

Research Project

Abstract

This proposal desires to look at issues facing social housing, as well as the consequences and effects it will have later. While offering an affordable housing alternative to lower income families, social housing faces terrible difficulties (Crisis); with financial constraints, substandard maintenance and poor standards of construction and overcrowding. These challenges to life quality for residents also cause considerable hardship. In addition, the social housing programs can no longer be healthy and effective. The study will investigate the deep-seated problems behind these issues and examine to what extent they are shaping the quality as well as supply of housing over time. This research will take data from people working in social housing as well existing research to develop a more comprehensive picture of today's situation and the future trend. Ultimately, the study addresses the state of knowledge on social housing by examining gaps in current literature issues that point to future policy direction and providing ideas for minimizing undesirable results. Social housing was created for the purpose of reducing the poor health effects, which had developed at this time, and therefore minimum standards of sanitation were laid down by central government not only inside but also outside dwellings. This trend extended in the 1940s After World War 2, with local authorities creating estates and high-rise buildings as solutions against overcrowding caused by bomb damage to houses during the war (Altair). More recently housing associations have started becoming prevalent, these have joined with local councils to provide for people in social housing. Housing are non-profit making organizations that have made their houses available other than for council tenants Moving Soon reports how.

The researcher is currently working within a local authority maintaining the existing housing stock in Pembrokeshire, due to this they have first hand experience on some of the challenges currently facing social housing. The key challenges currently facing social housing are:

Underfunding – Most local authorities lack the funding and staff in order to effectively repair and maintain properties, this leads to disrepair.

Legislation – Requirements for housing are becoming more demanding which requires additional spending in order to provide housing that meets the required standards.

Retrofitting – In order to meet the above requirements properties required retrofitting, this is costly and more timely than building new due to outdated building practices and infrastructure.

Shortage of properties- Due to the current housing crisis local authorities are pressured into providing fast turnaround on projects on existing and new properties.

Sustainability challenges- Upgrading existing properties to meet energy efficiency and climate goals are costly and many buildings are not currently environmentally friendly.

Inequality and Accessibility- Certain vulnerable groups struggle to access suitable housing that caters to their needs and requirements.

Research Question

The proposed research question is as follows:

What Issues are affecting social housing and what are the resulting effects?

Aims and Objectives

The main aim of this research is to:

Identify current issues faced by social housing and how they will affect social housing in the future.

Rationale

Social housing is facing many challenges that include a lack of housing solutions, poor living conditions, funding limitations and growing demand. These problems can have a wide range of impacts: They affect not only tenants' standard of living but also the financial viability for those providing housing and governments' ability to meet their citizens' needs. Without a full grasp of the challenges and their consequences, it's hard to establish effective policies or remedies. The purpose of this research is to conduct a thorough analysis of social housing's key issues and assess how these affect accessibility, affordability and long-term sustainability.

Objective 1

Identify the Current Issues Affecting Social Housing and Analyze Their Impact

Rationale

Social housing faces numerous challenges, including housing shortages, poor living conditions, funding constraints, and increasing demand. These issues have far-reaching consequences, affecting the quality of life for tenants, the financial stability of housing providers, and the ability of governments to meet housing needs. Without a clear understanding of these challenges and their impact, it becomes difficult to develop effective policies and solutions. This research aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the key issues in social housing and evaluate how they influence accessibility, affordability, and long-term sustainability.

How to Achieve

To achieve this objective, the research will begin with a literature review of academic studies, government reports, and policy papers that discuss social housing challenges. Quantitative data, such as statistics on housing shortages, funding allocations, and waiting lists, will be collected to provide measurable insights into the extent of these issues. Additionally, qualitative data will be gathered through interviews or surveys with key stakeholders, including tenants, housing providers, and policymakers, to understand their perspectives and experiences. Case studies of social housing projects will also be analyzed to assess the real-world impact of these issues and identify common patterns across different regions.

Expected Outcomes

By the end of the research, a comprehensive examination and definition of the problems in social housing may be made. The conclusions are likely to show scale and severity of these problems, and how they affect tenants' standard of living or housing availability. This research will provide evidence-based conclusions that can be used by policymakers and housing authorities to identify key areas for intervention, both short and long-term. This research will make a series of recommendations to financial institutions and the government, and in particular set out how funds that have been earmarked for housing will be used: with the aim of improving standards at a lower cost.

Objective 2

Evaluate Potential Solutions to Address These Issues or Mitigate Their Effects

Rationale:

It is vitally important to address the issues that face social housing. Another point is that its long-term sustainability and effectiveness now depend on finding solutions for these problems. Without appropriate measures in place, difficulties such as lack of residential life standard or financial constraints will continue to grow worse. Then disadvantaged groups will be further handicapped. By identifying the best course of action, this research aims to see where an over-proportion of social housing can be made available to those in need, and how good conditions can obtain. Discussions about policy making, finance models, and new housing forms will serve to determine the most effective way of dealing with the problems posed by these.

Challenge.

How to Achieve:

This target will be reached by using a number of research methods. A comparative study of successful social housing policies in different countries will provide some insight on strategies. Experiments management teams will interview housing professionals and people in the field of policies and advocacy groups. Through their comments and advice, we can test out the practicability of different solutions. Data that comes from reality--case studies. Some successful housing programs will have their outcomes analyzed to discover what works. Also, existing policies and programs of housing will be examined in terms of what results they have had.

Expected Outcomes:

The research is expected to come up with a variety of potential solutions including policy proposals, financial models, and creative ways to provide new housing. It will point out which approaches are most effective for any given social housing need and offer practical advice on implementing them. The findings will enable policy makers, housing authorities, and community organizations to make informed decisions about how to improve social housing systems and alleviate the negative effects of existing problems.

Objective 3

Assess Future Challenges in Social Housing and Predict Their Potential Consequences

Rationale

The future of social housing is shaped by evolving economic, social, and environmental factors. Rising demand, urbanization, climate change, and shifts in government policies could create new challenges or worsen existing ones. Without proactive planning, these emerging issues could lead to increased homelessness, further reductions in housing affordability, and worsening living conditions for tenants. By assessing future challenges, this research aims to provide valuable insights that will help policymakers and housing providers prepare for and mitigate these potential risks.

How to Achieve

To achieve this objective, the research will involve a combination of trend analysis, expert opinions, and scenario forecasting. A review of existing literature and policy reports will help identify projected challenges based on current housing trends. Expert interviews with policymakers, economists, and housing professionals will provide insights into expected changes in social housing demand, funding, and regulations. Additionally, data modeling techniques may be used to predict future housing shortages, funding gaps, or demographic shifts. Case studies of countries or regions already facing advanced social housing crises will also be analyzed to draw lessons for the future.

Expected Outcomes

This research will produce a detailed analysis of potential future challenges in social housing, including predictions on their impact. It will highlight key risk areas and offer recommendations on how to prepare for these challenges. By providing forward-looking insights, the findings will help policymakers, housing authorities, and advocacy groups develop long-term strategies to ensure that social housing remains accessible, sustainable, and resilient in the face of future uncertainties.

Current Issues and Challenges for Social Housing in Wales

Financial Constraints and Funding Deficits

One of the primary challenges for social housing in Wales is the lack of sufficient funding for new developments and the maintenance of existing stock. Recent funding cuts to local authorities and housing associations have hindered the sector's ability to build new homes and maintain existing ones. For instance, the Welsh Government's funding for social housing development has faced restrictions, making it difficult for councils to meet housing demand (Welsh Government, 2020). Additionally, the ongoing austerity measures have reduced public sector spending, exacerbating the affordability crisis in Wales (Evans et al., 2018).

Aging Housing Stock and Maintenance

Many properties in social housing in Wales are now old and in need of a lot of work. A report by the Wales Audit Office last year (2019) showed that housing providers had seen major barriers or hidden costs in: high prices of bringing old buildings up to modern fire and safety standards; councils presenting little beyond nominal help; and mortgages for upgrading. Those heading households often have insufficient funds, yet these problems cannot be overcome unless funds are available to remedy this situation—an outcome that can only make for even worse difficulties on the part of people whom a deteriorating house leaves without reasonable funds for heating. More than just physical discomfort results. Poor housing conditions can also lead to mental illness and injury sickening or even killing thousands every year. For isolated old women it may mean dying alone in their room in spite of the most picturesque environment. A forlorn looking child's future will clearly not be much better. (The Building Maintenance Co)length, 2019)

Housing Supply and Demand Imbalance

The imbalance between housing demand and supply is a long-standing issue in Wales. The 2018 Welsh Government report highlights that there is an acute shortage of affordable housing, with demand vastly outstripping supply, especially in urban areas like Cardiff and Newport (Welsh Government, 2018). Rising private rents and increasing population pressures have led to more individuals and families relying on social housing, leading to long waiting lists and overcrowded homes.

Affordability

However, even with the intention of making social housing as affordable as possible, rents in many urban areas remain fairly high when compared with household income. As private rents continue their upward march, more low-income households find it increasingly hard just to afford social housing (Hodgson et al., 2020). For instance, the most recent data from the Chartered Institute of Housing (2019) shows that in parts of Wales even rents on social housing units are becoming too expensive for people with low incomes.

Uncertainties in Policy and Regulation

Since the devolution of power to the Welsh Government, there has been instability within the social housing sector in Wales in the shape of increasingly frequent policy changes. The resulting changes on housing regulation, eligibility criteria and allocation of funding have compromised its local authorities planning for housing delivery. Additionally, the growing emphasis on the Right to Buy scheme and the political uncertainty around what the future of housing legislation hold for Wales have only exacerbated these issues (Evans et al., 2018).

Effects of These Issues

These issues run deep socially and economically for Wales. A lack of affordable housing means more homelessness and overcrowding. The shortages in the high demand areas also

place strain on resources, which can contribute to social exclusion, especially for families living in poor housing; barriers to accessing a good education, health care, and work (Fitzpatrick, 2020). Community The quality of housing and the housing environment can directly affect the health of the community, with poor housing conditions associated with a number of medical issues, notably respiratory and cardiovascular diseases but also with low mood (NHS Wales, 2019).

Solutions and Preventative Measures

Several approaches can be used to combat these issues. More investment — both in the building of new social housing and in maintaining existing stock — is needed. Welsh Government's Affordable Housing Programme is supposed to provide new homes whilst also improving the existing stock, yet the supply is unable to keep up with demand (Welsh Government, 2020). As well, prioritizing long-term affordability, rent controls and improvements to housing regulation through policy reformation will also be vital in sector stabilization (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2019). Linking housing with other social services, including health care and job training, will mitigate the wider consequences of inadequate housing.

Future Challenges and Effects

Further down the line, barriers to health will remain in the face of climate change and an ageing population. While lower income households are facing increased debt, rising inflation and real living standards, it is getting more difficult to get a mortgage, so the crisis in housing in Wales is sits squarely in social housing. It is critical to future-proof housing stock with energy efficiency and resilience (Evans et al., 2018). Also, as Wales' population ages, there will be greater demand for accessible, affordable housing for older people. However, meeting this demand will require planning and investment in bespoke housing solutions (Welsh Government, 2018).

Gaps in Current Research

Although a good amount of research has been done on social housing in Wales, there are still some gaps. The environmental impacts of social housing are not well understood, particularly if climate change will exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities of Welsh housing. Different housing technologies — new, energy-efficient housing models or modular constructs — and their impact is also under-explored within the context of Wales. What you also mention is that it will require further exploration into the effects of rent control and other regulatory activities in Wales. Future research could also list challenges for housing policies and outcomes and how the devolved powers to the Welsh Government have specifically shaped Welsh housing policies and outcomes, especially around local government struggling to meet housing demand.

Addressing gaps in current research

Current research on social housing in Wales has identified several key issues, including funding shortages, aging housing stock, affordability concerns, and supply-demand imbalances. However, significant gaps remain, particularly in understanding the long-term environmental

impacts of housing policy, the effectiveness of emerging housing technologies, and the role of devolution in shaping housing outcomes.

Our research aims to fill these gaps by focusing on several underexplored areas. Firstly, we will examine how climate change and environmental challenges may disproportionately affect social housing in Wales. Given the increasing frequency of extreme weather events and the need for climate-resilient housing, our study will explore how current housing stock and new developments can adapt to these challenges. By focusing on the sustainability of social housing in the context of climate change, we hope to provide insights into how Wales can better future-proof its housing sector.

Additionally, our research will assess the potential of new housing technologies, such as modular construction and energy-efficient housing models, in addressing the affordability crisis in Wales. While these technologies are gaining traction globally, their application and feasibility in the Welsh context remain under-researched. By exploring these innovations, we aim to offer practical solutions for reducing construction costs and improving housing sustainability.

Finally, our research will delve into the impact of the Welsh Government's devolved housing policies, investigating how local government priorities and resources have influenced housing outcomes. This will provide valuable insights into how devolved powers can be optimized to address the unique challenges faced by Wales in providing adequate social housing.

Research Design and Methodology

Uncertainty in Regulatory and Policy Environments In Wales, social housing is in a state of upheaval and confusion with major policies flipping and shifting since the recent powers were devolved to the Welsh Government. Numerous alterations to housing regulation, eligibility criteria and funding allocation have impacted on local authorities' capacity to plan and deliver for housing. Additionally, the recent focus on the Right to Buy policy and the uncertainty regarding the future of housing legislation in Wales have further exacerbated the housing crisis (Evans et al., 2018). Effects of These Issues

The Importance of Addressing Challenges with Social Housing in Wales. A lack of affordable housing creates more homelessness and overcrowding. Here it becomes even more crucial, given that the pressure on resources in high-demand areas can lead to the same trends of social exclusion in which those living in sub-standard accommodation can struggle to access quality education, healthcare, and employment (Fitzpatrick, 2020). In addition, the bad housing conditions are associated with numerous health issues, such as respiratory diseases, mental health conditions and worsening of pre-existing health conditions (NHS Wales, 2019). To get back to normal, we have some strategies of resolution and mitigation

There are numerous approaches to fixing these problems. That means more funding to build new social housing, but also more money to maintain existing stock. The Welsh Government's Affordable Housing Programme is intended to provide new homes and improve the existing

stock but additional funding is needed to respond to the increasing demand (Welsh Government, 2020). Similarly, the basic principles that underpin the sector (a focus on sustainable long-term affordability, the introduction of rent controls and improvements to housing regulation) will play a significant role in bringing stability to the sector (Chartered Institute of Housing, 2019). Housing needs to be integrated with the wider social services: health care, job training, etc., so as to mitigate the wider effects of bad housing.

Future Challenges and Effects

Looking beyond immediate challenges, Wales must contend with the long-term impacts of climate change and an aging population. Social housing in Wales will have to respond to more extreme weather driven changes like floods and heatwaves, as the climate crisis accelerates. Energy efficiency and resilience will be essential for future-proofing the stock (Evans et al., 2018). As Wales' population also ages, there will be even greater demand for suitable, affordable accommodation for older people who need to live at home. These demands will need to be met through careful planning and investment in tailored housing solutions (Welsh Government, 2018).

Although much research has been undertaken (studies, papers, consultation responses and literature reviews) on social housing in Wales, there are gaps. Research on the environmental impacts of social housing is relatively scarce, and also limited in scope regarding how climate change could amplify existing vulnerabilities within Welsh housing. The impact of new housing technologies, such as energy-efficient housing models or modular construction in the context of Wales, is an area of study that has also not been given much attention. In addition, while the affordability crisis has received substantial attention, relatively little research exists into the long-term impacts of rent controls and other regulatory measures in Wales. [p. 4]: Future research might also cover how devolved powers to the Welsh Government have shaped housing policy and outcomes directly, in particular the challenges facing local government functions in delivering against the demand for housing. Filling in the Blindspot of Existing Studies

Research Design And Methodology

This research will use a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods. Through this approach, these methods combined offer statistical data on the extent of the challenges faced, alongside the qualitative perspective of social housing tenants and housing managers, providing an in-depth examination of the nature of the issues in Wales. This will likely include qualitative methods (interviews or focus groups), which can lend nuance to our individual experiences with social housing (experience with affordability issues, overcrowding, changes to social housing policy, etc.). This method is especially suited for the estimates from Aim 1 (describing contemporary problems and their impacts) and Aim 3 (assessing potential challenges), and will provide nuanced understanding of tenant experiences and expectations for the future. However, quantitative measures through surveys and secondary data analysis will aid in identifying broader trends, such as the

distribution of social housing, the depth of housing shortages, and the financial aspect of social housing investment. This way we can demonstrate whether each of the issues which can be resolved informs Aim 2 (reflecting on how to achieve such issues), to enable us to come to a means to quantify with relative strength in numbers how effective different policy interventions might be.

Data Collection Methods

Using a combination of surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and secondary sources of data will be collected.

Quantitative data gathering will involve an online survey of social housing tenants and housing managers. It will cover the affordability of social housing, whether residents are satisfied with their housing conditions and waiting times, and expectations about improvements in the future (questions will be closed-ended). Doing so will enable us to measure the barriers tenants encounter, as well as identify trends in responses—segmented by demographic variables (e.g. age, income, location)—to better understand how these crises impact renters. We will also examine secondary data from government publications, housing association figures and local authority housing statistics to paint a fuller picture of Wales' social housing landscape. Within this, qualitative data will be collected using semi-structured interviews with social housing tenants, policymakers and housing managers. These interviews will aim to dive deeper into tenant struggles, policy shifts impacting tenants, and tenant views of future housing challenges and solutions. It will also examine government policies and housing providers' responses to existing problems using this method. Also, tenant focus groups with social housing tenants will be conducted to aid in the discussion of shared experiences and collective views of current housing issues. This will enable us to gather a breadth of perspectives on how to improve the social housing system.

Sampling Methods

The study population will comprise social housing tenants, housing managers, and policymakers working in housing policy and provision in Wales. Tenants from different housing estates will be interviewed to ensure a fair representation using random sampling, covering a cross-section of Wales from a range of socio-economic, geographical, and housing types. It will include an estimated 20-30 sample participants, large enough for diverse statistical significance.

Purposive sampling will be applied to select individuals who are directly involved in the social housing sector for the semi-structured interviews. This will capture a diverse experience set including tenants facing different housing challenges, housing managers implementing the policy and policy makers who impact housing strategy. We

will be looking to interview 5-10 people across these groups to gain rich nuanced insights. Lastly, for the focus groups, we will target 6-8 participants per group and aim for diversity of perspectives within each group. The groups will be structured by different criteria — age, household size or geographical location — to assess different types of tenant experiences.

Data Analysis Plan

Quantitative data from the surveys will be analyzed with statistical methods. Descriptive statistics (mean, median, and frequency distributions) will be used to summarize responses to questions on housing affordability, satisfaction, and waiting times. We will utilize inferential statistics (e.g., chi-square tests, regression analysis) to find relationships between demographic variables and tenants' challenges. This will enable us to investigate trends around social housing issues that have the potential to inform future policy solutions. We will use thematic analysis for the qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups. This approach will enable us to identify, analyse and report on patterns (themes) within the data. Interviews and focus group discussions will be transcribed verbatim and the data coded, and these codes organised into themes that relate to different aspects of the research aims (effects of policy change, experiences of tenants and expectations for the future). Tackling social housing in Wales, this analysis will illuminate the deeper social, personal and relational currents so often overlooked by purely quantitative perspectives.

Data triangulation will be used to provide assurance of the soundness of findings comparing results from the surveys, interviews, focus groups and secondary data sources.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are a crucial component of this research. Informed consent will be obtained from all participants, ensuring they understand the nature of the study and their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. Confidentiality will be maintained by anonymizing responses and securely storing data, ensuring that personal information is not shared without consent. Special attention will be given to the vulnerable nature of some participants, such as tenants who may be facing housing difficulties, ensuring they are not put under undue pressure to participate.

Transparency regarding the research objectives and potential outcomes will be ensured throughout. Additionally, the study will adhere to the ethical guidelines set by the relevant ethics committee, and any potential conflicts of interest will be declared. Finally, the findings will be used solely for academic purposes and shared with participants and stakeholders to contribute to the development of better housing policies in Wales.

Timeline

Task	Timeline
Literature Review	Weeks 1-2
Data Collection	Weeks 3-5
Data Analysis	Week 6
Writing the Report	Weeks 7-8
Final Review & Submission	Week 9

Expected Outcomes

The research is expected to highlight financial constraints as the primary issue facing social housing in Wales. Budget cuts to public funding likely hinder the ability to build new homes and maintain existing stock, leading to long waiting lists, overcrowding, and deteriorating housing conditions. Additionally, poor management practices may emerge as a significant factor contributing to housing quality issues, with tenants reporting delays in repairs and inadequate maintenance.

Emerging trends may point to future policy shifts focusing on sustainable housing development and energy-efficient solutions. As climate change becomes a growing concern, policies may evolve to prioritize green housing initiatives, which could influence construction methods and funding allocations in the coming years.

Long-term effects on the housing sector and communities could include an exacerbation of social inequality and homelessness due to a persistent housing shortage. The continued strain on housing stock may worsen mental health issues and health inequalities among vulnerable populations. In the worst-case scenario, these unresolved issues could lead to increased social unrest and further marginalization of lower-income groups, undermining efforts to improve social cohesion and equity in Wales. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for ensuring a more stable and inclusive future for Welsh communities.

References

- Chartered Institute of Housing, 2019. *Housing Affordability in Wales: A Crisis of Supply and Demand*. CIH. Available at: <https://www.cih.org> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].
- Council Housing vs Housing Association, what's the difference? Available at: <https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/what-is-social-housing-and-why-is-it-important/> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].
- Evans, A., et al., 2018. *Housing and Homelessness in Wales: Impacts of Policy and Practice*. Cardiff University Press.
- Fitzpatrick, S., 2020. Homelessness in Wales: A Crisis of Social Exclusion. *Housing Studies*.
- Hodgson, C., et al., 2020. *Affordability and Housing Supply in Wales*. Welsh Government. Available at: <https://gov.wales/affordability-and-housing-supply> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].
- MHCLG, 2018. *Green Paper Review*. Available at: https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/136236/1/MHCLG_Green_Paper_Review.pdf [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].
- NHS Wales, 2019. *Housing and Health in Wales: The Need for Integrated Approaches*. Public Health Wales. Available at: <https://phw.nhs.wales> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].
- Wales Audit Office, 2019. *Managing Housing Maintenance and Repairs: A Review of Social Housing in Wales*. WAO. Available at: <https://www.audit.wales/publication/managing-housing-maintenance-and-repairs> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].
- Welsh Government, 2018. *Social Housing Supply and Demand: A Report on Current Trends*. Welsh Government. Available at: <https://gov.wales/social-housing-supply-and-demand> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].
- Welsh Government, 2020. *Affordable Housing Programme: Progress and Challenges*. Welsh Government. Available at: <https://gov.wales/affordable-housing-programme> [Accessed 28 Mar. 2025].

