

### **Housing and disabled people – Wales’ hidden crisis**

In December 2016, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (‘the Commission’) launched a formal inquiry on housing for disabled people.

The inquiry examined whether the availability of accessible and adaptable housing, and the support services associated with it, fulfilled disabled people’s rights to independent living. The inquiry covered Wales, England and Scotland. The inquiry explored the supply of accessible housing across all tenure types, allocation policies and practices, types of tenancy support, adaptations and planning and building regulations.

Housing is the cornerstone of independent living, yet many disabled people live in homes that do not meet their requirements. If disabled people are to have choice and control over their lives, then urgent action is required to make sure that future housing supply is accessible for everyone.

### **Summary of key findings of the Inquiry**

The shortage of housing in Wales has received increasing political and media attention, yet the effects of this crisis are not uniform; the impact of unsuitable housing on disabled people is particularly acute. Our inquiry uncovered four major challenges:

- Disabled People are demoralised and frustrated by the housing system.
- There is a chronic shortage of accessible homes
- Installing home adaptations involves unacceptable bureaucracy and delay
- Disabled people are not getting the support that they need to live independently

### **The toolkits for local authorities and disabled people**

Our interim findings suggested that local authorities’ current performance in allocations and tenancy support was variable. Consultation and consideration of disability issues during the formulation of strategic plans can be poor as well as the implementation of operational systems to deliver on the plans.

There were authorities that appeared to demonstrate effective and innovative practice in providing accessible housing and related support services to ensure disabled people’s right to independent living.

Additionally our interim findings identified the need for resources to inform and support disabled people and those close to them, in asserting their right to independent living, when securing a suitable home, as a homeowner and renter, tenancy support or adaptations.

Having identified this need for practical information and best practice guidance, we wanted to fill the gaps in existing information available and bring together information into toolkits.

Our key aims for creating these toolkits was:

- To encourage best practise in local authorities and in particular, more effective involvement of disabled people in development and scrutiny of policies and integrating disability and housing considerations firmly into strategic plans, policies and practices.
- To empower disabled people and their organisations to claim their rights to independent living, through access to more appropriate housing. To ensure disabled people understand their legal entitlements and know where to go to for support and what questions to ask.

The Commission was delighted to work with Tai Pawb and Access Design Solutions to develop the toolkit for Local Authorities in Wales. We hope it will be a helpful aid to Elected Members in their work to improve housing provision for disabled people in Wales.

The Local Authority toolkit has been developed in consultation, through interviews and focus groups, with Elected Members, the WLGA and Local Authority Housing Directors and Officers, Housing Associations and disabled people.

The Commission aims to launch the toolkit in mid-October 2018 at which point we would be pleased to share with members.

### **About the Equality and Human Rights Commission**

The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006. It operates independently to encourage equality and diversity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and protect and promote human rights. It contributes to making and keeping Britain a fair society in which everyone, regardless of background, has an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential. The Commission enforces equality legislation on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and is accredited by the UN as an 'A status' National Human Rights Institution. Find out more about the Commission's work at: [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com).

### **About Tai Pawb**

Tai Pawb's purpose is to inspire Wales to be a fairer place to live and we do this by promoting equality, social justice and human rights in housing in Wales. Our membership comprises of local authorities, all housing associations in Wales, housing and homelessness third sector organisations as well as equality and community organisations. We fulfil our purpose through contributing to national housing policy and supporting our members to embed equality into their policies and practices. Find out more about Tai Pawb's work at [www.taipawb.org](http://www.taipawb.org).