

TAKE NOTICE!

#3
DECEMBER 2023

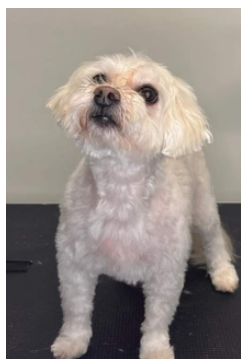
Written by and for people who have experienced homelessness, or know what it's like to live in unsafe, unaffordable, unsuitable housing. Together we can make a real difference to the housing emergency in Wales.



Don't give up! Help is out there by Emma-Jane Noble, Take Notice Member

This Christmas, I will be in my forever home.

I have a secure housing association tenure in a quiet area that suits my family and there is enough space for all of us as well as room for our two dogs!



"It's all I need and it's even more than I hoped for."

"We've fallen really lucky, but it was a difficult journey"

As soon as I moved into our last property in April 2022 I knew there was something wrong, but we needed somewhere to live and there aren't many options in our area. It was costing over £400 a month to heat and it still wasn't warm, you could feel the draft coming from the doors, the windows and even the skirting boards in some areas. We had a damp meter from when we had a caravan years ago and the readings varied from 28% to 38% across the house. Every house has moisture, but any reading over 16% needs attention. Our private landlord didn't want to know - we were one of 150 tenants and a thorn in his side.

Things came to a head for me when my husband had Covid in January 2023. He was in bed and surrounded by patches of black mould and soaking wet walls. I phoned the council and they suggested getting in touch with Environmental Health which I did, and they contacted the landlord. 32 days later the landlord called me wanting to know why I'd reported him... I simply told him that our health was deteriorating and his property was getting worse and worse.

Eventually, my landlord gave me an eviction notice saying that he needed to take the property back to carry out the repairs. Because I had been served my notice, I could start bidding on properties in the area.

I also got in touch with Shelter Cymru and explained my situation to them. All I could do now was bid and hope.

Within 3 weeks I got offered a property. I didn't even see it, but I accepted it because it couldn't be any worse than where I was. I couldn't help thinking that any house provided by the council or a housing association would be 100 times better than private sector.

I know from speaking to other people that I've been incredibly lucky - this house is an absolute dream and this is going to be an amazing Christmas.

As difficult as the last 18 months have been, I'm so glad I took on the fight. It makes me really happy to know that no one is in my previous property this year and that anyone who moves into it in the future will not experience what we went through.

I hope that if you are reading this and living in a house which isn't fit for human habitation, you get in touch with your council and organisations like Shelter Cymru and Environmental Health. We have more rights now than ever before and it's so important that people stand up for them.

It doesn't matter whether we are fit, have disabilities, live alone, have children, have pets or what age we are, we all deserve to be treated with respect and we have the right to live somewhere clean, safe, warm and secure.

This guy agrees!



Projects Corner

Alongside our advice services, Shelter Cymru runs local projects all over Wales which strive to end the housing emergency in different ways.

MY HOME DENBIGHSHIRE

The aim of My Home Denbighshire is to stop homelessness before it even starts. There are so many reasons why people face housing difficulties. This project provides tailored support to individuals and families facing challenges such as financial concerns, disrepair, landlord disputes and relationship breakdown. Funded by Denbighshire Council and working with Clwyd Alyn, the team have helped over 250 people in the last year tackle problems before they are at risk of losing their homes.

Prevention is always better than cure!

For more information, please go to our [web page](#).



Ask the Trainers!

Like so many things, the housing sector is FULL of jargon. Shelter Cymru's training department tries to help us all make sense of it...

HAVE SUCCESSION RULES CHANGED?

Thank you for the question. The answer is YES and it's quite a big deal.

People who live in a council or housing association home can apply to take over the occupation contract if the contract holder dies - this is called 'succession'. Taking over a contract is called 'succeeding'.

It used to be that a contract could only be succeeded once e.g. from the deceased contract holder to partner or relative. Under the Renting Homes (Wales) Act, occupation contracts can now be succeeded TWICE.

It's not always a simple process or the best option for people and there are very strict eligibility criteria, but it's a really important thing to know. Worrying about losing your home at a time of loss and grief can add to the stress and uncertainty, so please get advice.

For more information, please visit our [webpage](#).

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR OUR TRAINERS? If you do, please email getinvolved@sheltercymru.org.uk and we'll ask the trainers!



THANK YOU!

to the customers and staff at Dunelm in Wrexham

As part of Dunelm's **Delivery Joy at Christmas** Campaign, Shelter Cymru Staff were asked to request gifts for the people they support who might be struggling this Christmas.

A large Christmas tree covered in gift tags was put up at the front of the store.

Each gift tag represented a person and provided information about their interests and needs. Customers removed a gift tag, bought a gift to match and returned it to the store to be distributed.

People's generosity has been incredible and the whole process has been heart-warming and incredibly appreciated by all involved.

Our partners at Dunelm said:

"It is such a joy to see the people's faces when we deliver the gifts to them"

Almost 3,500 children in Wales will wake up homeless this Christmas.

It's a heartbreaking, but true statistic.

With thousands of people on the brink of poverty and no sign of the cost of living crisis coming to an end, homelessness is a reality that many families are facing this winter.

It doesn't have to be this way. Shelter Cymru helps 18,000 people a year who are either experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Your donation, no matter the size, means that we can be there for families when they need us most, helping people to find a permanent place to call home.

Home is everything. Please help us protect it.

Donate today at sheltercymru.org.uk/donate

Thank you to our volunteers for sharing their stories with us in this campaign.

If you want to share your story, please get in touch and help us tell the truth about homelessness.

ARE YOU READY TO SHOUT?

Your voice matters

by **Amanda Lawrence**, Take Notice Member



In November, tenants, housing associations, councils and government officials gathered at the annual TPAS Cymru conference, an opportunity to mix, debate, and learn.

It is energetic, loud and fun. It is always informative, and some hard topics are covered, along with opportunities to learn about the latest housing news, future technologies, and government plans.

I'm a very involved tenant voice within social housing and I'm proud of it. I am a very lucky person, I have a great home, fab landlord and my family are safe and warm. But it wasn't always that way.

I've had challenging times and thanks to others supporting me and mine, we were able to come through them, and remain in our home.

The main reason I'm active as a tenant is because I want things to change, I want to see things get better and I hate the idea that my adult children and future generations are facing even harder times. It should be that they have a brighter future. Instead it feels like their path to a safe home is tougher than ever.

Everyone is so close to homelessness, without realising it. We don't appreciate that the slightest change in life can trigger the route to homelessness.

When I use my voice, I know I don't speak for everyone, but I try to make sure that everyone gets the chance to be heard. I no longer work, so I have a lot of time to give, but it's important that people know that just a few minutes of their time can be beneficial and that it is always valued.

It's vital that people with lived experience of a situation or a system are involved at all levels of decision making. Organisations such as Shelter Cymru and TPAS Cymru want us involved and know how important our views are. Opportunities exist everywhere.

My takeaway is simple, we need our lived experiences of the worst, to help fight for changes to make things better in the future. We need to keep being heard, to constantly push for change and do what we can. Sometimes I find myself shouting, but there is a lot to shout about.

Are you ready to shout too?

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Email getinvolved@sheltercymru.org.uk if you are interested in any of the following:

25 January

Take Notice Team Meeting

Join us in North Wales for:

- work on Shelter Cymru's 'the right to request a review' leaflet
- free training - Friends of Shelter Cymru (tbc)

5 February

Newsletter Content Deadline

If you have ideas or content for the March edition of this newsletter, please let us know by February 5

28 and 29 February

Focus Group: Promotion and Visibility

What can we do to encourage people to get in touch and use our services? (online)

2 March

Bucket Collection: Parc Erias, Colwyn Bay
RGC v Neath

CONGRATULATIONS LLONGYFARCHIADAU

A huge congratulations from all of us to Take Notice member, **Tina Williams**. After possibly the worst 12 months of her life, Tina has recently passed her Masters degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice WITH A DISTINCTION!

When Tina shared her amazing news, she was keen to point out that she couldn't have done it without the support and understanding of her lecturers and her family.

GET INVOLVED WITH SHELTER CYMRU AND JOIN THE FIGHT FOR HOME

- Join Take Notice to work with local authorities to help them understand how to improve their housing services.
- Our Fundraising team organise regular events across Wales to help us raise funds and spread the word about our fight for home. Why not join us?
- We are recruiting Peer Researchers to speak to staff, service users and the public to better understand the barriers to housing and inform our campaign work.
- We run regular focus groups with people who have used Shelter Cymru services to help us continually improve what we do. We are looking for participants and facilitators to help to run these sessions.
- We need your help to review our Shelter Cymru Advice Online webpages to make them as accessible, useful and informative as possible.

To find out more, email getinvolved@sheltercymru.org.uk