housing capital				
Council stock	74.5	61.8	} 194.2	} 194.2
Private sector renovation	139.7	139.4	}	}
	214.2	201.2	194.2	194.2
Social Housing Grant	62.9	68.4	62.9	62.9
Supported Housing Revenue Grant	11.2	11.3	11.6	11.9
Other	7.8	7.6	7.3	7.0
Total	296.1	288.5	276.0	276.0
Housing Revenue Account Subsidy	169.8	185.0	198.0	213.0

3.9 Some members of the National Consultative Forum on Housing in Wales consider that insufficient priority is given to housing within the spending plans.

4. Issues for a National Housing Strategy

4.1 This section sets out key housing issues which the Assembly will need to consider in developing its strategic approach to housing in Wales. Some of these will have resource implications which would need to be considered in the development of a strategy.

Identifying and Meeting Housing Requirements

4.2 Building a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the nature and extent of housing need and demand at the national level has proven difficult in the past and will be an important issue for the Assembly to consider. Meeting the housing requirement that will arise from the projected household growth over the short to medium term (i.e. the next 5 to 10 years) will require effective partnerships between the Assembly, local government, housing associations/registered social landlords (RSLs), the private sector, the voluntary sector, and community groups. How housing demand and need is met will vary across Wales but will, in most areas, involve making best use of the existing stock, tackling areas of low-demand housing, bringing empty properties back into use, and building new housing. The Welsh Development Agency can support this process as it now incorporates the former Land Authority for Wales' remit of making housing land available where the private and voluntary sectors face difficulties.

4.3 A clear understanding of the nature and extent of housing need (i.e. of those living in inadequate housing or unable to obtain their own accommodation) is fundamental to the strategic housing role of the local authority. The Welsh Office recently issued a new guide to assist local authorities in undertaking local housing needs assessments, and offered authorities help towards the cost of carrying out housing need surveys over the next three financial years.

4.4 In meeting housing need, housing agencies need to take account of the affordability and fairness of housing costs for households. Viewed exclusively from the consumer perspective, social housing tenants might expect to pay rent at a level that is related to the size, location and type of property that they are living in. However, evidence from across Wales suggests that the broad pattern of rents across the social housing sector is not a coherent one.

4.5 An important element of national and local housing strategies will be measures aimed at addressing the particular housing needs of specific groups, such as vulnerable people or those with special needs. These will include alleviating homelessness and rough sleeping; promoting independent living for those with physical or other disabilities; and supporting those escaping domestic violence, abuse and other forms of criminal and anti-social behaviour. These measures will need to link with wider initiatives aimed at supporting people in their homes.

4.6 The Government is committed to introducing primary legislation to strengthen local authorities' duties to homeless households. Ahead of that, certain categories of homeless households have been added to those households to whom local authorities must give "reasonable preference" in their allocation schemes. At the local level, a strategic approach to homelessness will involve consideration of all aspects of homelessness and 'hidden homelessness' and developing ways of preventing and reducing homelessness for all, and especially for those people currently not entitled to the full accommodation duties. A strategic approach is important in tackling all homelessness, but is particularly important for those to whom there is currently no single statutory provision, such as single homeless people, including rough sleepers, and young homeless people. Shelter Cymru's 1999 paper '*New Approaches to Homelessness in Wales*' points to the need for greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness, with more flexible approaches to accommodation duties and greater input from applicants into more sustainable housing outcomes.

4.7 An important element of homeless strategies will be the availability of advice, information, support and outreach services aimed at preventing homelessness and promoting sustainability of tenure.

4.8 Rough sleeping is one of the most serious manifestations of social exclusion. Consequently, the Welsh Office has had the objective of eliminating the need for anyone in Wales to sleep rough. In the last three years, the Welsh Office has offered grants to help local authorities, working through voluntary organisations, to develop strategies and schemes for helping rough sleepers. To help local authorities gain a better understanding of the incidence and causes of rough sleeping in their areas, and to identify good practice and gaps in service, an experienced professional from the voluntary sector has been seconded to work with the Welsh Office/Assembly and local authorities. The outcome of this work will inform future action at national and local level.

4.9 Housing strategies must also ensure that the needs of the black and minority ethnic (BME) population of Wales are addressed. With the help of a temporary secondment from the Welsh BME Steering Group, an assessment is being made of how well the housing needs of BME groups are met by

Welsh local authorities and RSLs, and of the quality of service delivery to these groups. BME housing strategies have already been adopted in England and Scotland, and, following this assessment, proposals are likely to be brought to the Assembly regarding the adoption of a BME housing strategy for Wales.

4.10 In seeking to address housing demand and need, a national housing strategy could include proposals for:

- assessing the national requirement for housing, including the need for supported housing;
 - further assisting local authorities to carry out accurate local housing needs assessments;
 - assessing current levels of empty homes and working with local authorities to bring these back into use where appropriate;
 - supporting the development of private housing where appropriate, including low cost homeownership;
 - providing grant aid for the development of new social housing where appropriate;
 - providing funding to encourage redevelopment of previously developed sites;
 - strengthening housing advice services;
 - supporting action (such as the development of local homelessness strategies) to better understand and tackle the problems of homelessness and rough sleeping in Wales;
 - ensuring that housing needs of particular groups, such as the emergency and longer term needs of those experiencing domestic violence and abuse, or BME groups are adequately addressed; and
-
- making progress towards a coherent social housing rent policy. This might involve changes to the Housing Revenue Account subsidy system, and refinements to the housing association rent benchmark system.

Investing in Bricks and Mortar

4.11 While stock condition on a national scale might be improving, tackling the remaining pockets of badly maintained housing remains a priority given the impact that poor housing can have on people's health and well-being and their general quality of life.

4.12 Improving house conditions will require action across all tenures. There is an estimated £1 billion backlog of repairs, refurbishment and modernisation required to the council house stock in Wales. In the private sector there has been more than £1.6 billion of renovation grant and area renewal investment since 1990. This investment has contributed to improved conditions in individual houses, through grants and area renewal schemes and by support for Community Care policies (through Disabled Facility Grants and Home Repair Assistance). Nevertheless, as shown by the 1997-98 Welsh House Condition Survey (see paragraph 3.5), though the condition of the private sector stock has improved since 1993, some 78,000 properties (around 8.5 per cent) are unfit. Comprehensively tackling these problems of unfitness is difficult because Wales has a higher proportion of owner-occupiers than other parts of the UK, many of whom are on low incomes or benefits and unable to maintain their homes to a good standard. Proportionately, the problems are greatest in the private rented sector where an estimated 18.4 per cent of dwellings were found to be unfit – problems in this sector are often concentrated among houses in multiple occupation (HMOs).

4.13 In the council house sector, if investment into the stock is maintained at current levels, the estimated £1 billion backlog of repairs, refurbishment and modernisation will simply increase year on year and will make the stock more difficult-to-let. This will further exacerbate the trend of the most disadvantaged households being concentrated on the more run-down council estates which in turn will reinforce their exclusion from the broader community.

4.14 In addition to stock condition problems, 3 per cent of households in Wales live in overcrowded conditions. The 1997 Welsh Household Interview

Survey found that 38,000 households were living in homes below the bedroom standard. Overcrowding problems of this nature are known to be correlated to higher rates of mental illness and domestic violence.

4.15 Addressing the problem of poor house conditions will require a combination of action including repair, refurbishment, modernisation, new development and in some cases demolition. To promote better house conditions the Assembly could consider:

- establishing house condition standards within the framework of the proposed new fitness rating and formulating policies to bring housing up to those standards. Such policies might include:
 - encouraging owners to adopt preventative maintenance measures through, for example, home renovation grants and the use of loans;
 - the implementation of an HMO licensing scheme for the private rented sector, and the promotion of model registration schemes ahead of the required primary legislation; and
 - supporting area renewal schemes; for example, by encouraging local authorities to fully engage with private sector bodies such as local employers, local chambers of commerce and lenders.
- options to tackle the backlog of repairs, refurbishment and modernisation in local authority housing in a sustainable way. This could include those options put forward by the Private Finance Working Group. This group comprises representatives from the Assembly, Welsh Federation of Housing Associations (WFHA), Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA), Welsh Tenants' Federation (WTF), Chartered Institute of Housing and the Council of Mortgage Lenders. All methods of securing additional investment in local authority housing from private finance sources, consistent with current Public Sector Borrowing Requirement rules, are being considered.

4.16 Investment in the physical condition of the housing stock will make an important contribution to wider initiatives aimed at improving health and tackling social exclusion.

Housing and Energy Efficiency

4.17 Alongside stock condition issues, the energy efficiency of Wales' homes is important for two main reasons:

- energy conservation aimed at reducing global emissions; and
- fuel poverty and health - many of Wales' households are deemed to be in fuel poverty i.e. more than 10 per cent of their income has to be spent on heating, lighting and general energy use.

4.18 In a wider context, significant energy is consumed in the building and demolition process, while assessment of the potential environmental impact is important in the location of new housing developments. Reducing car dependency by integrating new housing developments with existing patterns of settlement, employment, public services and amenities will also help to reduce energy consumption and cut down on the release of harmful emissions into the atmosphere.

4.19 In addressing energy and environmental issues related to the construction, use and possible demolition of homes, the Assembly might consider:

- how energy efficiency funding (i.e. the replacement for the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme) is allocated in the light of responses to consultation on the UK review of fuel poverty – for example, improving the energy efficiency of the homes of older people might be tackled as a major priority;

- to what extent the activities of national energy efficiency organisations, such as the Energy Saving Trust and National Energy Action, address fuel poverty and domestic energy efficiency issues in Wales;
- how to promote practical and cost effective domestic energy conservation measures, for example, through national and local energy advice (e.g. through the four Energy Advice Centres in Wales); or through supporting local authority Home Energy Conservation Act strategies;
- the scope for improving the energy performance of social housing funded by Social Housing Grant (SHG);
- options for continuing to support the activities of 'Care and Repair' agencies in helping older and disabled people to improve the energy efficiency of their homes;
- ways of promoting changes in the way that the construction process in Wales uses natural resources, consumes energy and generates waste; and
- supporting energy efficiency measures in area based renewal schemes.

Sustainable Home Ownership

4.20 The overwhelming majority of households in Wales aspire to home ownership as their eventual tenure. These include households on low incomes who, along with existing owner-occupiers on low incomes or benefits, may need help to achieve and/or maintain their tenure aspirations. Supporting these households will require action to address the fitness problems in the existing stock, and planning policies which take proper account of the need for new affordable housing. In addition, many elderly and disabled owners need special adaptations to enable them to remain in their own homes. The 1997 Welsh Household Interview Survey found that 8.3 per cent (69,000) of owner-occupied households reported a need for special facilities which has not been met.

4.21 Welsh homeowners are currently faced with average repair bills of £951 and an estimated 63,000 owner-occupied homes are classed as unfit. In relative terms the national repairs bill for owner-occupied stock is higher in Wales than other parts of the UK because a disproportionately high number of Welsh households are in this sector, including many vulnerable and elderly home-owners. The existence of these problems suggests that the Assembly and its partners might explore how low income and vulnerable home-owners can be assisted to maintain/adapt their housing to a standard which meets their needs. For the latter group, support is currently provided by agencies such as Care and Repair Cymru which helps older and disabled people to stay in their own homes, and by local authorities through Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Repair Assistance Grants.

4.22 To promote sustainable home ownership in the future the Assembly could consider:

- encouraging lenders to market flexible mortgages more widely - these arrangements can be particularly helpful to self-employed people and others whose income tends to fluctuate;
- working with lenders and insurers to develop improved mortgage payment protection insurance products and monitoring the performance of these products;
- investigating the potential for local authorities to use their powers to indemnify mortgage loans to allow lending, for example, to marginal buyers who might otherwise become social housing tenants;
- taking action, in conjunction with central government departments, to tackle delays in the house buying process;
- the potential of a range of low cost home ownership schemes, such as conventional shared ownership, homefinder and homebuy schemes, flexible tenure for the elderly and self-build schemes etc;
- exploring the potential for equity release schemes and for expanding the potential of Care and Repair schemes; and
- initiating research into the longer term sustainability of home owning brought about through Right to Buy or low cost home ownership schemes compared to the general housing market, and evaluating their potential contribution to sustainable communities.

Regenerating Wales' Socially Excluded Communities

4.23 In many of Wales' poorest communities, particularly on large social housing estates, problems go beyond "bricks and mortar" issues. Problems of social exclusion have become evident, such as high unemployment; rising levels of crime and fear of crime; neighbour nuisance; and poor access to public services, support information and local amenities. As a result, these communities have become unpopular. This problem does, however, vary both between and within local authority areas. Unfortunately, information is insufficient to build up a comprehensive national picture of the problem in Wales. Work is currently being done to explore ways of gathering evidence on, and improving understanding of, the links between large social housing estates, social exclusion and low demand housing. However, problems of social exclusion are not confined to large public sector housing developments, but are also evident in some of Wales' poorest communities in both urban and rural areas, such as in the South Wales valleys where there are high levels of home ownership.

4.24 Despite the lack of comprehensive information, anecdotal evidence suggests that the problem of low demand social housing might be a phenomenon common to many parts of Wales. This has often been exacerbated by patterns of provision, design and location of housing, and a lack of community involvement in identifying and meeting the needs and aspirations of people on the ground.

4.25 Allied to this, factors such as allocation policies and 'Right to Buy' sales (which has removed a quarter of the council stock, and a disproportionately higher share of better-quality stock) have resulted in some of Wales' poorest households, with least choice over their housing, becoming concentrated on the least popular (and often poorest quality) estates.

4.26 Future housing-based investment and management initiatives that seek to regenerate communities should have a more positive impact if they are integrated with other community initiatives. There is a widely held view that "housing-based" actions will have more effective outcomes where they are an integrated component of strategies which take a comprehensive, community-based approach to reversing the problems of social exclusion. Housing solutions which are imposed without meaningful consideration of a community's broader problems, and the views of its tenants/residents, are less likely to build sustainable communities. Solutions derived from national policies and initiatives will need to reflect local problems and needs.

4.27 Examples of existing initiatives where housing has an important part to play include:

- the 'People in Communities' programme, launched by the Welsh Office in 1998, which aims to demonstrate how community-based co-ordination can effectively help to build sustainable communities, encourage healthy living and improve educational attendance and achievement. Several types of housing initiatives (covering rough sleeping and empty properties, for example) were included among the potential areas for action in individual community projects.
- the 'Sustainable Communities' programme, aimed at enhancing the sustainability of communities by providing support for small projects in targeted areas that add value to public sector housing investment, to begin the process of integrating funding towards cohesive packages.
- the Strategic Development Scheme and Welsh Capital Challenge programme have encouraged local authorities to develop strategies which demonstrate a coherent approach to regeneration across a wide range of services and policy areas, including housing.
- as part of the Sure Start scheme, housing agencies, along with other local agencies, have a part to play in securing improvements to housing and residential areas where existing standards leave children at risk of failing to fulfil their potential.

4.28 To support the regeneration of Wales' deprived communities the Assembly could:

- expand the scope and number of area renewal schemes and link these with other related community initiatives;
- review the contribution of housing in existing community regeneration programmes that have a strong housing component; and
- promote and monitor the role of housing authorities in local area crime and disorder reduction strategies.

Supported Housing

4.29 Appropriate housing and support is an important factor in the success of 'Care in the Community'. This applies to those people who are discharged from hospital or institutional care, and to elderly or disabled people who wish to remain in their own home. People with learning difficulties, problems with drug or alcohol misuse, or behavioural problems may also need additional support if they are to be able to live in their own homes in the community.

4.30 Local housing agencies (including housing associations) have a key role in providing adequate accommodation and support for vulnerable households. The quality of the relationship between local authority housing and social services departments is widely recognised as an essential factor in delivering integrated community care services. The recent Audit Commission Report *'Home Alone'* found that collaboration between these two areas of local government is often weak and that the full potential of housing departments and providers to contribute to community care services is not being exploited.

4.31 At a national level, the UK Government has reviewed the funding of supported accommodation following a court decision in 1998 that Housing Benefit should cover only the "bricks and mortar" costs of housing and not charges for support services. In March 1999, the Secretary of State for Social Security announced the long term funding arrangements as set out in the consultation paper *"Supporting People: a new policy and funding framework for support services"*. This proposes replacing the current complicated funding arrangements with one single budget targeted specifically at support services for vulnerable people, which would be administered by local authorities. This change, which requires primary legislation, has significant implications for the provision of supported housing.

4.32 In Wales, the single budget will transfer to the Assembly which, following the primary legislation, will need to consider:

- whether to include Supported Housing Revenue Grant in the single budget;
- whether to ring fence that budget;
- funding arrangements for people moving between local authority areas; and
- other detail of the implementation of the Supporting People scheme which commences nationally on 1 April 2003.

Raising Standards of Performance in Social Housing

Best Value

4.33 Subject to its successful passage through Parliament, the Local Government Bill includes provisions to raise standards across all public services, including housing. These provisions will place a duty on local authorities to *"make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness"*. Local authorities will be required to consult on how they fulfil this duty and to prepare an annual Best Value performance plan, setting out strategic objectives and summarising achievements over the past year.

4.34 Local authorities will also be required to carry out reviews of all services within a period to be determined by the Assembly. The Assembly will have responsibility for specifying performance indicators and setting standards. Thus, through this process the Assembly can play an effective role, in partnership with local authorities, in defining housing service standards, monitoring the delivery of these services and promulgating best practice. Where an authority is failing to deliver Best Value, the Assembly will have the power to intervene. A consultation paper on Best Value in Housing was issued by the Welsh Office in May 1999.

4.35 RSLs are not included in the Local Government Bill as Best Value authorities. However, they are regulated by the Assembly. The regulatory framework is being amended to apply the principles of Best Value to RSLs and as far as possible to set the same performance indicators and standards as will apply to local authorities.

Housing Management

4.36 Poor management of social housing can compound the social and environmental problems that exist in socially excluded communities. This is why it is in the interests of tenants that housing management services are high quality and high value.

4.37 The Assembly might consider how it can encourage improved performance among local authority housing departments via Best Value principles.

4.38 In advance of the introduction of the Best Value regime, the WLGA and WFHA are collaborating to define and raise standards of performance in the social housing sector. Their report, '*Quality Social Landlords*' argues the benefits in establishing greater consistency between local authorities and RSLs in standards in housing services, and in levels of consumer involvement.

4.39 The report also notes the particular relevance of Best Value principles to RSLs. The Assembly might therefore consider how it can encourage improved performance in this sector via Best Value.

Tenant Participation

4.40 There is broad consensus that social housing works best where tenants have a say in the running of their homes and communities. The report from the WTF and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Cymru entitled '*Count Us In!*' and the Tai Cymru topic audit of tenant participation in RSLs found that some social landlords have not been diligent and committed enough in giving tenants meaningful opportunities and incentives to overcome the many barriers to participation.

4.41 These reports made it clear that tenants want to get more involved in housing issues and also in issues of wider concern to their communities, for example crime prevention, neighbour nuisance and youth unemployment. Tenants have a very important role in improving the quality of life in their localities, in tackling social exclusion and sustaining local communities.

4.42 The Best Value framework is designed around the principle of consulting consumers about plans and services and working in partnership to promote the well being of the area. For local authority housing departments and RSLs this means consulting and involving tenants and residents in the type, quality and management of services provided.

4.43 Within the context of Best Value the Welsh Office carried out a consultation on the introduction of Tenant Participation Compacts. These compacts are agreements negotiated between landlords and tenants, aimed at getting tenants more involved. The consultation paper contained a framework on which Tenant Compacts should be based and outlined important standards to be adopted as the foundation for successfully involving tenants.

4.44 To support and encourage tenant participation the Assembly:

- will need to consider how it ensures that local authorities and RSLs fully embrace Best Value in relation to tenant involvement; and
- might consider how to guide local authorities and RSLs in introducing effective Tenant Compacts.

5. Key Partners to a National Housing Strategy for Wales

The National Assembly for Wales

5.1 The advent of the Assembly creates an unprecedented opportunity to develop coherent policies which are particularly relevant to the needs of Wales. The National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999 gives the Assembly the Secretary of State's range of powers and responsibilities for housing functions in Wales. Most of these functions are effected through the agency of local authorities, housing associations and other organisations. The Assembly will be able to develop and implement housing policies, within the framework of primary legislation, and to allocate resources accordingly. The development of a national housing strategy will set the implementation of these policies at a local level within the context of nationally identified needs and priorities. The strategy will inform, and be informed by, local authorities' HSOPs for their areas. A summary of the key powers of the Assembly in relation to housing is at Annex B.

Tenants and Communities

5.2 The involvement of tenants and communities will be vital to the development of housing policies and actions which contribute effectively to the creation of sustainable communities in Wales. The WTF and TPAS Cymru provide support for tenant groups and contribute to the development of national and local policies as they impact on tenants, including the preparation of this framework. The involvement and constructive contribution of communities in identifying and tackling local priorities, is a key element of the 'People in Communities' programme and is a fundamental component of the framework for achieving Best Value in public services.

Private sector

5.3 Around 80 per cent of homes in Wales are owner-occupied or privately rented. Between 1993 and 1997 new housebuilding in this sector accounted for 72 per cent of all new dwellings completed in Wales. Private developers, often working in partnership with local authorities and RSLs, have an important contribution to make to the achievement of community, environmental and economic sustainability. Although not large (around 8 per cent of the housing stock), the private rented sector is important in meeting the needs of people who are unable to, or choose not to, purchase their own homes, especially in the larger towns and cities. A thriving private rented sector is also of wider significance to the economic life of Wales, since it makes a key contribution to labour mobility. Most private sector housing activity is underpinned by resources from a range of lenders which includes mainly banks and building societies. In addition to supporting home ownership, lenders have injected £650 million of private finance into the housing association capital development programme since the 1988 Housing Act. Umbrella bodies such as the Construction Confederation, the Council of Mortgage Lenders and the House Builders' Federation play a key role, at national and local level, in promoting private sector input in both housing development and finance.

Local Government

5.4 Section 113 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 requires the Assembly to draw up a scheme indicating how it proposes, in the exercise of its functions, to sustain and promote local government in Wales. The Assembly must also establish a Partnership Council for Wales, consisting of Assembly and local authority members. The Council will advise on matters of concern to local government in Wales, including housing.

5.5 The WLGA represents local government in Wales. Its *"Housing Manifesto for Wales"* published in 1997 and signed up to by all 22 authorities, is a comprehensive statement of the role of local government in working towards better housing for the people of Wales. The WLGA is currently developing an action plan from the manifesto in consultation with its members and other agencies for implementation of key manifesto objectives which have yet to be achieved.

5.6 Individual local authorities have a key strategic role in ensuring that people in their area have the opportunity of a decent home in a sustainable community. To discharge this role effectively, authorities need to put in place comprehensive yet realistic strategies, based on effective consultation with partner organisations on local needs and priorities, which include:

- o identification of areas of poor or problematic housing;
- o an assessment of housing need and how it will be met;
- o the authority's strategy for the management and maintenance of the public sector housing stock; and
- o the contribution of the private sector.

5.7 At present, all local authorities prepare a HSOP. These are reviewed and rolled forward on a yearly basis. This is done in partnership with other local organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors, including RSLs, tenants and tenant organisations, health authorities, voluntary organisations and private housebuilders. HSOPs are submitted to the Assembly to inform work on the Public Expenditure Survey and to allow key issues to be tracked generally, and within individual authorities. The current HSOP process needs to be examined for its continued appropriateness and usefulness both to local authorities themselves and to the Assembly.

5.8 The WLGA and WFHA are currently working together to develop a format for "Community Housing Agreements". These documents are designed to widen partnership working between local authorities and housing associations, to cover not only the contribution that authorities and associations can make in meeting housing needs, but also to assisting community regeneration and investment.

5.9 In conjunction with their strategic role, local authorities also have an enabling role which involves directly helping other agencies – particularly RSLs, home improvement agencies (more popularly known as care & repair agencies), and private housebuilders/developers – within the context of the local housing strategy. This can include, for example, allocating local authority capital resources to housing association development programmes, and ensuring adequate land supply for private housebuilding.

Housing Associations (Registered Social Landlords)

5.10 Currently RSLs are the main providers of new social rented housing in Wales. Since 1989, all additional housing in this sector has been funded through a mix of private and public finance.

5.11 RSLs vary enormously in terms of the number and type of accommodation that they provide (including self-contained accommodation for rent, hostels and co-operatives). Currently there are around a hundred RSLs in Wales. Of these, 35 are regarded as 'developing' or expanding RSLs, which are regularly in receipt of SHG to provide new or refurbished homes. The activities of Welsh RSLs are regulated by the Assembly itself, whereas in England and Scotland this regulatory function is carried out by an independent public body.

5.12 RSLs and local authorities should work together in assessing and meeting housing need in their area. The allocation of SHG to RSLs is based on the assessments of need in local authorities' HSOPs.

5.13 As the representative organisation for housing associations, WFHA promotes the role that this sector can play in meeting the need for social housing.

Voluntary sector

5.14 Beyond the RSL movement, the voluntary sector has a key role to play in housing, especially in community development projects; the provision and management of supported housing for vulnerable people; providing services for homeless people and rough sleepers; providing support for women and

children escaping domestic violence and abuse; and helping disabled and elderly people to remain in their own home. More generally, there are a wide range of voluntary organisations operating on a national, county or local level providing advice, information, counselling, and support and advocacy services.

5.15 Section 114 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 places a duty on the Assembly to promote the interests of relevant voluntary organisations. In advance of that, in November 1998 the Secretary of State launched a compact between the Government and the voluntary sector in Wales setting out agreed arrangements for working in partnership. The WLGA has agreed to promote similar compacts at local level between local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Others

5.16 There are also a range of other organisations that have a role in informing the development of policy, undertaking research and the dissemination of best practice. These include professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales and, from academia, the Centre for Housing Management and Development at Cardiff University.

Annex A: National Consultative Forum on Housing in Wales – Core Membership

Care and Repair Cymru

Centre for Housing Management and Development, Cardiff University

Chartered Institute of Housing in Wales

Construction Confederation

Council of Mortgage Lenders

House Builders' Federation

Shelter Cymru

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru

Welsh Federation of Housing Associations

Welsh Local Government Association

Welsh Office

Annex B: Key Powers of the National Assembly for Wales in Relation to Housing

The ability of the Assembly to act will be governed largely by the scope of its powers under UK legislation. A summary of the key housing primary legislative provisions and the secondary powers of the Assembly is set out in the table below. The Assembly is able to exercise its powers through a number of means including making subordinate legislation, providing funding, and issuing guidance and best practice advice.

Responsibility for the exercise of housing functions in Wales transferred from the Secretary of State to the Assembly on 1 July 1999. However, there are other issues, such as taxation, law and order and social security benefits, which will continue to be the responsibility of Whitehall, but which impact on the delivery of a national housing strategy for Wales. Also, in determining the annual calculation of Housing Revenue Account subsidy (payable to local authorities) insofar as it affects rent rebates (Housing Benefit), the Assembly will have to obtain the consent of the Secretary of State for Social Security before acting. Established concordats with other government departments (including the DETR and the Department of Social Security) should enable effective implementation of policy in those areas which require close working between departments thus ensuring that the needs of Wales are taken into account.

Section 33 of the Government of Wales Act 1998 allows the Assembly to debate any matter affecting Wales - whether or not it is responsible for it - and to make representations to the UK government. This provision is important if the Assembly is to design and implement a "comprehensive" housing strategy. Given that Wales has lower average incomes, and higher levels of benefit dependency than the UK as a whole, the Assembly is likely to want to give serious consideration to how proposed UK reforms to areas such as housing finance and housing benefit will impact upon Welsh households.

SUBJECT AREA	PRIMARY LEGISLATION		ASSEMBLY POWERS	
	ACT	SECTION/S	SECTION/S	

<p>Leasehold</p>	<p>Leasehold Reform Act 1967</p> <p>Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993</p> <p>Housing Act 1996</p>	<p>s1</p> <p>s1-39</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houses - right to purchase freehold or extend lease. Flats - right (collectively) to purchase freehold or extend lease. 	<p>s28</p> <p>sch4 para 4</p> <p>s72, 75</p> <p>s87</p> <p>s83</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevent enfranchisement of leasehold properties where the land is required for development for public purposes and related compulsory purchase powers. Consenting to estate management schemes, specifying procedures and varying schemes within the area covered by the estate management scheme. Approving Codes of Management Practice for landlords etc. Prescribing procedures for claiming right to buy freehold.
<p>Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)</p>	<p>Housing Act 1985 (as inserted by the Housing Act 1996)</p>	<p>s 346 as inserted by s 65</p>	<p>Registration of HMOs.</p>	<p>s 346 as inserted by s 65</p> <p>s 365 as inserted by s 75</p> <p>s 352a as inserted by s 72</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make provision for registration fees including the maximum fee permissible; prepare model registration schemes and confirmation of schemes which vary from the model. Specifically describe houses in the HMO category which are required to have means of escape from fire and other adequate fire precautions. Specification of maximum charge recoverable by local housing authorities in serving notices requiring the execution of necessary

				s 377a as inserted by s 76	works. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the opportunity for representations to be made before a local authority serves a works notice.
Statutory Rent Assessment Bodies	Rent Act 1977			s63-64 s63-64	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of grant to fund Rent Officer Service. • Making schemes for appointment and remuneration of rent officers, amalgamating schemes for the appointment of rent officers • Amalgamating rent registration areas. • Determining membership of rent assessment committees, appointing professional and lay members, nomination of president and vice-president from chairmen/women members, and remuneration of members. • Specifying fees and limiting the amount of charges for Leasehold Valuation Tribunals, for dealing with disputes over service charges, insurance and management.
	Housing Act 1988			s64 s65 sch10	
	Rent Act 1977				
	Housing Act 1996			s86	

<p>Homelessness</p>	<p>Housing Act 1996</p>	<p>s175</p> <p>s179</p> <p>s181</p> <p>s183</p> <p>s184</p> <p>s185</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of what comprises homelessness and threatened homelessness. • Local authority duty to secure that advice and information about homelessness and its prevention is available free of charge to anyone in their area. • Terms of assistance to homelessness voluntary organisations. • Definition of a person's eligibility for local authority accommodation; or for assistance in obtaining accommodation in cases of homelessness or threatened homelessness. • Local authority duty to check eligibility of "homeless" applicants. • Limits, or exclusions, to entitlement of persons from abroad to housing assistance. • Local authority's interim duty to accommodate in case of apparent priority need. • Definition of which persons have a priority need for accommodation. • Circumstances in which a local authority may refer an applicant to another authority. • Applicants right to request a review of a local authority decision about their homelessness. • Definition of how local authority should provide 	<p>s177</p> <p>s182</p> <p>s189</p> <p>s189</p> <p>s198</p> <p>s203</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend the range of circumstances and matters to be taken into account, or disregarded, in assessing whether to or not it is reasonable for a person to occupy accommodation. • Guide local authorities on how they exercise their functions relating to homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. • Make further descriptions of which persons have a priority need for accommodation (with prior consultation). • Amend or repeal the primary legislative definition on priority need. • To make arrangements for resolution of cases where local authorities fail to agree over referral of an application (after prior consultation). • Make procedures to be followed in connection with local authority homelessness reviews. • May exclude or modify the operation of the primary legislative definition of how a local authority should provide accommodation to the homeless, where a local authority applies to the Assembly on the grounds that it can not provide accommodation under that definition. • Specify circumstances in which homelessness accommodation is (or is not) to be regarded as suitable.
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s188

s189

s198

s202

s207

s210

- accommodation to the homeless.
- Definition of what local authority should consider as suitable accommodation.

s207

s210

Homelessness Grants

Housing Act
1996

s180

Assistance to voluntary
organisations concerned with
homelessness

Allocation of Local Authority Accommodation	Housing Act 1996	s162	A local authority shall maintain a register of people qualified to be allocated accommodation.	s160 s161 s162 s163 s165 s167	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescribe cases where provisions about allocations do not apply. • Prescribe classes of persons who are, or are not, qualifying persons. • Prescribe information which should be contained on the housing register. • Prescribe requirements for removal of persons from the register. • Make regulations regarding procedure for review. • Prescribe regulations regarding procedures for allocation schemes.
Information to Tenants	Local Government and Housing Act 1989		s168	Make determinations on the information to be provided to local authority tenants in an annual report.	
Local Authority Housing Finance	Local Government and Housing Act 1989	s74 sch4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places an obligation on a local housing authority to keep a housing revenue account (HRA) unless consent is otherwise given. • Specifies the broad framework of the HRA, including such categories as credits to the account and certain detailed items such as rents. • Duty to prevent debit balance on the HRA. • Specifies that HRA subsidy to be payable each year to authorities. • Authorities have the power 	s74 s74 s76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define land, houses and other buildings to be included, or not included, in the HRA (provided they are not in the classes set out in the primary legislation). • Consent to a HRA not being kept. • Specify items to be taken into account when setting the HRA budget and included in the budget statement. • Specify expenditure to be carried into debit of Housing Repairs Account. • Specify accounting practices to be used in keeping a HRA.

		s76 sch4 s77	to keep Housing Repairs Account (effectively a sub-account of the HRA).	s77 s78 s79 s80 s83 s86 s87 sch4 s96	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set time and manner of HRA subsidy payments. • Set rules for calculating entitlement to HRA subsidy. • Specify formulae for calculating residual debt subsidy. • Set the administrative rules for recouping payments of HRA subsidy or residual debt subsidy. • Vary or revoke relevant determinations or directions. • Make changes to some aspects of the HRA (for example, may allow authorities to debit specified items to the HRA). • Make Housing Exchequer Contributions (HEC) to local authorities.
Housing Welfare Services	Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993	s126	Authority may provide housing welfare services.	s128	Can exclude from the HRA the cost of the provision of certain housing welfare services.

Stock Transfers	Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993	s135	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities must apply for inclusion in disposals programme. • Disposals must be included in annual programme. 	s135 s136	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare stock transfer disposal programme; to define "qualifying disposals"; and to set criteria for disposal of dwelling houses. • Determine the amount of levy, if any, to be charged on disposal.
Provision of Shops, Recreation Grounds etc	Housing Act 1985			s12	Give consent in connection with housing accommodation.
Acquisition of land for housing	Housing Act 1985			s17	Authorise a local housing authority to acquire land compulsorily, including land not required immediately.
Appropriation of Land	Housing Act 1985			s19	Consent to a local authority appropriating a house or part of a house for another purpose.
Disposal of Housing and Housing Land	Housing Act 1985			s32 - 34	Consents for disposal of housing and land including conditions attached to disposal.
Financial Assistance for Privately Let Housing Accommodation	Local Government Act 1988			s25	Consents for provision of financial assistance for privately let housing accommodation including conditions attached to provision of assistance.
Restrictions on Disposals of Land	Housing Act 1985			s157	Consent to vary the limitation on freedom to dispose in National Parks etc.
Land Clearance and Demolition	Housing Act 1985			s290	Authorise a local authority to purchase land and houses compulsorily.
Discontinue Proceedings	Housing Act 1985			s292	Authorise local authorities to discontinue land purchases.

	1985 (as amended by Housing Act 1988)				
Social Housing Grant (SHG)	Housing Act 1996			s18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make grants to registered social landlords and specify: application procedure; circumstances in which grant can/cannot be paid; method and limitation of grant calculation; timescale of grant payments; and conditions attached to grant. • Appoint a local housing authority to act as agent and to specify the terms of the appointment. • Make grants to registered social landlords in respect of discounts given under the right to acquire. • Recover SHG and specify the procedure and rate of interest to apply.
				s18	
				s20	
				s27	

Regulation of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)	Housing Act 1996	s3 s4 sch 3 para 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a register of landlords • Remove a landlord from the register • Supervision and control over RSLs (as detailed in Schedule 1) 	s2 s9 s34 s36 s1-4 sch1 para 2 sch1 para 3 sch 1 para 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend permissible activities for RSLs • Consent to disposal of land by RSLs • Determine required standards of performance • Issue guidance on housing management • Amend/add to description of RSLs • Determine exemptions to payment and benefits to officers and employees of RSLs • Set fees/expenses for officers/board members • Determine accounting requirements
Information from RSLs	Housing Act 1996			s30-33	General power to obtain information about RSLs.
Powers to Determine Standards of Performance, and Issue Guidance to RSLs	Housing Act 1996			s34-36	Collect information and publish reports on RSL performance.
Complaints Against RSLs	Housing Act 1996			s1	Add or amend requirements on RSLs regarding membership of schemes for dealing with complaints.

Right to Acquire	Housing Act 1996	s16	RSL tenant's right to acquire the dwelling of which s/he is a tenant.	s17 s17 s17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specify the amount or rate of discount. Designate exempted rural areas. Apply the provisions of the "right-to buy" regulations as they are relevant to the "right to acquire", except in relation to: certain powers to intervene; exemption of charities/certain housing associations; rent to mortgage terms; disposals in National Parks; preserved right to buy.
Codes of Management Practice	Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993			s87	Approve any code of practice designed to promote desirable practices in the management of residential property.
Grants to Assist Public Sector Housing	Housing and Planning Act 1986			s16	Make grants to facilitate or encourage improvements in the management of public or former public sector housing.
Building Regulations	Building Act 1994			s3 s8-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To exempt particular buildings or class of buildings from all or any of the provisions of building regulations. To dispense with or relax requirements of building regulations (after consultation with the local authority) and publish notices of proposed dispensations and relaxations. To make determinations where a question arises

s16

between a local authority and a person over whether work or plans of work comply with building regulations or whether work has been done in accordance with plans passed by local authority.

- To consider appeals against local authority refusal etc. to dispense with or relax building regulation requirements.
- To appoint persons to hear appeals, to give directions and make Statement of case to High Court on a point of law following an appeal to High Court.

s39

- Default powers, where a local authority or joint board have failed to discharge their functions under the Act. To set up local inquiry etc.

s39

s116-118

				s40 of the Government of Wales Act 1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mix and balance of house types on new housing developments; • affordable housing in rural areas.
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Annex C: Glossary of Terms

Care and Repair Agency	A general term used to describe agencies which help older people or those with disabilities to repair or adapt their homes to meet their needs. This may include practical help with grant applications and management of building contractors, or advice on local contractors or other issues such as benefit entitlement.
Community Care	The general term meaning provision of services and support in their own homes to people with mental health problems, learning difficulties or a physical disability, frail elderly people or other vulnerable people. The aim is to help them live as independently as possible in their own homes.
Disabled facilities grant	A grant which a disabled person may qualify for, towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable them to continue to live in their property. The grant is given by councils under Part I of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
Flexible mortgage	A mortgage which allows borrowers to vary their monthly repayments through the option of overpaying, underpaying or taking a payment holiday.
Hidden Homeless	Households who have no home of their own and who rely on living with other people such as relatives or friends. People in these circumstances often do not appear in official homelessness statistics.

Homelessness

Section 175 of the Housing Act 1996 defines a homeless person as one who has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere or who has accommodation but is unable to occupy it. Local authorities have temporary duties to house people who are homeless and in priority need, this includes households with children, or where a woman is pregnant. Other people can be considered vulnerable and assisted such as older people and some single people who may have significant physical and/or mental health problems. Most homeless single people and childless families, however, will not usually receive the full housing duties. Where a homeless applicant is found to have a local connection with another area, the local authority concerned has discretion to refer the case to the authority for that area (this discretion does not apply in cases of domestic violence).

Home Repair Assistance

A discretionary form of assistance specifically designed to provide practical help through either a grant or the provision of materials for small-scale works of repair, improvement or adaptation to a dwelling, house-boat or mobile home. Home repair assistance is given by local councils under Part I of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Housing Advice

The 1996 Housing Act places a duty on every local authority to provide advice and information about homelessness, and the prevention of homelessness, free of charge, to any person in their area. This can include assistance to people looking for somewhere to live, advice to private tenants about their housing rights, debt counselling for people in arrears, information on housing benefits, and advice on how to get repairs done. Organisations that concentrate on the provision of housing advice are located in the independent sector as well as local authorities. In addition, a variety of organisations such as Citizen's Advice Bureaux and Law Centres provide housing advice as part of a wider service.

Housing Association

A non-profit making voluntary body formed to provide housing. Housing associations are legally constituted and may be charitable trusts, industrial and provident societies or, occasionally companies. In order to receive SHG, housing associations must be registered (a "registered social landlord") with the Assembly.

House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

A property in which households share basic amenities.

Housing Benefit

Financial assistance to help tenants of local authorities, RSLs and private landlords pay their rent.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

A ring-fenced account within a local authority's General Fund. It records revenue expenditure and income, relating to an authority's own housing stock. The main items of expenditure included in the account are loan charges, management and maintenance costs and rent rebates. The main items of income are from tenants in the form of rents and from the Exchequer in the form of HRA Subsidy.

Housing Strategy and Operational Planning (HSOP) Process

Local authorities use this process to set overall housing strategy for their areas, covering all tenures and laying out plans for housing investment over the coming years. The local authority's strategic role follows from the duty laid down in section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 to periodically review housing conditions and the needs for additional housing. In setting a strategy it is intended that local authorities, as well as investing directly themselves, should facilitate other agencies (in other parts of the public sector, and in the voluntary and private sectors) to achieve their housing related aims.

Local Agenda 21 Strategy

A local authority document for developing local policies for sustainable development and building partnerships with other sectors to implement them.

Low Cost Home Ownership

A generic term for initiatives designed to make owner occupation affordable to low income households. These include conventional shared ownership; homefinder and homebuy schemes; transferable discount and home release schemes; flexible tenure for the elderly; self-build schemes; homesteading; and Improvement for Sale schemes.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL)

Registered social landlord (RSL) is a term introduced by the Housing Act 1996 applying to housing organisations registered with the Assembly. These may be charities that are housing associations (registered with the Charity Commission), industrial and provident societies, and not-for-profit companies. The term supersedes "registered housing associations". RSLs have access to SHG and are eligible to receive stock transferred from local authorities. The Assembly regulates RSLs to protect its public investment and to safeguard the interests of tenants and prospective tenants. RSLs are required to supply the Assembly with statistical details about themselves, file annual accounts and returns, and comply with accounting requirements.

Right to Buy

Under the Housing Act 1980, most secure tenants of local authorities and of non-charitable RSLs have the right to buy their homes at a discount, after a minimum period of residence.

Rough sleeping

People sleeping, or bedded down, in the open air (such as on the streets, or in doorways, parks or bus shelters); people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as barns, sheds, stations, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations or bashes).

Social Exclusion

There is no single definition of this term. Social exclusion exists in neighbourhoods that have inter-linked, and often cyclic problems of poverty, unemployment, poor health and concern about crime. These neighbourhoods may also experience other types of problems that vary greatly from place to place. These include everything from litter and vandalism to lack of shops.

Social housing

General term covering rented housing owned by local authorities and registered social landlords.

Social Housing Grant (SHG)

Grant paid by the Assembly to RSLs towards the cost of capital development programmes.

Supported Housing Revenue Grant

A grant paid by the Assembly to RSLs for the additional costs of managing properties occupied by persons requiring support in order that they can sustain their occupancy of those properties.

Sustainable Development	Development that is based on 4 broad objectives: social progress which recognises the needs of everyone; effective protection of the environment; prudent use of natural resources; maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment.
Unitary Development Plan (UDP)	Each local planning authority in Wales is required to prepare a UDP for its area setting out the authority's policies and proposals for the development and use of land in its area.

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