



Care & Repair Cymru

Improving homes to change lives

Care & Repair Cymru's manifesto for
the 2021 Senedd elections

About Care & Repair Cymru



Care & Repair Cymru is Wales' Older People's Housing Champion. Together with our 13 agencies across Wales, we have delivered, evolved, and innovated services that help older people live independently at home for over 30 years. We improve homes and change lives.

As a charity working through our network across Wales, we deliver practical help to create safe, warm and accessible homes. This help can range from directly carrying out housing adaptations, to helping older people through bureaucratic paperwork for accessing grants, to offering advice and support with finding reliable contractors to carry out work, to helping claim benefit entitlements.

We work on the front line in communities, which helps us understand and represent the housing needs of older people. We believe passionately in the rights of older people to have decent housing and to be able to live independently for as long as they want.

For more information about the policies in this document, please contact:

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In 2019/20:

- We listened to **47,965** older people, with an average age of 78, and helped make their homes warm, safe, accessible and fit for habitation
- We enabled **£14.5 million** of housing repairs and improvements
- We completed over **19,000** Rapid Response Adaptations
- We prevented trips and falls by completing **17,279** jobs in the home
- We made **1,549** older people's homes warmer and more affordable to heat
- We helped over **2500** older people increase their household income, helping them claim over **£10.5 million** of unclaimed benefit entitlement
- We reduced time spent in hospital for **2555** older patients, significantly improved patient flow, and saved **16,590** bed days for NHS Wales.¹

¹ All statistics references on this page are available in our Annual Report:

https://www.careandrepair.org.uk/files/9716/0130/8166/Annual_Report_19.20_E...pdf

Healthy homes for older people

Our vision for the next Senedd term

The next Welsh Government must ensure that Wales is a nation that empowers and provides choice for its ageing population. We must commit to tackling the housing problems faced by older people so that they can live with dignity and independence in their own homes for as long as they choose. Homes must be made warm, safe, accessible and be adaptable across the life course.

Housing that is inclusive by design or by adaptation creates a more equal Wales, which is integral to the wellbeing goals set out in the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015. The Social Services and Well-being Act 2014 places a clear emphasis on prevention, and the current A Healthier Wales strategy provides a strong message about the need for partnership, integration and prudent healthcare across housing, health and social care services. Prevention begins at home. Now is the time for the next Welsh Government to put words into actions and provide healthy homes for older people.

The experience of receiving care and support whilst living through the Covid-19 pandemic for older and vulnerable people has not always been positive, with the call to stay at home condemning many to live in poverty, loneliness and poor, unsafe homes. Problems present prior to the pandemic have been magnified by people being required to live in isolation, and housing risks have been left unaddressed.

Our experience working with older people means our asks for the next Welsh Government are based on proven preventative interventions. Now, we must significantly scale up preventative housing policy and resources across Wales.



1 Older people should have a right to decent housing which is enshrined in law

We want to improve housing conditions for older people across Wales. 18% of houses in Wales pose an unacceptable risk to health, however with 19% of pensioners in Wales in poverty many older people cannot afford to complete repairs. Yet local authority housing grants for disrepair are virtually non-existent and take up of local authority loan schemes amongst older people is very low.

- We conducted a total of £14.5m housing repairs and improvement works in 2019/20
- Despite our work, every day we come across unfit homes and serious disrepair where the needs of vulnerable older people can't be met due to a lack of funding
- Based on our caseworker service alone, we have found that there is millions of pounds' worth of essential works that aren't carried out every year due to a lack of funding

The next Welsh Government should commit to ensuring that no older person will live in a home that is dangerous or unfit for habitation by:

- **Enshrining a right to decent housing in law** to improve housing conditions for older people and future generations
- **Setting a clear minimum standard of condition for private sector housing** and a timescale to meet this standard
- **Creating a national safety net grant programme** for vulnerable older homeowners, available to Care & Repair, to support those who would otherwise have to live in unfit housing.





2 Older people should have easier access to the help they need to make their homes healthy

Homes can often be a barrier to an older person's full, healthy independence. We want the next Welsh Government to break down the divides between health services and housing support, so that older people have quick and equitable access to the help they need.

- Care & Repair's Hospital to a Healthier Home programme has shown what can be achieved by breaking down these divides. We conducted 1876 Healthy Home Assessments between April 2019 - March 2020
- In 2019/20 we helped 2555 patients through Hospital to a Healthier Home and saved NHS Wales 16,590 bed days to help improve patient flow
- We are proud that we were there to help the Welsh NHS in 2020 by supporting safe discharge, reducing unscheduled care and assisting older people to manage the risks to their health

The next Welsh Government should join up health and housing services more effectively so that older people can consistently get the help they need, through:

- **A 'Once for Wales' approach** to provide clarity and continuity of evidence-led best practice across housing and health, and nationally funded cohesive solutions for older people across Wales
- **Continued core funding of Care & Repair services** to sustain and expand our national Hospital to a Healthier Home provision across Wales
- **Ensure Regional Partnership Boards encourage a more equal relationship** with third sector bodies and housing organisations.



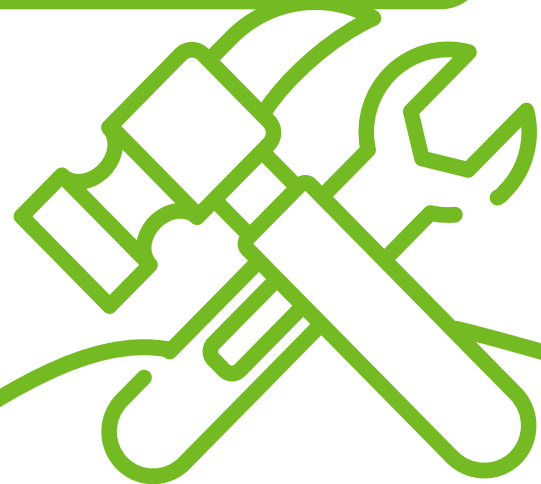
3 Older people should have equal access to housing adaptations across Wales

Home adaptations are one of the most accessible, cost-effective, and integral ways of ensuring older people can live with dignity and independence in their own homes. There are 132,000 older people in Wales who will fall more than once in their home, and having fallen once, will be 50% more likely to fall again. We need a more preventative approach to housing adaptations.

- The current system of delivering adaptations in Wales varies hugely on whether an older person owns their own home, and where in Wales they live. In some cases, it also serves to reinforce existing inequalities. Falls amongst older people cost the NHS in the UK over £2.3bn a year, yet evidence suggests that home adaptations reduce the risk of injury by 26%
- We adapted 19,025 homes in 2019/20 with an average waiting time of just seven days
- For every £1 spent in Care & Repair's Wales Rapid Response Adaptation Programme for owner occupiers and private rented homes, £7.50 is saved from health and social care budgets by preventing trips and falls

The next Welsh Government should ensure every older person in Wales has equal access to housing adaptations, whether they own their home or live in a rented property; through:

- **A joined-up approach to funding adaptations**, across housing, health and social care, and local and national governments
- **Better local strategic planning for housing adaptations** based on need and outcomes expected
- **Increased and ring fenced funding for Care & Repair and the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme** to protect existing equitable access to our services and do more of what we have proved works.



4 Older people should always be able to live in a warm home

We know that of the 155,000 households in fuel poverty in Wales, 130,000 of these households are classed as vulnerable. This is equivalent to 11% of all vulnerable households. Up to 30% of excess deaths in Wales during winter are due to cold homes, and 75% of those deaths are people aged over 75. No older person's life should be at risk at winter because they struggle to heat their home, yet older people are amongst those at greatest risk from cold and damp related respiratory, circulatory, and cardiovascular diseases.

- We completed 1644 energy efficiency improvements in 2019/20 to make older people's homes warmer and more affordable to heat
- We calculated that every £1 spent on warmer homes could save the NHS £4
- We helped 1,947 older people in 2019/20 access over £8m in unclaimed benefits, helping older people to better afford their fuel bills

The next Welsh Government should commit to halving the number of older people in fuel poverty by 2025 through:

- **Greater parity between health, housing, and energy** to create year-round cross-sector preventative action
- **Investment in a national targeted campaign** to increase the take-up of Pension Credit
- **An explicit long-term plan to retrofit and de-carbonise homes across Wales**, with specific help for those who own their own homes



5 Older people should be able to use technology to help them live independently

The COVID-19 pandemic has quickly changed day-to-day life for many in Wales, and many of these changes wouldn't have been possible without technology. However, older people must not be left out of the digital conversation. No older person should be excluded from technology that can help them live independent, healthy and happy lives at home.

Through our specialist Managing Better service, we are beginning to understand that assistive technology has the power to revolutionise independent living for older people.

- In 2019/20, our Managing Better service helped adapt the homes of 2,623 people with sensory loss, stroke, and dementia, with many benefitting from the help of assistive technology
- The current Social Return on Investment of Managing Better is £4.50 for every £1 spent. We want to increase this by finding new ways for assistive technology to provide specialised help for our most vulnerable
- Procuring technology from Welsh companies could help grow a new industry in Wales while ensuring the health and homes of our older people can benefit

The next Welsh Government should take a preventative approach to using assistive technology through:

- **Encouraging increased availability and take-up of user-friendly digital technology** to support independent living, that is accessible for older people with complex needs
- **Increasing investment in developing and implementing technological solutions** to the challenges of living independently
- **Allocating grants to upskill relevant workforces** to meet the demands of changing digital innovation

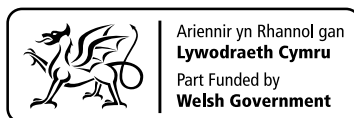




Care & Repair Cymru

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Improving homes, Changing lives

Care & Repair Cymru is a registered charity:
Charity number 1163542