

The future of housing for those on low incomes in the Valleys

Communities in the south Wales valleys sit in a changing context. The Cardiff City Deal, the Valleys Task Force, and ongoing welfare reforms present opportunities and challenges over the next 10 years.

A new JRF study seeks to understand how these changes will affect the housing options for those on low incomes, and what Welsh Government and local stakeholders can do to ensure there is an effective housing offer for those on low incomes.

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Summary

- A baseline report in Autumn 2017 will set out what is likely to happen to the housing markets in the Valleys, and particularly the supply of housing for people on lower incomes, over the next 10 years.
- Policy development work involving local stakeholders and residents will seek to identify possible solutions to the challenges identified.
- In early 2018, the study will present realistic options to ensure an effective housing offer for people on low incomes in the Valleys over the coming decade.
- The study has been commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, with support from the Bevan Foundation and other local stakeholders.
- The research will be conducted by a team from the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University.

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A new Joseph Rowntree Foundation study seeks to understand how housing options in the Valleys will change over the coming decade. It will set out what Welsh Government and local stakeholders can do to ensure there is an effective housing offer for those on low incomes in the Valleys.

Population change, economic trends and policy developments such as City Deals and the Valleys Taskforce have potential to alter the balance of supply and demand for housing in the Valleys.

Ongoing welfare reforms also present significant challenges. In particular, the extension of the Local Housing Allowance rate of housing benefit to the social rented sector will have a pronounced impact in the Valleys. This will challenge the current provision of social rented housing for those on low incomes. Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent have both been identified as amongst the twenty UK local authorities worst affected by this reform¹.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is working with the Bevan Foundation and other local stakeholders on a study which will set out the likely impacts on the housing markets in the Valleys over the coming 10 years. A further stage of policy development, involving local stakeholders and residents, will lay out policy options that can shape and respond to change, with a view to ensuring an effective housing offer for those on low incomes in the Valleys.

The research

The study will consist of two distinct phases. Phase one will establish the baseline for what is likely to happen to the housing markets in the Valleys, particularly the supply of housing for people on lower incomes over the next 10 years. The analysis will focus on the interaction between factors of demand and supply of housing set within the changing context of the Welfare System, population change, economic trends and policy developments such as City Deals. The analysis will be guided by the following questions:

- What is the current housing offer in the Valleys?
- What factors will affect the housing market in the Valleys over the next 10 years?
- How are housing providers likely to respond and change their offer as a result of these factors?
- Given this, what is the housing offer likely to look like in 10 years?

The second phase of research will focus on identifying potential solutions to the challenges facing housing provision for households on low incomes. This will be done by identifying realistic housing options and framing broader changes that may be required.

Developing an effective housing offer

Like all JRF research, this project is intended to influence policy and practice. The study aims to identify realistic housing options and to frame broader policy changes that may be required. We want to present housing organisations, Welsh Government and other stakeholders with realistic solutions that could ensure an effective housing offer for those on low incomes.

To do this, the second phase of the study will:

- Review how other organisations in similar circumstances are responding to the issues faced by the Valleys.
- Conduct workshops in each of the five Valleys local authorities, involving the local authority, housing providers, private landlords, and support providers.
- Undertake interviews with those with a more 'global' remit (for example those with an interest across the Valleys, Wales or the UK).
- Run two further workshops with a representative sample of the stakeholders above to 'road-test' and 'sense-check' emerging solutions.
- Use three resident workshops to ensure that the views of those living in social housing, or seeking to access it, are captured and that they can shape solutions.

The team

A team led by Ian Wilson of the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR) at Sheffield Hallam University has been appointed to conduct the research. Ian's team also includes Prof. Tina Beatty, who has already completed research looking at the impact of welfare reform in the Valleys, and Prof. Steve Fothergill who has a long track-record of work on economic restructuring in the Valleys.

The study will be supported by a Project Advisory Group chaired by Dr. Victoria Winckler, Director of the Bevan Foundation. The Group also includes representation from Welsh Government, Community Housing Cymru, local housing associations, charities and councils.

Timetable

Phase one of the study – the baseline report – has begun, and is expected to report in Autumn 2017.

The final report, including policy and practice solutions to the challenges identified, will be published early in 2018.

About the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation is an independent organisation working to inspire social change through research, policy and practice.

JRF is working with governments, businesses, communities, charities and individuals to solve UK poverty. The majority of the ideas outlined above were drawn from our recent [strategy to solve UK poverty](#) which contains analysis and recommendations aimed at the four UK governments.

All research published by JRF, including publications in the references, is available to download from www.jrf.org.uk

If you would like to arrange a meeting to discuss the study please contact:

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ⁱ Beatty, C. et al (2016) 'The uneven impact of welfare reform'. Sheffield: Centre for Economic and Social Research.