

PIW 08
National Assembly for Wales
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
Inquiry into: Poverty in Wales: Strand 1
Response from: Tai Pawb



Tai Pawb

National Assembly for Wales – Inquiry into Poverty in Wales

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Who we are

Tai Pawb (housing for all) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The organisation's mission is, "To promote equality and social justice in housing in Wales". It operates a membership system which is open to local authorities, registered social landlords, third (voluntary) sector organisations, other housing interests and individuals.

What we do

Tai Pawb works closely with the Welsh Assembly Government and other key partners on national housing strategies and key working groups, to ensure that equality is an inherent consideration in national strategic development and implementation. The organisation also provides practical advice and assistance to its members on a range of equality and diversity issues in housing and related services.

Tai Pawb's vision is to be:

The primary driver in the promotion of equality and diversity in housing, leading to the reduction of prejudice and disadvantage, as well as changing lives for the better.

A valued partner who supports housing providers and services to recognise, respect and respond appropriately to the diversity of housing needs and characteristics of people living in Wales, including those who are vulnerable and marginalised.

For further information visit: www.taipawb.org

Charity registration no. 1110078
Company No. 5282554

1. Effectiveness of the Tackling Poverty Action Plan, Strategic Equality Plan and other government strategies working together. The co-ordination and prioritisation across the Welsh Government of legislation, policy and budgets tackling poverty and reducing inequality.

1.1 The current action plan would benefit from a more detailed analysis of poverty issues from an equality perspective looking at the prevalence, specific nature and responses needed for different protected characteristics and in relation to specific groups for example refugees and asylum seekers.

1.2 It is important that the initiatives being implemented to tackle poverty across a range of areas are appropriate for and being accessed by people across the protected characteristics. For example:

- What work is being done to ensure that people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds are aware, taking up and benefiting from the NEST scheme.
- How accessible are current employment initiatives for people from different groups at risk of discrimination within the work place e.g. LGBT people, disabled people including people with mental ill health etc.

1.3 Greater consideration is needed in relation to considering the impact that cuts to services are having at a local level for people from different groups experiencing poverty. For example the impact of cuts

- to bus services in rural areas on the ability of people to access libraries or other facilities offering computer access, services such as banking and health related services and employment, social and education opportunities.
- to community and voluntary groups providing direct and often specialist engagement opportunities or support to specific equality groups.
- to day centres, libraries, sport facilities and other amenities.

1.4 There are examples of innovative projects happening through joint working between housing and health that look to address a number of poverty related issues including quality of housing, training opportunities, community facilities and health. For example the combination of health and dental care provision, housing, shops and community facilities at the Loudoun Square development in Butetown Cardiff. It is important that such initiatives are promoted through the action plan and related strategies.

1.5 Poverty and destitution can put people at risk of exploitation. As a result it would be beneficial for the work of the anti-slavery co-ordinator and Wales anti-slavery leadership group to be referenced within the action plan to demonstrate co-ordination between these two areas of work.

2. Impacts of poverty, particularly destitution and extreme poverty, on different groups of people.

2.1 Poverty, in particularly destitution and extreme poverty can increase an individual's risk of exploitation in areas such as trafficking, forced labour, criminal exploitation, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Research by the Salvation Army found that 'the majority of British nationals were rough sleeping prior to being trafficked and/or had existing mental health or learning disabilities which may have made them vulnerable to a trafficker.' They found that the majority of male victims were from A8 states or the UK, while the nationality profile of female clients was much more diverse, with 86% of men requiring an interpreting service. Accommodation was identified as the number one support need of victims of trafficking once they have escaped their situation and been identified to authorities.¹ Homeless Link note "Traffickers are increasingly seeing services that attract and support vulnerable individuals as prime locations to target people for exploitation."² Operation Imperial by Gwent Police highlighted the fact that this form of exploitation is happening in Wales and a report to Cardiff Council's Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, 3 September 2014 notes that 'There is official and anecdotal evidence of human trafficking in Cardiff covering males and females, adults and children, internal and external trafficking. Trafficking is known to be happening in Cardiff for the purpose of sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and domestic servitude.'³ A report by Oxfam highlighted in relation to destitute refused asylum seekers that 'There is evidence of both men and women involved in commercial sex work, with many of those who pursue this strategy being physically abused, sexually exploited or manipulated, or forced to stay against their will.'⁴ Lack of recourse to public funds, vulnerable immigration status, having mental ill health or a learning disability and falling within groups traditionally given limited priority within services (e.g. single men) can increase the likelihood of destitution and potential vulnerability that can lead to exploitation.

¹ Gayle Munro and Chloe Pritchard, Support Needs of Male Victims of Human Trafficking: Research Findings, Research & Development, The Salvation Army, June 2013

² Homeless Link, Trafficking and Forced Labour - <http://bit.ly/1uKaTng>

³ The City of Cardiff Council, Tackling Human Trafficking in Cardiff – Report of the task and finish group, Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee, 3rd September 2014 - <http://bit.ly/1rYdiOf>

⁴ Heaven Crawley, Joanne Hemmings and Neil Price, Coping with Destitution Survival and livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in the UK Centre for Migration Policy Research (CMPR), Swansea University, February 2011

- 2.2 Having a home can provide a key stabilising factor for people in their lives which can bring benefits from improved health to opportunities to access education and employment. Poverty, low income and destitution narrows the housing options available to people making it harder for people to access suitable and affordable housing and the potential associated benefits. This is an acute issue facing young people on a low income in Wales today who are facing the multiple challenge of the shortage of suitable affordable housing, restrictions related to shared accommodation rates, disproportionately being affected by sanctions related to job seekers allowance⁵ and limited availability of stable employment opportunities. These factors also makes it harder to find housing solutions and move on accommodation for young people when they are in temporary accommodation or have specific needs such as the need for an adapted property.
- 2.3 Poverty and being on a low income (whether in work or not) can impact on the ability of households if there is a change in circumstances, to meet housing costs, increasing the risk of homelessness or households getting in to debt. This has been shown by the impact that the bedroom tax / under occupancy charge has had on disabled people and their families on low incomes who don't qualify for discretionary housing payments and where no suitable alternative accommodation is available. These tenants are at significant risk of not being able to meet the additional costs resulting in them accruing arrears, putting their home at risk and having a negative impact on their physical and mental health.⁶ Changes in circumstances can also increase the risk of young people being asked to leave the family home in an attempt to reduce household costs.
- 2.4 Poverty and low income can lead to people living in unsuitable and poor quality housing that does not meet their needs and this can have a negative impact on both physical and mental health. In terms of those facing destitution or rough sleeping the impact is intensified. The Oxfam report in relation to destitute asylum seekers noted "Many of those who participated in this research described how they and others suffer from ill health as a result of having no accommodation, a poor diet and lack of access to health care...Those sleeping on the street or in abandoned or poorly heated and damp houses also suffer ill health related to cold and damp."⁷

⁵ Watts, Fitzpatrick, Bramley and Watkins, Welfare Sanctions and Conditionality in the UK, September 2014

⁶ <http://www.wwha.co.uk/About-Us/News/Pages/Public-money-set-to-be-wasted.aspx>

⁷ Heaven Crawley, Joanne Hemmings and Neil Price, Coping with Destitution Survival and livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in the UK Centre for Migration Policy Research (CMPR), Swansea University, February 2011