



Make sure everyone is counted

The most radical reforms to social housing proposed for more than a generation have been published in a white paper called "Local Decisions: a fairer future for social housing"

Details at:

www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/socialhousingreform

The biggest proposed changes are to tenure e.g. most new social tenancies from 2011 will be flexible and fixed term. Also proposed are new "affordable rents" to replace the current council and housing association rents. Landlords including Councils and Housing Associations are to charge up to 80% of local market rents. Another proposal is to reduce local authority duties toward statutorily homeless people.

Questions in the consultation include:

- Is two years an appropriate minimum fixed term for a general needs social tenancy?
- What opportunities as a tenant or resident would you expect to have to influence the local authority's qualification criteria?

The consultation ended 17th January. Housing Justice put together a draft response. If you would like to comment or see their response please email Alastair Murray at a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk

Most of us become aware of homelessness by seeing rough sleepers in towns or cities. Rough sleepers are the tip of the iceberg of homelessness. Those who work in the field of housing and social need agree that a broader definition of homelessness is more meaningful - the homeless are 'people who are affected by lack of a stable home to live in'. This includes the 'hidden homeless': sofa surfers - people who are living temporarily with family or friends; squatters; and people living in overcrowded, inadequate housing. Overcrowding is suffered by two main groups:

- Families who need three-bedroomed socially rented housing, most of which has been sold into the market.
- Refugees and people seeking asylum, for whom housing is a huge problem, even if or when their claim is accepted, and are often crammed into the private rented sector.

Crisis recently estimated the figure of hidden homeless to be 400,000 and rising.

This year the 30th January is Homelessness Sunday and the 6th February is Poverty Action Sunday. The theme is 'Who Counts?' Census day is 27th March 2011.



The 2011 census will try to list all of the people who live in the country - but chances are there are many it won't include - such as the 'hidden homeless' and destitute asylum-seekers.

Who counts in society? Who does the counting?

Who decides who is included and who is excluded?

Who has a voice? Whom do we value and why?

Who counts in God's eyes?

All the resources are now available free from the Action Week website - www.actionweek.org.uk/html/home.html - including a worship guide to help plan a special service or prayer meeting, an events guide, posters, and lots of other useful material.

Other useful links are

Ekklesia - www.ekklesia.co.uk - a beliefs and values think-tank providing briefing, research, commentary and analysis of culture religion and politics and

Homeless UK -

www.homelessuk.org - providing practical help and advice.

INTERCESSIONS FOR THE HOMELESS AND POLICY MAKERS

We pray for the Church. May her prophetic voice grow stronger, speaking against the injustice of homelessness. May all the people of God cry with one voice, 'An end to homelessness is possible'.

We pray for people who are homeless in our own area and throughout the world. We pray that the provision of a safe place to call home may be a priority for all governments and all people. We pray for all people experiencing homelessness.

We pray for an end to their situation of homelessness and for increased protection while they remain homeless. We pray also for an increase in affordable housing and a decrease in broken homes.

We pray for politicians and decision-makers. May they be wise and just with the policies they create and the decisions they make. May they be guided by the will of God and God's care for the poor and marginalised.

We pray for architects, builders and planners. We give thanks for their creativity and vision. We pray that they plan, design and build communities with homes for all.





Old ...

Projected population figures from the Welsh Assembly Government Directorate suggest that the increasing proportion of older people in the total population will continue well into the future. From a current figure of 24%, by 2012 it is estimated that 26% of the population will be aged 60 or over, with this increasing further to 28% and 32% by 2020 and 2030 respectively. This is an increase from approximately 719,000 people in 2007 to 789,000 in 2012, 890,000 in 2020 and over a million - 1,044,000 - in 2030. Looking at those aged 85 or more, compared to 2% of the population currently, this age group is forecast to grow to 3% and 5% by 2020 and 2030 respectively; an increase from approximately 70,000 people in 2007 to 98,000 in 2020 and 150,000 in 2030. In marked contrast to these figures the number of people aged under 20 is forecast to decrease from approximately 24% of the total population in 2007 to 22% of the total population) in 2020.

A recent All-Wales Symposium focused on the factors which reduce the wellbeing of older people and new ways of transforming their welfare and health, not least through better quality provision. Full details may be found on the Church in Wales website.

"Giving dignity to the elderly ... is inseparable from recognising the dignity of human beings as such. So the challenge we face ... is about identifying the underlying assumptions that keep elderly people marginal."

"In most traditional societies, the term 'elder' is a title of honour - as it is in the Christian Church, where the English word 'priest' is an adaptation of the Greek for 'elder'. A person who has been released from the obligation to justify their existence is one who can give a perspective on life for those ... who are in the middle of the struggle; their presence ought to be seen as a gift."

Archbishop Rowan Williams

... And Young

The Enterprise and Learning Committee of the National Assembly for Wales has recently released a report entitled "Young people not in education, employment or training". The report states that an estimated 1 in 5 young people between 19-25 year of age and 68,800 young people aged between 16 and 24 years of age are young people NEETs. Long term NEETs will very likely lead to



disengagement, a feeling of hopelessness and low aspiration. The End Child Poverty Network Cymru released a Fairness Test to mark the International Eradication of Poverty Day at the end of last year. Copies were sent to WAG Ministers and AMs to attempt to ensure that the cuts which were announced last November will not lead to more unfairness towards vulnerable families.

On a more positive note the Equality Act came into existence on at the end of last year - details at www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010.aspx

Children and Poverty

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation recently published forecasts, calculated for it by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS), for the numbers of people whose incomes would put them below the poverty line. These are national (UK) forecasts. The official definition of poverty is used - households with an income that is less than 60% of average household income. Poverty levels are examined over the three year period 2010/11 to 2013/14. Figures have been calculated for children and for working age adults.

These forecasts take account of plans for tax and benefit changes - those introduced by both the current Government and by the previous one. They therefore include recent announcements in the Spending Review. They do not, however, include proposals for a Universal Credit system to be introduced at a later date. Over the three year period average incomes are expected to remain at around the same level, initially falling then rising back up again.

In headline terms, between 2010/11 and 2013/14 poverty amongst children and amongst working age adults is forecast to rise. In terms of relative poverty the increase is expected to be 800,000 and in terms of absolute poverty the increase is expected to be 900,000.

These figures mask some significant differences. One group which comes off particularly badly is adults without children, some 400,000 of whom are added to those living in relative poverty by 2013/14. This continues a trend, since poverty also grew amongst this group from 2008/09 to 2010/11. It is a group which has not benefited from the up-rating of child tax credits.

Relative poverty among children is forecast to be unchanged for the next two years, but then to rise by 200,000 in the final year of the forecasting period.

Faith in Families

Swansea and Brecon
Diocesan Board for Social Responsibility,
7 Talfan Road, Bonymaen,
Swansea, SA1 7HA
Tel: 01792 644106
alanjevons.bsr@swanseabrecon.org.uk