



Shaping Wales' future: using national indicators and milestones to measure our nation's progress

Written evidence submitted by Care & Repair Cymru: October 2021

Introduction to Care & Repair

1. Care & Repair Cymru is Wales' Older People's Housing Champion. Our aim is to ensure that all older people in Wales can live independently in safe, warm, accessible homes. We are the national body for Care & Repair in Wales, representing 13 independent agencies operating in every county offering a wide range of home improvement services, tailored to client's needs and local circumstances. Last year we supported nearly 44,000 older people across Wales, carried out over 36,371 adaptations in the home to help prevent trips and falls - more than double of 2019/20 output – whilst delivering £14.5 million's worth of repair and improvement work to improve the health, safety and warmth in people's homes¹.
2. Care & Repair works with older people in the private housing sector, owner occupiers and private tenants. A third of our clients live alone, a third have a disability and two thirds are over 74 years old.

Questions

Part 1: National Milestones

Q1: Do you agree with the 2 proposed national milestones for indicator No.8: Percentage of adults with qualifications at the different levels of the National Qualifications Framework?

Yes

No

a) If yes, but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestones?

Recently, we have seen a number of older, previously retired people, returning to work. This may be through choice and to remain social or out in their communities. It can,

¹ For more information, please see Care & Repair Cymru's 2019/20 Annual Report. Available at: https://www.careandrepair.org.uk/files/9716/0130/8166/Annual_Report_19.20_E...pdf

however, also be through choice to insufficient, static pension incomes that do not meet their basic needs.

Many of these older people face difficulties and discrimination when trying to get in to work, as there is a necessity now for digital based qualifications which many older people do not have. There are also few training options for older people to learn these skills (we call for a right to digital connectivity in our response to Question 12). 2050 is too far away for today's older people in Wales to have access to the training they need to have better access to the job market. As such we hope there will be interim targets focusing on helping those most in need first.

Additionally, this milestone works in tandem with creating more jobs in Wales that require Level 3 qualifications proportionally across the whole of Wales. If this is not the case, then there will be stagnation of the job market and mass exodus from areas of Wales that cannot offer these roles, which is currently happening across Wales².

b) If no, please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Q2: Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.22 Percentage of people in education, employment or training (in different age groups)?

Yes

No

a) If yes, but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?

Older people often face ageism and limited employment opportunities thanks to limited opportunities to upskill. For this reason, we believe this milestone should also include adult learning: many older people want to change career in their adulthood but find training and education programmes inaccessible to do so. Existing grants for older people to access further education³ are limited and do not always cover the full course costs.

Incorporating older adult learners into a national milestone would also help meet the aims of the Strategy for an Ageing Society, which is a cross-governmental approach to helping make Wales a fairer and more equal society for its older population.

b) If no, please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

² <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/18/you-have-to-go-where-the-work-is-why-young-people-are-leaving-wales>

³ <https://gov.wales/sixty-new-21-bursary-older-people-among-new-support-welsh-masters-students>

Q3: Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.21 Percentage of people in employment?

Yes

No

N/a

a) If yes, but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?

b) If no, please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Q4: Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for Indicator No.17 - Pay Equality – for gender, ethnicity and disability?

Yes

No

N/a

a) If yes, but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?

b) If no, please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Q5: Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.5 Percentage of children who have fewer than 2 healthy lifestyle behaviours?

Yes

No

N/a

Q6: Do you agree with the proposed national milestone for indicator No.14 Ecological Footprint of Wales?

Yes

No

N/a

a) If yes, but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?

b) If no, please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Q7: Do you agree with adopting the existing Net-Zero greenhouse gas emissions target as a national milestone?

Yes

No

a) If yes, but you would like some changes, what would you change about the proposed national milestone?

b) If no, please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

These targets should be more ambitious and set in stone Wales' ambition for net zero by 2030.

Q8: Do you agree with adopting the existing Cymraeg 2050 target of reaching a million Welsh speakers by 2050 as a national milestone?

Yes

No

b) If no, please provide evidence for what a more suitable national milestone for Wales would be.

Q9: How do you think we should communicate the national milestones and national well-being indicators with the people and communities of Wales?

Statements to the Senedd, national media, and local media would go a long way to ensuring that people are aware of these milestones and indicators, as well as the wider *Wellbeing of Future Generations Act*. Ensuring that these communications take place in newspapers, radio, other 'legacy' media, and not exclusively online will ensure that older people are able to know and voice their concerns about these milestones and indicators.

Q10: We are keen to gather evidence on the potential impacts and opportunities of achieving all the national milestones, and in particular, any dependencies between them. For example, there could be unintended consequences of making progress towards achieving a national milestone on another national milestone, or opportunities to deliver wider benefits between national milestones. Please use this space to provide evidence of these connections and interdependencies.

In our response to Questions 1 and 2 we outline the case for older people to also be included in qualification and employment targets. This is crucial to ensuring a fairer and more equal Wales that does not age discriminate and meet wider cross-governmental aims such as the Strategy for an Ageing Society. *The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act* must not just be about protecting future young people, but also

about protecting the wellbeing all generations throughout the life cycle, including future older generations.

Part 2: National Indicators

Mode of travel

Q11: Do you think an indicator on mode of travel should be added to the existing national indicator set?

Yes

No

a) If “Yes”, please provide the idea(s) or concept(s) you would like the indicator to capture?

b) If “No”, why would this not form an appropriate indicator?

c) Are you aware of a data source(s) that could be used to measure this indicator?

Minimum digital living standard

Q12: Do you think an indicator on a minimum digital living standard should be added to the existing indicator set?

Yes

No

a) If “Yes”, please provide the idea(s) or concept(s) you would like the indicator to capture?

Care & Repair Cymru has long been calling for a right to digital connectivity across Wales. We are pleased to see commitments from various Senedd committees to improve infrastructure across Wales, especially in rural areas, but a right to digital connectivity will prompt the urgent action required to ensure digital connectivity is available across Wales.

Having a good connection is just one part of the infrastructure puzzle. Wales also requires an infrastructure of knowledge. Encouraging older people to take up online connections that they already have will also be key to ensuring connected communities, and bridge the digital divide worsened by the pandemic. Third Sector or industry partners can facilitate older people in learning new digital skills in a safe, accessible environment. Additionally, if an older person requires a new device such as a laptop or smartphone to fully benefit from good digital infrastructure, local councils should be encouraged to explore the possibility of technology grants to encourage technology use amongst older populations in their locality.

Digital can also be used in innovative ways to improve wellbeing and independence at home. For example, Bridgend Care & Repair hosted our Alexa pilot, via Rockwool funding, to help support independent living at home. The project identified 30

vulnerable people, from Dementia services or from Hospital Discharges, with health conditions or recognised risks of falling. The outcome benefits for the clients were:

- 12 addressing loneliness & isolation
- 19 reminders/prompts for care needs
- 4 family 'drop-ins' for managing risks
- 5 supporting shopping
- 26 stimulation (music/talking books, etc.)

With this in mind, indicators should capture the following list:

- Coverage of fibre broadband and 4/5g across Wales, especially in rural communities;
- Percentage of people accessing digital connectivity, and regularly updating the *National Survey for Wales*' 'Internet use and digital skills'⁴ section to ensure targets are being met, especially among older people in Wales;
- Local authority and/or Welsh Government schemes for those in financial straits to access funding for essential technology items, such as laptops and phones. This will be especially important for those in rural areas and those in need of benefits, but who find themselves unable to engage with the online application process.
- How many people use digital at home to alleviate loneliness, improve independence and wellbeing.

Ensuring that everyone can engage with technology and wider digital infrastructure will be key to ensuring an equal Wales.

b) If “No”, why would this not form an appropriate indicator?

c) Are you aware of a data source(s) that could be used to measure this indicator?

Indicator 33 - Percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance

(measured using the Standard Assessment Procedure)

Q13: Do you think indicator 33 “percentage of dwellings with adequate energy performance” should be changed?

Yes

No

⁴ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-09/internet-use-and-digital-skills-national-survey-wales-april-2018-march-2019-207.pdf>

a) If “Yes” to question 13, please provide the idea(s) or concept(s) you would like the indicator to capture?

While energy efficiency is key to ensuring that Wales’ net zero targets are met, energy efficiency of properties should not be the final word in “good” housing. Part of SAP scoring is the fuel an occupant uses for “water and space heating, light and ventilation”. Thus, a person living in fuel poverty who is unable to heat their home or has to ration their fuel would likely have a better SAP score than someone who does not.

If SAP scoring is to be used, other criteria such as the level of thermal insulation and air leakage should be given priority over the amount of fuel used. Funding should be made available to properties that score low on these fronts to ensure a “fabric first” approach for these houses can be implemented, in turn reducing some financial pressure on the occupants and future decarbonisation and retrofit schemes.

b) If “No” to question 13, why would this not form an appropriate indicator?

c) Are you aware of a data source(s) that could be used to measure this indicator?

In Question 14 we outline a suggestion for a *Healthy Housing* indicator, and call for an updated and more frequent *Welsh Housing Conditions Survey* which could for a useful starting point to measure this indicator.

Additional gaps to the national indicator set

Q14: We would also welcome your views on any further gaps you feel the COVID-19 pandemic may have highlighted in the way we measure progress towards our well-being goals?

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Care & Repair caseworkers noted the significant deterioration of housing conditions, as well as the worsening health of older people who were unable to access services they needed.

Despite the inclusion of National Indicator 31, *Percentage of dwellings which are free from hazards*⁵, we believe that a new indicator breaking down typical siloes between health and housing should replace this. The *Welsh Housing Conditions Survey* has not been carried out since 2018 and thus does not account for housing deterioration during the Covid-19 lockdowns.

Additionally, the survey states that 18% of Welsh homes are still hazardous to its occupants⁶. In reality this means hundreds of thousands of homes in Wales are not safe to live in. These hazards adversely affect older people – 83% of whom live in their own home and therefore often have sole responsibility for its maintenance; and tend whom to live in older housing stock with some of the worst housing conditions. This

⁵ <https://gov.wales/wellbeing-wales-national-indicators>

⁶ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-02/181206-welsh-housing-conditions-survey-headline-report-2017-18-en_0.pdf (p. 10)

leaves older people prone to falls, trips, and other accidents, as well as a wide range of other physical and mental health conditions.

We believe that funding and policy siloes between health and housing should be broken down and doing so in this national indicator would be an easy, effective way to do so. Integrating these two policy areas in one indicator would highlight the link between hazardous housing and poor health, as well as give momentum to actually tackling the problems facing the condition of Welsh housing.

What is the name of the proposed indicator?

We would like to propose another indicator: ***Healthy Housing***.

What is the data source for this indicator?

*The Welsh Housing Conditions Survey*⁷ provides a useful starting point for this indicator.

Wales has the oldest housing stock in Europe⁸, meaning conditions are likely to deteriorate quicker, especially in houses owned by people who are financially unable to keep them well maintained. With the last iteration of the survey taking place in 2017/18, we recommend that that an updated Welsh Housing Conditions Survey is carried out more frequently, either annually or biennially to ensure that information and statistics on housing conditions are up to date.

Please provide an explanation for why this indicator best measures the well-being of Wales

Some reasoning for this indicator has already been explained above but creating policy objectives to improve the conditions of Welsh houses will ensure a healthier, more prosperous Wales. Care & Repair has identified two key areas in which that are directly affected by poor housing conditions. Additional logic is also explained in the final part of this question's response.

Firstly, there is irrefutable evidence which shows the link between hazards in the home and poor mental and physical health, and many older people live in unfit housing unsuitable for their needs. We believe that everyone in Wales should be able to live in safe, secure housing which is free from hazards. This is equally true for older owner-occupiers, private renters, and those in social housing. However, the Welsh Housing Condition survey conducted in 2017-2018 revealed that 18% of homes have Category 1 hazards present⁹. These hazards can lead to numerous physical health issues such as falls, respiratory illness, and increased risk of heart attacks or strokes, as well as

⁷ <https://gov.wales/welsh-housing-conditions-survey>

⁸ https://files.bregroup.com/bretrust/The-Housing-Stock-of-the-United-Kingdom_Report_BRE-Trust.pdf (p.3)

⁹ https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-02/181206-welsh-housing-conditions-survey-headline-report-2017-18-en_0.pdf (p. 10)

mental health issues; all of which could be prevented by simple repairs¹⁰. Fixing these issues and thus bringing Welsh housing to an acceptable standard would save the NHS around £95million per year¹¹ as well as preserve properties for future owners for years to come.

Our *Hospital to a Healthier Home* service¹² put the spotlight on the link between health and housing. When an older person has a fall at home, it is more likely to result in their hospitalisation than other age groups. Falls at home among older people cost the NHS £2.6billion per year¹³. Moreover, there is potential for 43% of hospital beds to be occupied by an older patient who has fallen in any given month, putting preventable strain on NHS services when repairing a hazard at their property would mean they were less likely to fall. In addition to this, cold, damp homes increase circulatory, respiratory, and cardiovascular diseases which could have been prevented had the hazards been repaired. Our *Hospital to a Healthier Home* service found that when repairs were carried out on older patients' homes, there was a reduction of 38% in admissions of people over 60 years old to hospital, and a 26% reduction in falls from properties that Care & Repair agencies repaired or adapted.

Secondly, bringing Welsh housing up to an acceptable standard and removing hazards in homes should also include ensuring that a house is free from drafts, leaks, and otherwise generally energy efficient. With Welsh housing accounting for 21% of Wales' emissions¹⁴, ensuring that housing is energy efficient will be key to ensuring that Welsh Government's net zero targets are met. Ensuring Welsh houses are free from drafts, leaks, and taking other energy efficiency measures will also ensure that older people in fuel poverty will be able to heat their homes better without wasting energy. Caroline Lucas MP recently observed that installing new heating systems into homes "without first insulating a home is like buying a teapot with cracks in it"¹⁵. Our *70+ Cymru* scheme helps older people in fuel poverty to heat their homes to a minimum comfort level through the Welsh Government's NEST scheme, but also takes a "fabric first, whole house approach" which ensures the property is properly insulated before any new heating system is installed. If a home is properly insulated and can be heated without energy escaping, people rationing fuel or avoiding its use entirely will have some immediate respite from cold homes and have to spend less money on heating their inefficient homes.

¹⁰ <https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Home-and-dry-report.pdf> (p. 4, p. 13)

¹¹ https://files.bregroup.com/bretrust/The-Cost-of-Poor-Housing_Report_BRE-Trust_English.pdf

¹²

[https://www.careandrepair.org.uk/files/2715/6578/0045/Hospital to a Healthier Home Winter Pressures Pilot Evaluation E.pdf](https://www.careandrepair.org.uk/files/2715/6578/0045/Hospital_to_a_Healthier_Home_Winter_Pressures_Pilot_Evaluation_E.pdf)

¹³ https://www.careandrepair.org.uk/files/2116/0750/8185/CRC_2021_Manifesto_en.pdf (p. 7)

¹⁴ <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-07/decarbonising-welsh-homes-stage-1-report.pdf> (p. 6)

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/CarolineLucas/status/1450413948440915974>

Rolling out this “fabric first” approach across the housing sector as standard will not only ensure that houses are more energy efficient for their current occupants, but also ensure that any future decarbonisation and retrofit schemes will be effective and alleviate some future budget pressures. In turn, this will ensure that the benefits of renewable energy, including financial savings and warmer homes, are passed on to older owner/occupiers and private tenants throughout Wales.

In summary, keeping Welsh houses in good repair and ensuring the health of the housing itself will not only ensure that the property remains in good condition for the duration of the occupiers’ time there, allowing them to live independently and in good health, but also to ensure that the property is available and safe for future owners or tenants. There will also be benefits for the energy efficiency of properties, positively affecting future generations and climate goals.

Which well-being goals does the indicator directly impact on?

This indicator will affect the following wellbeing goals:

- **A prosperous Wales:** ensuring that housing in Wales is brought up to a healthier standard will also ensure that housing is ecologically sound. Repairing the fabric of the house first ensures that any future retrofitting and decarbonisation schemes have a strong foundation to build on.

There may also be opportunities to increase jobs in the construction sector.

- **A More Equal Wales:** The most vulnerable in society are more likely to have poor housing standards and be unable to make any repairs to their properties due to financial constraints. This leads to more of these occupants suffering from fuel poverty and poor health due to the poor standard of their homes. If funding were made available to ensure these hazards can be fixed, more people would have access to decent housing and better health.
- **A Healthier Wales:** as aforementioned, the link between good housing and good health is well-known and evidenced.
- **A Globally Responsible Wales:** by fixing housing hazards and making properties across Wales more energy efficient, Welsh housing will have a good footing to build on when it comes to retrofitting and decarbonising homes as aforementioned.

Q15: We would like to know your views on the effects that this policy would have on the Welsh language, specifically on opportunities for people to use Welsh and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than English.

We believe that the *Shaping Wales’ Future* policy will have a largely positive effect on the Welsh language. Encouraging and supporting the inclusion of Welsh in schools and day-to-day life will ensure the longevity of the Welsh language.

Many older Welsh speakers are currently unable to access the services they need in their preferred language, especially in more rural communities, and the number of older

Welsh speakers is set to increase significantly by 2050. Ensuring that measures are implemented now to better encourage and integrate the use of Welsh language is integral to ensuring that these older people are able to access the services they need in the future, and now.

Q16: Please also explain how you believe the proposed policy could be formulated or changed so as to have positive effects or increased positive effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language, and no adverse effects on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.

N/A

Q17: We have asked a number of specific questions. If you have any related issues which we have not specifically addressed, please use this space to report them:

As the older people's housing champion in Wales, we believe the current Wave 1 targets, especially those concerning housing, focus too much on specific energy efficiency measures. We know that Wales' goals for Net Zero will not be met without the decarbonisation of the Welsh Housing Stock. There should, however, be more of a focus on improving wider housing conditions, which in turn can help tackle other interlinked indicators and milestones around health and net-zero targets. Our proposals for a new *Healthy Housing* indicator will go a long way to ensuring the longevity of properties and the health of their occupants, at the same time as improving the energy efficiency of the Welsh housing stock.

Care & Repair agencies carried out £14.5million worth of repairs and improvement work in 2020/21, and helped a total of 43,913 people, 32% of whom lived alone¹⁶. This highlights the lack of support available for these people, and with 83% of older people living in their own homes, and nearly 1 in 5 older people living in so-called 'pensioner poverty' in Wales, they turn to us due to a lack of support. However, Care & Repair caseworkers note that there is millions of pounds' worth of essential repairs that we are unable to carry out every year due to a lack of funding. As such, we encourage a continued relationship with Welsh Government in the future, and for additional funding to be made available to ensure that Wales' Wellbeing goals are met.

¹⁶ Care & Repair Cymru Annual Report 2020/21, Forthcoming

Responses to consultations may be made public. To keep your response anonymous (including email addresses) tick the box.

Keep my response anonymous

Email completed form to: ShapingWalesFuture@gov.wales

Deadline: midnight 26 October 2021