

KNOW THE FACTS

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

How to use these factsheets



These factsheets explain some of the frequently asked questions about immigration and social housing in Wales

Recently, there has been a trend in linking immigration to social housing shortages. Sometimes this is because of a lack of knowledge or access to figures. In other cases, however, it is a deliberate attempt to scapegoat immigrants. It is important to acknowledge this distinction when engaging or responding.



These factsheets are useful for all staff at housing associations in Wales

Senior leadership will be able to use these factsheets to dispel misinformation from the top down. Communications teams will be able to use them to challenge disinformation online. Frontline staff will be able to draw on the factsheets to respond to queries in the course of their daily duties.



Limitations of factsheets

Some opinions on immigration are deeply entrenched, and facts alone are unlikely to change perceptions. Whilst they may contribute over the long term, integration and community cohesion projects are often more effective.

KNOW THE FACTS #1

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

Who is actually eligible for social housing?



Only people with a **legal right** to live in the UK are eligible for social housing.

As such, the only migrants who can access social housing are migrants who have come through regular routes, such as for work, or those who the Home Office have concluded have a right to live in the UK after fleeing persecution or war. Others don't.



A person must have a **local connection** to their local authority area to be eligible for social housing.

Someone must have a local connection to their local authority area to be eligible for social housing. Local connection is created by time lived in the area, employment, or close family ties.



Only 6.6% of people living in social housing in Wales in 2021 had a non-UK passport.

This 6.6% figure represented a 2% increase from the previous 2011 figure for England and Wales (2021 and 2011 UK Census)

No matter where they are from, if someone has a legal right to access social housing, it is important that they can follow the right procedures, **the same as everyone else in Wales**, to find a home.

KNOW THE FACTS #2

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

Do refugees get priority over local people?



Everyone in Wales, regardless of where they originally come from, is subject to the **same social housing allocation rules**.

Although these may seem random at times, there is logic behind them.



Priority need is a tool Welsh local authorities use to house and support people at a **greater risk**.

When accessing social housing and homelessness support, some people are given priority. For example, this would include victims of domestic abuse, families with children, or severely disabled people. This does not mean people without priority need will not be supported by a local authority, just that quicker, emergency solutions will be sought for those in priority need.

KNOW THE FACTS #2

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

Do refugees get priority over local people?



Some refugees or migrants will be given priority need, but **not** because they are not from Wales.

It will be because they meet the priority need condition, for example, they may be a single mother with young children.



Unfortunately, **even those with priority need** are not assigned accommodation immediately and still face **long waits**.

This is because local authorities are under so much pressure with so many people need housing support. In essence, some local authorities no longer operate on a priority need basis, and assume that everyone is priority need.

KNOW THE FACTS #3

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

What support do migrants get?



It depends. Migrant is a catch-all term.

There isn't a simple singular migrant demographic. Different types of migration will impact what rights individuals have and the support they are entitled to.



Asylum seekers and refugees made up around **12%** of all immigrants to the UK in 2024.

The vast majority of people who come to the UK do so alongside their families to study or to work in sectors such as, health and social care, engineering and construction, or technology and IT.



Seeking asylum from persecution is an **international human right**.

Asylum seekers are people who have sought refuge in the UK after entering the country through an irregular route, such as a Channel small boat crossing, or who have claimed asylum after entering the UK through a regular route.

KNOW THE FACTS #3

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

What support do migrants get?



The **Home Office decides** if a person seeking asylum has a right to remain in the UK or if they must return to their country of origin.

In 2024, 47% of all asylum cases were granted at initial decision, meaning the Home Office had no doubt that that person had a right to asylum and could remain in the UK.



Asylum seekers have **no say** on the type or location of the accommodation they are given.

Whilst the Home Office is making a decision on whether someone has a right to remain or not, most asylum seekers are housed and given a subsistence by the Home Office. This is because the majority of asylum seekers do not have the right to work and cannot claim benefits.



Asylum accommodation is **provided by the Home Office**

This is done via their contractors (Clearsprings Ready Homes in Wales), not local authorities or housing associations.

KNOW THE FACTS #3

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

What support do migrants get?



Asylum seekers currently receive **£9.95 per week** if the accommodation they are provided serves food or **£49.18** if not.

This payment is to cover all basic essentials. For comparison, the average UK expenditure on food alone is £44 per week and the average UK household weekly expenditure is £663.



Once the Home Office grants someone status, i.e. the right to live in the UK, the person has **28 or 56 days** to leave their Home Office accommodation and find somewhere to live.

At this point, they have the same rights and are subject to the same housing rules as everyone else. Yet, 28 or 56 days is often not enough time to find new housing.



Some migrants are **not allowed to claim benefits** and are **ineligible for social housing** and homelessness support.

This is called “No Recourse to Public Funds” and is because of their visa conditions.

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KNOW THE FACTS #4

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

What about the housing crisis?

✔ Put simply, successive UK and Welsh governments have **failed to build enough homes** to house everyone in Wales.

✔ There are currently **94,000 households** waiting for a council house in Wales, which equates to around **150,000 people**.

There are also nearly 12,000 households in temporary accommodation across Wales waiting for a permanent, long-term home.

✔ Local authorities **stopped building council homes** in the mid-1980s and only really began building again in 2017.

Even so, the pace of building and number of new homes is too low.

KNOW THE FACTS #4

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

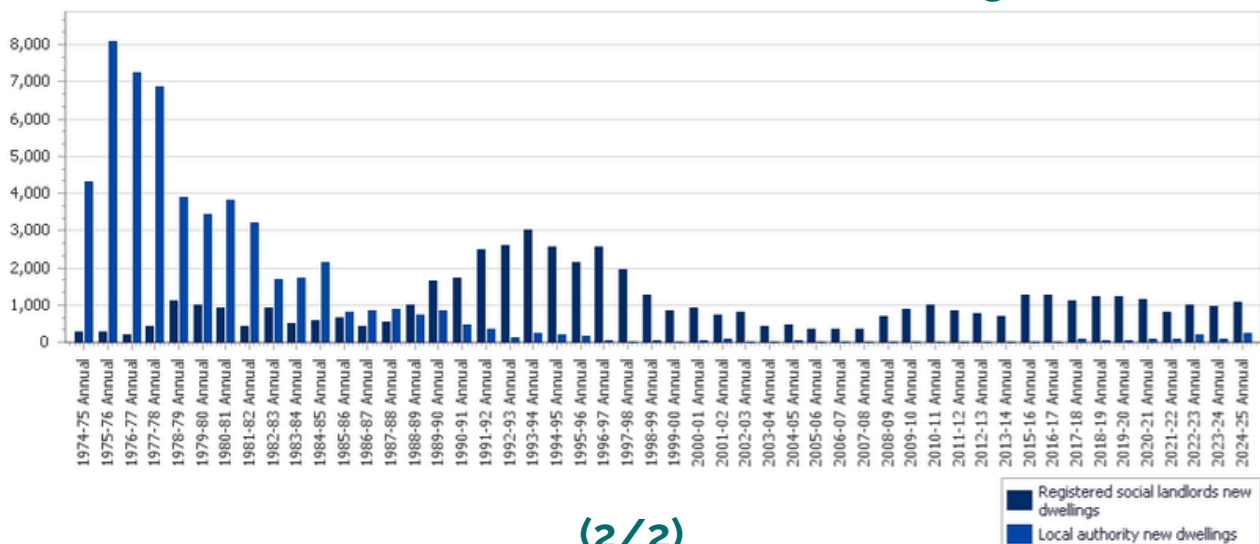
What about the housing crisis?

✓ Housing associations built new stock in the 1990s and have **built steadily ever since**.

✓ Even if the Welsh Government were meeting the targets they set for house building, the reality is that **Wales needs many more houses** to house everyone who needs a home.

In 2021, the Welsh Government committed to building 20,000 new affordable homes within five years. In 2026, it looks like the Welsh Government may fall just short of this target. The Senedd's Local Government and Housing Committee estimates we need 60,000 new affordable homes.

New dwellings since 1974



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KNOW THE RESOURCES

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

Where can I go for accurate information?



Social housing eligibility rules for renters in Wales

The Tenant Rights blog breaks down social housing eligibility rules for renters in Wales and offer many other resources for want to be social housing tenants.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



Local connection

Shelter Cymru explain what counts as local connection and how it applies to housing and homelessness in Wales.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



Housing in Wales (Census 2021)

Census 2021 data on all things housing in Wales.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



Housing, England and Wales: Census 2021

Census 2021 data on all things housing in England and Wales.

[Click the link to find out more](#)

KNOW THE RESOURCES

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

Where can I go for accurate information?



Ethnicity facts and figures - Social housing lettings

Breakdowns of all social housing figures from the Census 2021 from England and Wales broken down by ethnicity.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



Priority Need

Shelter Cymru explain what counts as priority need and how it applies to housing and homelessness in Wales.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



Social housing waiting lists

Powerful research from Shelter Cymru highlighting the demand for social housing in Wales.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



The Truth About Asylum

Handy explainer from the Refugee Council on the UK asylum system.

[Click the link to find out more](#)

KNOW THE RESOURCES

Immigration and Social Housing in Wales

Where can I go for accurate information?



Asylum seekers and refugees

A detailed explainer from a legal perspective on the different rights asylum seekers and refugees have.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



How many people claim asylum in the UK?

Official Home Office data on the most recent asylum claim figures with links to further resources and data sets and explainers.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



Immigration to the UK

Official Home Office data on the most recent immigration figures with links to further resources and data sets and explainers.

[Click the link to find out more](#)



House building in Wales

Welsh Government house-building figures

[Click the link to find out more](#)

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