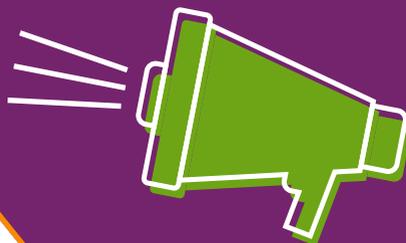


Cymorth Cymru



Arbenigwyr trwy Brofiad

Experts by Experience



Introduction

The Experts by Experience project has been established to empower people with experience of homelessness and housing support services to influence policy and practice across Wales. This project is coordinated by **Cymorth Cymru**, the representative body for providers of homelessness, housing and support services in Wales.

The project has four main objectives:

- To provide opportunities for people with lived experience of homelessness and housing-related support services to share their views and experiences.
- To ensure that people's views and experiences are communicated to service providers and decision makers across Wales.
- To provide opportunities for people with lived experience to gain confidence, skills and knowledge that will help them to make their views heard and influence decision makers in the future.
- To encourage support providers to involve people with lived experience in decisions about their services.

What do we mean by 'Experts by Experience'?

In the context of this project, Experts by Experience are people who have experience of homelessness or experience of using housing-related support services. We believe they are experts in their own experiences and provide invaluable insight and expertise about how we should develop policy and services in Wales.

How can you stay in touch with the project?

Experts by Experience website: We've created a dedicated **website** where people can find out more about the project, how to take part, what opportunities and events are upcoming, and to read our latest reports.

Mailing list: Participants can also sign up to our **mailing list** to stay up to date on the project.



Background

Who is Cymorth Cymru?

Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for providers of homelessness, housing and support services in Wales. We act as the voice of the sector, influencing the development and implementation of policy, legislation and practice that affects our members and the people they support.

We are committed to working with people who use services, our members and partners to effect change. We believe that together, we can have a greater impact on people's lives.

We want to be part of a social movement that ends homelessness and creates a Wales where everyone can live safely and independently in their own homes and thrive in their communities.

Why was the project developed?

At Cymorth we really value the views of people with lived experience and we are passionate about giving people a platform to make their voices heard.

In 2020 we met with approximately 80 people with lived experience and asked them how they thought we should end homelessness in Wales. The **resulting report** was submitted to the Welsh Government's Homelessness Action Group and the Minister for Housing and Local Government.

The Homelessness Action Group subsequently recommended that the Welsh Government should continue to provide opportunities for people with lived experience to influence policy – and the Minister agreed. As a result, we developed the proposal for this project.

How is the project funded?

The project is funded by the **Oak Foundation** and the Welsh Government.

Will participants or support workers be able to give feedback?

Of course. This is a collaborative project between people with lived experience of homelessness, our members and Cymorth Cymru. We will always be open to receiving feedback from Experts by Experience and there will be opportunities for participants to feed back on how the events have gone and what we could do to improve. We also welcome any comments from support workers about how to engage with the people they support.



Opportunities

We want to empower people by giving them opportunities to gain confidence, build their skills and influence policy and practice. We know that people will want to engage with the project in different ways, so we will provide a variety of opportunities for participation. We also know that life can change at any moment, so people can get involved whenever and however suits them.

These opportunities will be structured around two main themes:

Make Your Voice Heard

One of the key aims of this project aims to provide opportunities for people with experience of homelessness and housing-related support services to make their voices heard and influence policy and practice.

This will include:

- Electronic surveys
- Online and in-person discussions
- Focus groups
- Meetings with Welsh Government officials
- Meetings with Members of the Welsh Parliament
- Membership of the Welsh Government Ending Homelessness National Advisory Board
- Cymorth Experts Panel

Experts Academi

Another of the key aims of this project is to provide opportunities for people with lived experience to gain confidence, skills and knowledge that will help them to make their views heard and influence decision makers in the future.

This will include:

- Training opportunities
- Tours of the Welsh Parliament
- Workshops with activist organisations
- Talks with inspirational or influential people

Sign up to our newsletter to receive information about all of the upcoming opportunities.



Recognising and rewarding involvement

We really value the time and expertise that people will be giving to this project and want to ensure that we recognise and reward people for their contributions.

Why we reward Experts by Experience

We are keen to remunerate people to show that we value their time and expertise. However, one of our key considerations has been to ensure that we do not have a negative impact on people's finances if they are in receipt of welfare benefits.

We've spoken to experts from organisations that advise people on welfare issues and run similar projects involving people with lived experience, to try and ensure that we make the right decision. Based on our research, we believe that the best approach is to provide vouchers to people who give their time and expertise. We will offer a range of different vouchers, so that people have choice about where and how they want to spend them.

We will provide different levels of remuneration according to type of engagement or activity the person is involved in. For example, people who sit on the Housing Support National Advisory Board or on our Experts Panel, will be offered vouchers equivalent to the Real Living Wage. For other activities, such as participating in short surveys, we will enter people into a prize draw to win a voucher.

Other ways of recognising involvement

We will recognise participation in other ways, such as providing certificates for participants, and giving people the option to be named in reports they have contributed to. Please let us know if you have any other ideas about how we can recognise people's involvement.

What role will Cymorth play?

We're here to facilitate discussions. We'll bring with us our knowledge of current Welsh Government strategies and plans and we'll create opportunity for participants to discuss topics of their choice, including their own experiences.



Compassionate, supportive, inclusive and safe

We want people's involvement in this project to be a positive experience and will do all we can to be compassionate, supportive, inclusive and safe.

Compassionate and trauma informed

We know that many people will have experience of trauma and we want to make sure that participants feel safe and aren't re-traumatised when sharing their views and experiences. We will work in a psychologically informed way, which means that we'll build relationships with people, ensure that any physical or online environments are safe and welcoming, and that our communication is clear, consistent and respectful. We will also work with support workers to try and ensure participants get the support they need.

Confidentiality and anonymity

We want participants to be as open and honest about their views and experiences as possible. As a result, we will anonymise feedback from surveys, focus groups and interviews. We will not attribute any comments to individuals without their explicit permission. The only time we will share any concerns is if we think there is a safeguarding issue.

Diversity and inclusivity

We understand that different groups of people will have different perspectives and experiences of services and it's important that we reflect this in our project. We also know that people may have different needs and may experience different barriers to engagement. We've spoken to and will continue to work with organisations who specialise in particular areas and support specific groups of people, including survivors of domestic abuse, the LGBTQ+ community and people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities. We want to provide a safe space for people from all backgrounds and experiences to participate.

COVID-19

As COVID-19 continues to be present in Wales, we'll ensure that participants feel safe. We'll do this by offering engagement online via surveys, video calls and where appropriate, we'll coordinate face to face sessions either one-to-one or in a socially-distanced small group. At Cymorth we keep up to date with COVID developments, and we always ensure we that we follow Welsh Government guidelines.

If you have any ideas or views about how we can ensure that the project is compassionate, supportive, inclusive and safe, please let us know by emailing [**EBE@cymorthcymru.org.uk**](mailto:EBE@cymorthcymru.org.uk)



www.cymorthexperts.wales



EBE@cymorthcymru.org.uk



[@CymorthCymru](https://twitter.com/CymorthCymru)



Cymorth Cymru



Arbenigwyr trwy Brofiad

Experts by Experience