

Community and Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee



Scrutiny Review

*A review of the effectiveness of the Council's
Homelessness Strategy and the impact on the
community.*

October 2006

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The Vale of Glamorgan Council
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Foreword



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The focus of this review was “an examination of the effectiveness of the Council’s Homelessness Strategy and the impact on the community”- a direct quotation from the review’s plan. It has been a useful lesson to the Scrutiny Committee to try to grasp the whole of this topic and render it comprehensible without getting bogged down by detail, whilst not losing effective points in reduction exercises.

We were looking for examples where our Homelessness Strategy is successful, where it differs from that of the recently published Assembly Strategy and based on these findings, what recommendations for improvement we could make. In other words, “Where are the gaps?”

We wanted Councillors to understand the responsibility of their role in helping homeless people and of the importance of imaginative preventative work to stop these situations happening and to raise public awareness of the whole topic of homelessness. So that those that are or maybe affected by it will not be panic-stricken but will know, in time, where to go for help and advice. We must make sure it is the best advice given, with a sympathetic and helpful attitude.

For review we used the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Strategy 2004-2009, the National Homelessness Strategy for Wales 2006-2008, criticisms of the latter by Shelter Cymru, the Homelessness Strategies of Rochdale and Monmouth Councils, the CAB evidence report on Housing Benefit Administration in Wales and the Welsh Ombudsman’s report on Housing Allocations and Homelessness.

We held two well attended workshops, visited the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Hostel and the Safe House for homeless teenagers. We also went to the Huggard Centre run by Cardiff Action for the Single Homeless (a direct access hostel) and to Ty Seren a female only project in Cardiff. In addition, some Members also visited the Llamau offices and the Women’s Refuge both in Barry and Home Access based in Penarth. We have made efforts to judge the results of these initiatives, how they began and how they gained and kept their funding.

In an attempt to engage the public in the review process, I wrote to the local papers and asked for comments from the public. There were not many, but the few that did respond revealed sad and unnecessary experiences.

A series of interviews were also conducted with partner agencies such as Llamau, SOVA, Shelter Cymru and Spurgeons. We also interviewed three AMs, Lorraine Barrett, Leanne Wood and Mark Isherwood, representing three of the local political parties across Wales.

A number of interviews were also conducted with services user to gauge their views in relation to Homelessness Services and form the basis of case studies in the body of the report. For example, on one occasion we interviewed three men of different ages who were being housed and supported by Llamau.

We have looked at service level agreements the Vale has with different agencies and tried to pinpoint duplication of work.

In all this we have been helped to access information and people by our excellent policy officers Sarah Jeffery and Julia Davies. All our officers and the people from different organisations that we met have been generous with their time and help.

The recommendations we will make are important not only because we now understand better what they mean in terms of necessity for the homeless, but because we in this committee can appreciate how the shortage of funds for Social Services might make all our work in vain. There will be many reasons in the coming years for exerting pressure to keep specific services and we must try to provide better provision for the homeless in an imaginative way by re-using, or multiple use, of buildings, pooling resources, combining training sessions with partners and proving above all that spending to save by preventive action is the most sensible long-term measure.

Executive Summary

The Community Wellbeing & Safety Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to examine the work of the Council and its partners in the provision of services in the areas of Community Safety, Housing and Social Services in the Vale of Glamorgan. Its task is to actively promote improvement by testing the effectiveness of this work and to recommend ways in which greater benefit may be obtained for the community as a whole.

The review forms part of the 2005/06 planned work programme of the above Scrutiny and was carried out in line with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny methodology. This included a scoping exercise, full participation from Members of the Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee resulting in a final report. The review work was undertaken with the support of officers from Democratic Services, the Improvement & Development Team, Housing and Community Safety Division, Community Care & Health Divisions and the Vale of Glamorgan's Housing and Homelessness Forum.

The review considered the effectiveness of the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2004 – 2009 and Homelessness Prevention Plan and the impact the strategy and plan have made on the community of the Vale of Glamorgan. The objectives and purpose of the review were to consider the actions achieved in the Homelessness Strategy to date and the impact of those actions on homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan, to identify any gaps between the Vale of Glamorgan strategy and the recently published Welsh Assembly Government Strategy for homelessness and to make recommendations that would form further actions for life of the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Strategy.

The review extended slightly beyond the boundaries of the scope, current gaps in service provision and notable practice across England and Wales were also identified and these informed the recommendations for improving homelessness provision across the Vale of Glamorgan (VoG). A number of recommendations have been made to the Executive in response to the findings of the review.

The voluntary sector plays a significant role in tackling homelessness, the review highlighted that the large number of homelessness services across the Vale are largely delivered by voluntary sector organisations. The majority of these organisations are also represented on the Homelessness Forum, whose role it is to further the development of homelessness services in the Vale.

This review has highlighted the importance of working in partnership, however from the gaps in existing provision it is clear that there needs to be greater emphasis on joint working between both statutory and non-statutory partners to effectively manage a complex and multi-faceted issue like homelessness.

Recommendations

1. That the Executive Member with the housing portfolio adopts the role of a champion for homelessness issues within the Vale of Glamorgan.
2. That the next issue of the Corporate Plan currently being drafted include homelessness issues and making the relevant links to the Community Strategy.
3. That the remainder of the Section 180 monies be utilised to undertake an audit of homelessness/rough sleeping in the Vale of Glamorgan by March 2007 as required by the Welsh Assembly and to establish a system for proactive monitoring of homelessness within the county.
4. That the Housing Service review and reconfigure existing staff resources so that prevention is the initial response to all homelessness enquiries.
5. That a feasibility study utilising corporate funds, which have been set aside for that purpose be undertaken including capital and revenue costs to develop a multi-agency information website and housing advice centre within existing resources in an accessible location in Barry.
6. That the Homelessness Forum (with the support of the IDT review team) identify duplications in provision with partners and examine overall resource capacity within the Vale of Glamorgan. The findings from the research of the Homelessness Forum will form the basis of recommissioning of homelessness services within the Vale.
7. That the Homelessness Forum develop a mechanism for providing a promotional housing road show/outreach service to cover all parts of the Vale of Glamorgan by September 2007.
8. That the temporary WAG funded post of the new Private Sector Co-ordinator be added to the establishment under the terms of the grant and that on appointment, the remit of the new Private Sector Co-ordinator include:
 - Shadowing Housing Benefits staff and coordinating improved joint working.
 - Read-only access to Housing Benefits information and identifying and resolving potential problems.
 - Co-ordination of regular liaison meetings between Housing Benefits and Homelessness Prevention Teams.
 - Nomination of lead Housing Benefits officer or the placement of a Housing Officer within Housing Benefits section to liaise with Homelessness Team.
 - Development of Housing Benefits performance indicators for pre-tenancy determinations and clients on indicative rents.
 - Review of discretionary payments.
 - Regulation of quality of landlords in order to increase housing stock

9. That a review of the ANITE Homelessness database be conducted to examine opportunities for further development.
10. That in light of the new suitability order, the Housing department continues to examine alternative accommodation options to increase the level of temporary accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan and that the timescale for turning around void properties be improved in order to ensure that at risk groups are accommodated.
11. An action plan is developed to tackle the identified gaps between the All Wales Strategy and Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Strategy and Prevention Plan, as set out in this report.
12. That the Homelessness forum undertake a training needs analysis in order to identify any training needs which may be undertaken within the Council at little or no cost
13. That the Council invests in the production of a video/DVD highlighting the realities for young people leaving home and be shown at all Vale of Glamorgan schools.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee

The Community Wellbeing & Safety Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to examine the work of the Council and its partners in the provision of services in the areas of Community Safety, Housing and Social Services in the Vale of Glamorgan. Its task is to actively promote improvement by testing the effectiveness of this work and to recommend ways in which greater benefit may be obtained for the community as a whole.

The review considered the effectiveness of the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2004 – 2009 and Homelessness Prevention Plan and the impact that the strategy and plan have made on the community of the Vale of Glamorgan.

1.2 Terms of Reference

The review of homelessness forms part of the 2005/06 planned work programme of the Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee. This Committee agreed the review scope and timescales earlier this year. In line with the agreed work programme the review commenced during February 2006. It was due to be completed by April 2006 but was delayed due to changes made to the original scope. The review work was undertaken with the support of officers from Democratic Services, the Improvement & Development Team, Housing and Community Safety Division, Community Care & Health Divisions and the Vale of Glamorgan's Housing and Homelessness Forum.

Appendix 1 of this report contains the completed scrutiny review scoping document and outlines the objectives and purpose of carrying out the review including the desired outcomes.

1.3 Methodology

The review was carried out in line with the Council's Overview and Scrutiny methodology. Comprehensive guidance is provided with regards to the Overview and Scrutiny function in the Vale of Glamorgan:

- Identifying issues for scrutiny review;
- Scoping the review;
- Collecting and collating evidence; and
- Final report.

1.4 Homelessness

Definition

The Welsh Assembly Government recommends the following definition of 'homelessness':
'Where a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure'.

Homelessness covers a broad variety of housing circumstances including temporary accommodation and insecure accommodation, staying with friends and family, and squatting. These people are often referred to as the 'hidden homeless', not obviously visible but still lacking their own permanent accommodation. Rooflessness or sleeping rough is considered as one of the most extreme forms of housing need.

The reality of homelessness

Homelessness is seldom solely a housing problem but is very often a complex issue linked to other factors such as:

- Unemployment, the insecurity of short-term employment contracts, the high number of part time jobs, the inability to secure or maintain employment.
- Relationship breakdowns, family conflicts, support issues, leaving care, lack of the necessary life skills and support.
- Debt and poverty.
- Lack of basic skills and educational achievement.
- Higher levels of stress and poorer health, higher levels of physical and mental illness, and substance and alcohol abuse, and a greater risk of contracting infectious diseases as a consequence of their housing circumstances.

The Local Authority duty to homeless households

Homelessness Act 2002

The new Act amended the Housing Act 1996 (Part VII) and increased local authorities responsibilities to homeless households. Local authorities have a duty to carry out a review of homelessness, which must consider levels and predicted future levels of homelessness, the activities around homelessness and the resources available to tackle advice and prevent homelessness. The strategy should reflect the roles of other agencies and partners to seek to prevent homelessness and work in partnership to provide comprehensive advice and preventative role.

1.5 The Vale of Glamorgan Councils' Homelessness Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Plan

Council adopted a Homelessness Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Plan in May 2005. The strategy sets out Council's approach to preventing homelessness and effectively responding to homelessness when it occurs. As required by the Homelessness Act 2002, it has been shaped by the findings of a comprehensive review of homelessness in the county. It was developed within the national legislative and policy context, as well as within the local context of

the county and takes account of current positive and effective practice in Wales and beyond. The strategy is based on four strategic objectives:

- Preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness from occurring wherever possible, thereby reducing homelessness
- Ensuring the provision of effective homelessness and housing advice services
- Ensuring the adequate supply of appropriate support and accommodation, both temporary and permanent
- Informing the public and involving users in developing and improving services

The Homelessness Prevention Plan is structured around the four objectives and sets out forty-nine actions to be taken by the Vale of Glamorgan Council and its partners to implement the aims and principles of the strategy.

The attached appendix 2 contains The Homelessness Strategy 2004 – 2009 and Homelessness Prevention Plan.

1.6 The Welsh Assembly Government's National Homelessness Strategy for Wales 2006 – 2008

The National Homelessness Strategy for Wales 2006 – 2008 was launched during November 2005. The strategy succeeded the first strategy published in April 2003. It defines how the Welsh Assembly Government intends to tackle homelessness in Wales, and has been produced as a statement of aims and intentions. The strategy is supported by an action plan identifying the expectations the Welsh Assembly Government has of all policy sectors including health, social services and education.

The reviewed strategy took into consideration, amongst other things, the study undertaken by Tarki Technology. Tarki Technology gave recommendations on how the Assembly could meet its priority of reducing the number of people in unsuitable bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation, by introducing a Homeless Prevention Framework similar to the one adopted in England.

The attached appendix 3 contains the Welsh Assembly Government's National Homelessness Strategy for Wales 2006 – 2008.

1.7 Tackling Homelessness – Key issues for consideration by Welsh Local Authorities(Tarki Technology Limited)

In June 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government published the Tarki Technology report *Tackling Homelessness - Key issues for Welsh Local Authorities*. It was produced following a general review by Tarki Technology Limited of the homelessness situation across Wales and detailed service reviews in four local authorities.

The aim of the Tarki report was:

- To pull together the key common themes identified during the individual onsite reviews

- To assist all Welsh authorities in identifying the key areas and issues they need to consider to successfully tackle the problem of homelessness in their area.
- Specifically to assist Welsh authorities in preparing for and ultimately delivering the Assembly's proposed target of reducing the use of B&B accommodation for homeless households.
- To make specific recommendations to local authorities, their partners and the WAG with regard to securing improvements in homelessness services.

Finally it provides an MoT checklist that Welsh local authorities can use for a critical self-assessment of where they are and what they may need to address to move forward.

The report has a large number of recommendations for local authorities, their partners (including Shelter Cymru), and the Assembly itself and is available online at www.housing.wales.gov.uk

Supporting People Operational Plan

The Supporting People Plan is an annual plan closely linked to specific frameworks for housing and support, such as the National Housing Strategy, but also takes on community issues from Health Improvement Plans, Crime Prevention and the Community Plan. It also links with the local MAPP (Multi-Agency Public Protection Panel) in order to establish best practice in accommodating high-risk offenders.

'Supporting People' integrates the current funding streams into a single, cash-limited budget. The funding sources affected are the element of housing benefit which currently covers support and grant paid to RSLs to cover the revenue costs of support in England (Supported Housing Management Grant (SHMG)). The new budget is allocated to local authorities according to relative needs identified, and spending decisions are also devolved at a local level. The housing and social services departments administer the budget together with the probation service. The aim of Supporting People is to provide and improve the quality of housing related services to vulnerable people to enable them to live independently, for as long as they wish or are able to do so. Supporting people also aims to introduce more flexible services based on the needs of individuals.

Housing related support is support which:

- Develops an individual's capacity to live independently in the community, or sustains their capacity to do so.
- Provides support to an individual who might remain in or be admitted to institutional care, or become homeless, or suffer tenancy breakdown if support were not provided.
- Is based on an agreement between the service provider and the user via tenancy agreement or separate support agreement to provide and receive support, with agreed objectives.

The Supporting People Programme does not cover all services people might consider to be support, but specifically focuses on support services which are related to ensuring people can manage to live safely and securely in their own home. The programme is intended to cover

low-level proactive support services which facilitate continued independent living. The Programme can help people by:

- Offering people help with managing their budgets and accessing welfare benefits so they don't accrue rent arrears and ultimately lose their home.
- Offering people a generic service in their own home, tailored to their individual needs, similar to that offered to older people in sheltered housing, e.g. monitoring of wellbeing, community alarm, emotional support, warden services.
- Helping people to maintain their own safety in the home.
- Helping people to make and keep appointments, including going with them if necessary.
- Helping people to gain access to other services they may need, including training, further education, employment, health and social activities.
- Assisting people in planning their weekly meals, shopping and food preparation, but not doing it for them.
- Generally, to support and assist people to comply with their tenancy agreements.

The above list is not exhaustive, but it shows the type of support services considered to be housing related. However, it is important to remember that the Programme does not cover health and social care such as domiciliary care, Meals on Wheels, and personal care such as bathing, toileting etc. Nor does it cover housing management and maintenance duties. In Scotland, housing related support services are prescribed in the Housing (Scotland Act) 2001 (Housing Support Services) Regulations 2002.

1.9 Other Strategies, Policies and Plans

In addition to the above strategies and reports there are other key strategies and plans that impinge on the Homelessness Prevention Service in the Vale, which in turn have driven the need to review the service. These include:

- 'Making the Connections' published in 2004, which sets out Welsh Assembly Government's agenda for improving public services across Wales, with emphasis on joined-up policy making, efficiency and participation.
- Legislative changes around the use of Bed & Breakfast and factors to be considered when locating temporary accommodation.
- Tribal report, which looked at the options available to the Council for the stock retention Strategy, to enable the Council to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- The Local Housing Strategy, which informs the Homelessness Strategy.
- The Young Person Protocol and accompanying Action Plan, which identifies a number of actions that need developing to improve joint working between Social Services and Housing and the provision of services for young people.
- The Ombudsman Special Report, which examined allocations schemes and some homelessness services and gave a number of recommendations to be considered by local authorities.
- The Commitments to Action that came out of the Housing Summit held on 30th November 2005. This gave commitment within both housing and homelessness. Specifically within

homelessness, it stated the commitment ' to work closely with local authorities in their quest to reduce presentations of homelessness through the sharing of good and successful practices operating elsewhere in Wales'.

In 2004 there was an inspection of the Vale's Homelessness Service by the Welsh Audit Office who made the following recommendations:

- That the Housing Service should review the provision of homelessness advice services
- That the Housing Service need to develop an approach for the provision of advice and assistance that provides value for money

2.0 Current Situation

Homelessness is the most extreme form of housing need. It can affect anyone: families, childless couples and single people. Homelessness is not just a housing problem: it impacts on health, educational achievement and employment opportunities.

The causes of homelessness are many and varied and each homeless person and household will have become homeless due to their own unique circumstances:

- Loss of income, including unemployment - leading to people falling behind with rent or mortgage repayments.
- Relationship breakdown, domestic violence, problems with a landlord, family disputes, or friends and relatives no longer being able to provide accommodation - mental health or substance misuse problems may also have an impact in these cases.
- Lack of available affordable housing - combined with adverse economic and social circumstances – according to Shelter Cymru this is the most common route to becoming homeless.

A substantial number of people housed by local authorities - up to 30% in some areas - have previously been accepted as homeless. These people are known as 'repeat homeless' cases.

New legislation and the adoption of a strategic approach represent major steps forward in tackling homelessness, however levels of homelessness remain high, with record numbers of people living in temporary accommodation.

The legal framework

The Homeless Persons Act 1977, the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002 - defines who is entitled to receive permanent housing by/on behalf of a local authority. Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996, which came into force in January 1997, places a statutory duty on local authorities to provide assistance to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Authorities must consider all applications from people seeking accommodation or help in getting accommodation. The local authority owes a "main homelessness duty" where it is satisfied that the applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a priority need group.

The priority need groups include households with dependent children or a pregnant woman, or with people who are vulnerable in some way, for example through mental illness or physical

disability. The Assembly introduced secondary legislation (starting from 1st March 2001) extending the priority needs categories to include, specifically: Applicants aged 16 or 17, applicants aged 18 to 20 who were previously in care, applicants vulnerable because of domestic violence or the threat of violence, and applicants vulnerable as a result of leaving the armed forces, or leaving prison.

Where a main homelessness duty is owed, then the authority must ensure that suitable accommodation is available for the applicant and his or her household until a settled home becomes available for them.

In 2004, across the UK, 137,220 were accepted as homeless in this way. Other groups of people, also homeless or at risk of homelessness, but not automatically given statutory protection include:

- Rough sleepers
- People living in temporary and/or other insecure accommodation
- People whose homelessness is 'hidden', for example those living in overcrowded conditions.

Numbers homeless people within these groups are much harder to estimate.

Where households are found to be "intentionally homeless" or "not in priority need", the Council must make an assessment of their housing need and provide advice and assistance to help them find accommodation for themselves.

2.1 Homelessness – The Context in Wales

The table below outlines the homeless applications and resulting acceptances year on year in Wales:

	Acceptances: Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	All Households presenting as homeless
2000-01	4,390	12,771
2001-02	5,333	13,982
2002-03	6,975	17,055
2003-04	9,147	20,935
2004-05	9,856	22,580

Latest information on homelessness for the April to June quarter across Wales 2005 shows:

- There were 2,319 households accepted as homeless; 49% of the total were because of dependent children or because someone in the household was pregnant.
- 435 acceptances (19 per cent) arose because of violence against members of the household, mostly arising from the violent breakdown of a relationship with a former partner.

There were 224 female single parents reported as becoming homeless because of violence from former partners.

- There were 3,629 households in temporary accommodation at the end of June 2005. Within this total there were 818 households in Bed and Breakfast accommodation (up from 807 households at end-June 2004), 252 of these households were families with children.

Temporary Accommodation issues and Developments

The use of Bed & Breakfast (B & B) accommodation is not considered a long-term or sustainable option. Indeed, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in England set a target for all local authorities to cease using this form of temporary housing by April 1st 2004. The Welsh Assembly Government has set a target for local authorities to reduce the use of Bed & Breakfast for all clients. Further legislation to restrict the use of Bed and Breakfast premises for homeless people, and to raise standards in other shared temporary accommodation has been approved by the Assembly and comes into force in three parts:

- Part 1 came into effect from 3rd April 2006. It requires local authorities to take account of the health, social and personal needs of people when determining the suitability of temporary and permanent accommodation for homeless people. This is already an expectation in statutory guidance.
- Part 2 will come into effect from 2nd April 2007. From this date, all B&B premises must meet a basic standard to be suitable for use as temporary accommodation. This basic standard requires compliance with other statutory requirements, and a judgement by the authority that the proprietor is a 'fit and proper person' to manage B&B accommodation.
- Part 3 will come into effect from 7th April 2008. This will extend the provisions above to all priority need groups to whom the authority owes a duty. It will also apply the higher standard to all other temporary shared accommodation, such as hostels and refuges, used by the local authority to meet its duties to homeless people for more than 2 weeks. In the case of social housing, this may be extended to 6 weeks if the authority has offered suitable alternative accommodation at 2 weeks. Where the accommodation was owned or managed by a social landlord on 7 April 2008, the higher standard will only apply after 4 April 2011. There will be no time limit where the shared temporary accommodation meets the higher standard.

A full explanation of the requirements of this legislation and an outline of the standards for each of these parts can be found at Appendix 4.

Of immediate concern is the increase in competition with other local authorities in South Wales to secure B & B accommodation. Demand for B & B accommodation by councils is extremely high with competition between council's becoming an ever more serious problem. In the last 2 years temporary B & B placements have been secured by neighbouring authorities as far away as Weston-Super Mare. With high numbers of the clients being vulnerable and requiring support, this situation is extremely unsatisfactory.

Right to Buy in Wales

Since 1980, 42.5% of local authority stock has been lost to the 'Right To Buy' scheme contributing to the lack of options available to people with housing needs in Wales. Up to the

end of December 2004, 131,000 homes were sold across Wales leaving just 162,000 local authority homes compared to 308,000 in December 1979.

Latest information on Right to Buy Shows:

- Since the 'Right to Buy' started in 1980 there have been a cumulative total of 133,000 Right to Buy and 7,000 other sales in Wales.
- There were 1,143 'Right To Buy' claims in Wales during the July to September quarter 2005 around 620 less than a year earlier.
- There were 440 completed 'Right to Buy' sales in Wales during the July to September quarter 2005, 740 less than a year earlier.
- There were 3,017 'Right to Buy' applications outstanding at end-September 2005 compared with 5,061 a year earlier.

2.2 Homelessness - The Context in the Vale of Glamorgan

The table below outlines the homeless applications and resulting acceptances year on year in the Vale of Glamorgan:

	Acceptances: Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need	All Households presenting as homeless
2000-01	120	327
2001-02	244	465
2002-03	288	686
2003-04	440	1220
2004-05	676	1825

The table above highlights the success the Vale of Glamorgan's Homelessness Team has had since reconfiguring the service in 2003 and introducing the Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme (VATS) in 2005. This is a spend to save bond scheme. The Vale of Glamorgan Council was the first local authority in Wales to adopt the prevention agenda. It is seen as a beacon amongst Welsh local authorities with a number of other Homelessness Teams from across Wales visiting the Vale of Glamorgan for guidance on how to take forward their own prevention agendas.

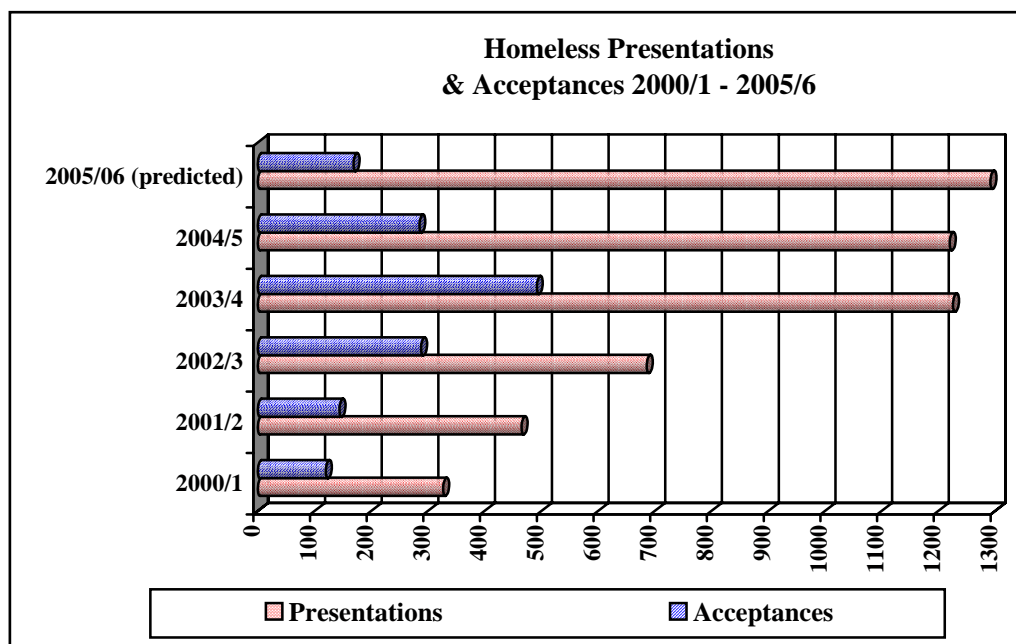
There have been significant improvements in the service in respect of the number of homeless acceptances. The number of clients seeking assistance has remained relatively stable and is predicted to increase slightly this financial year, despite the number of homelessness acceptances has decreased significantly. The following table gives a break down of the outcomes as a result of the Mediation and Visiting Officer services over a twelve-month period November 04 – November 05

Homeless prevention statistics 11/04 to 11/05

Closed cases	Numbers
Referred to A&A (Advice and Assistance)	45
Non engaged	65
Referred to VATS	76
Referred to Homes 4 U	20
Advice only	121
Referred to other agency	3
Tenancies saved	5
Fraudulent	6
Spend to save only	7
S195 decision (threatened with intentional homelessness decision)	1
Open Cases	
Awaiting client contact	30
On going action	17
Other	
Referred in Error	1
Duplicate cases	6
Case closed by client	1
Total	404

During the above period the Homelessness Prevention Officer secured 76 tenancies in the private sector of which the bond was claimed on three occasions costing the Council £960.

All members of the Homelessness Team have had training on the homeless legislation during the past 12 months and this has increased staff confidence in rejecting claims for homelessness. As a result of this training, the Homelessness Team has a greater understanding of the legislation and refinements made to the working practices. This has resulted in the practice of being considered 'homeless at home' replaced by a practice of clients being offered either preventative services or an offer of temporary accommodation at the point of homelessness. This new practice has drastically reduced the number of clients wishing to pursue a homelessness application. The reduction in the number of acceptances between 2000/1 and 2005/6 is shown in the chart below:



Right to Buy in the Vale of Glamorgan

'Right to Buy' sales have significantly reduced in the Vale of Glamorgan over the last three years. This may be due to the change in the discount rate offered in Wales since 2003. Under the Right to Buy scheme, tenants are given a discount, which is calculated based on the number of years public sector or armed forces tenancy they have accrued. However, on the 2nd of April 2003, the discount rate in Wales in respect of the Right to Buy scheme was reduced from £24,000 to a maximum discount amount of £16,000. In reality however, combined with the continuously increasing house prices, it has meant that the discount system in Wales works more like a 'flat' discount of £16,000 for all qualifying tenants. A property would have to be valued at under £50,000 in order for the discount awarded to be less than £16,000. To put it into context, the average price for a semi-detached property in the Vale of Glamorgan based on sales during April 2007 – June 2007 was £170,944, well above this figure. There has already been an impact on homelessness due to the 'Right to Buy' scheme by reducing stock in desirable areas. For example, in a count of 3 bedroom semi-detached houses in Castle Avenue in Penarth, an original stock of 70 houses has been reduced to just 7 through Right to Buy sales.

The Council currently has a mixed housing stock of 3,985 properties of these properties 784 (just under 20%) are sheltered properties or properties designated for the elderly. These properties cannot be sold under the Right to Buy scheme. The types of properties that cannot be sold under the Right to Buy scheme are sheltered properties and properties designated for the elderly. During the period January to March 2006 of the 62 applications for homelessness 34 or 55% applicants were aged between 16 and 25 years old.

The table below outlines the National position with regard to 'Right to Buy' for the year 2005/06.

	Number of claims received during the year		Number of Response Notices issued during the year		Number of Right to Buy sales completed		Number of accepted Right to Buy applications being dealt with but not yet completed at end of year
	i) Houses	ii) Flats	i) Admissions	ii) Denials	i) Houses	ii) Flats	
Isle of Anglesey	23	1	12	1	19	6	69
Gwynedd	28	1	24	1	11	1	94
Conwy	8	1	14	0	4	0	40
Denbighshire	24	1	16	3	6	0	52
Flintshire	47	3	25	2	21	2	176
Wrexham	86	10	69	16	23	3	162
Powys	20	0	16	3	6	0	60
Ceredigion	7	0	8	1	5	0	24
Pembrokeshire	31	3	32	0	19	3	101
Carmarthenshire	53	0	50	9	9	1	150
Swansea	126	11	69	2	29	6	262
Neath Port Talbot	64	7	50	8	16	4	128
Bridgend	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
The Vale of Glamorgan.	18	2	7	2	4	1	65
Cardiff	52	16	59	7	11	6	102
Rhondda Cynon Taf	109	16	114	10	36	5	315
Merthyr Tydfil	45	4	47	2	21	0	13
Caerphilly	67	0	56	4	20	0	421
Blaenau Gwent	66	8	72	2	45	5	80
Torfaen	49	8	52	2	13	3	188
Monmouthshire	11	3	9	0	5	0	38
Newport	42	9	55	6	9	2	114
Wales	976	104	856	81	332	48	2,654

Homes4U

In an attempt to positively modify the impact of reduced access to social housing the Vale of Glamorgan Council became the first local authority in Wales to implement a district-wide choice-based letting scheme, known as Homes4U in June 2003. After the first year, one of the benefits of the system was found to be increased access to housing services for vulnerable people, particularly homeless people and those with additional support needs. 41% of total lettings went to homeless people during year one. Every fortnight an advert is circulated to voluntary sector partners, statutory agencies such as Social Services and other support agencies, so that they can assist homeless people in bidding for a home of their choice. Based on the experience to date, rather than restricting access, choice-based lettings have enabled the Council to provide a

better service to vulnerable people seeking housing. A member of staff in Social Services dealing with care leavers stated that the new system had 'empowered his clients' and given them 'meaningful and real choice.'

During 2004 Homes4U was extended to include all lettings made by Newydd Housing Association in the Vale of Glamorgan and more recently Wales and the West Housing Association. This effectively allows the Council and Homes4U applicants access to 100% of these Housing Associations available stock rather than the statutory 50% requirement normally achieved by other local authorities. Hafod Housing Association will also use the advert to request expressions of interest from Homes4U members on specific properties such as the recent development in River Walk, Penarth.

There are 5 key principles to the Homes4U scheme:

- Principle 1 – Membership
Membership is open to anyone seeking accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan. Under HOMES4U there are three Priority Band Levels Gold, Silver and Bronze. All members who are accepted as statutorily homeless are placed in the highest priority gold band.
- Principle 2 – Registration
Each person seeking accommodation with the Council must complete a standard application form. Details are then placed on the Housing Register and applicants are allocated a unique identification number.
- Principle 3 - Choosing Accommodation
Every fortnight the Council advertises the homes it has available. Adverts are in the local press on Thursday each week and homes are open for bids from 8:30am on the day the advert is published until 2:00pm the following Thursday.
- Principle 4 - Offering Accommodation
On the closure of the advert at 12:00pm on the following Thursday, the Council evaluates the bids received and the applicant with the greatest priority and who has been a member of Homes4U for the longest period will be offered the property.
- Principle 5 – Feedback
Regular information is provided on how many people bid for properties, as well as the band and length of time successful bidder.

Move on accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan

All partners working within the homelessness sector commented on the lack of move on accommodation available in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Move on accommodation provides a stepping-stone between living in a hostel or bed and breakfast and living alone. Move on accommodation offers the chance for individuals to live independently, managing their own budget and looking after their home themselves, but with support workers on hand to help with any problems.

Lack of move-on from hostels and supported housing is consistently given by Homeless partner agencies as a key factor inhibiting progress in solving the problem of homelessness. Insufficient appropriate move-on accommodation results in service users spending longer in hostels or night shelters, which reduces the amount of vacancies available to those presenting to services

as homeless and risks people returning to the streets. A lack of move-on accommodation makes agencies less effective in supporting homeless people towards achieving independence, which is disheartening both for service users and staff.

3.0 Findings

Two workshops involving Members from the Community Wellbeing and Safety Committee and members of the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Forum were held during January and February 2006. The first workshop discussed specific issues within current service provision in the Vale of Glamorgan and went on to consider gaps between the National Homelessness Strategy and the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Action Plan. The specific issues that appeared common themes to each of the groups in the workshop were as follows:

- Prevention
- Accommodation
- Provision of advice and information services
- Training – for all involved with homelessness issues

It was decided at the close of the workshop to further explore these issues and collectively consider actions, which would assist in developing the service at a second workshop. Detailed analysis of this workshop is found below.

Homelessness Workshop-28th February 2006, Holmview Leisure Centre

Theme	Issue	Action	Comments
Prevention			
Education about homelessness	Qualitative/quantitative data-need evidence of areas of need, the data needs to be accurate. The data produced from the survey needs to be accessible to all forum members. To capture the data and views of rough sleepers and migrations requires specialist skills.	There is the need for a survey that can be used by all agencies involved in the homelessness forum. The survey needs to be an action of the homelessness strategy. There may be the need to engage consultants to do this task.	
Education about homelessness	Homelessness education is a strong feature of the current strategy; for example the forum is working with teachers and the YPP through the citizenship task group to promote homelessness education and information. The YPP in association with Housing are developing an information booklet for 11-25 year olds regarding homelessness and housing advice. The YPP conference will no longer be a one-day event. The conference will go out to schools by conducting workshops. It is hoped that this will help to set the scene for future consultation.	There is greater need to target 14-16 year old age group. There is the need to raise the profile of the Homelessness Forum, so that other outside agencies are aware of what the forum activities.	
Where to target resources	Concerns were raised regarding duplication of activities. There is the need for a greater co-ordinated approach.	Task group needs to pull together what other agencies are doing in order to develop a succinct and comprehensive action plan that reduces any duplication. This will enable activities to be co-ordinated between agencies more effectively.	Steps have been made in the form of a Homelessness Prevention Officer within Housing Services.
Supporting Private Landlords	Currently too few private landlords. Problems associated with supplying appropriate information regarding the buy to let market for potential landlords. There was also a feeling that letting agents don't promote the availability of housing to those who are in receipt of benefits and or at risk of becoming homeless. Change in housing benefit payments will mean that money will be paid directly to the tenant and not the landlord.	There is the need here for the general culture to change in order to effectively support landlords. National landlord association provide advice and support to landlords, but it is felt that there is the need for the forum to develop this support further. Task group needs to pull together what other agencies are doing in order to develop a succinct and comprehensive action plan that reduces any duplication. This will enable activities to be co-ordinated between agencies more effectively.	

Theme	Issue	Action	Comments
Accommodation			
Increasing temporary accommodation Vs New legislation	<p>Currently no direct access hostel service within the Vale, this is problematic when seeking to find emergency accommodation for at risk groups over the weekend.</p> <p>Introduction of the new legislation will mean pregnant women, families and 16-17 years can not be in bed and breakfast accommodation any longer than two weeks.</p>	<p>Investigate and assess the feasibility of developing a Direct Access Hostel in the Vale.</p> <p>Maximise potential use of Housing Association stock via leasing.</p> <p>Need to conduct an audit/assessment of the current status of accommodation is up to standard and an improvement plan produced.</p> <p>Rebalancing of staff and resources within the homelessness services. Investigate the costs incurred for services by other agencies. Investigate feasibility of increasing current 'friendly lodging' scheme in the Vale.</p>	
Increasing second stage accommodation options	<p>It is accepted that there is a general lack of affordable accommodation.</p> <p>There is the need to address the issue of voids and improve the time-scales for turning around voids that could otherwise be used to accommodate the at risk groups.</p>	<p>Make greater use of the forum to endorse agency funding bids. Need to expand the use of the private sector.</p> <p>Maximise potential use of Housing Association stock via leasing. Need to improve the feedback regarding any planning issues that may have an impact or bearing on the availability of housing suitable for homeless individuals or those at risk of becoming homeless. Need to investigate tenancy breakdowns and re-evaluate the stages. Reutilise some of the local authority's existing accommodation.</p>	<p>Women's Aid is currently looking into second stage accommodation issues. The forum currently works closely with the domestic abuse forum.</p>
Accommodating by groups	<p>Greater emphasis needs to be placed on accommodating different target groups. There is the need to improve the quality and quantity of needs assessments that are conducted and submitted by agencies.</p> <p>Early release from prison was highlighted as an issue, as it was felt that the prison service could do more to facilitate early release ex-offenders in finding suitable accommodation.</p>	<p>Need to tailor services to the needs of individual groups. There is the need to conduct an assessment of advice service needs and consider what currently exists.</p> <p>Need to provide more suitable second stage premises and support for groups in need particularly single people, those with mental health issues, care leavers, ex-offenders etc. Investigate issue associated with level of support provided by prison service in finding suitable accommodation.</p> <p>Promote the Homelessness Forum to the Prison Service</p>	<p>Rhondda Cynon Taff have a scheme targeted at young people leaving care provide trainer flats for second stage accommodation (second stage accommodation).</p>

Theme	Issue	Action	Comments
		and encourage attendance by a representative. Establish a task and finish group as part of the homelessness forum to conduct a feasibility study of procuring an information management system that could be used by all agencies members. This group will need to then produce a funding bid to procure an information management system collaboratively. The task and finish group will conduct an audit of IT systems and information management systems used by all partner agencies within the forum. There is the need to take into consideration the current OneVale programme. Invite greater representation on the Homelessness Forum e.g. Health.	
Provision of advice and information services			
Information sharing	There is the need for a multi-agency approach	The need to develop an all agency website with information that could be accessed by all- the need for developing a budget bid.	
Advice and information signposting	Advice is provided by a number of agencies, with no one source of information.	The need to develop an all agency website with information that could be accessed by all- the need for developing a budget bid. Re-evaluate existing services such as bond schemes	
Eliminating duplication	Information needs to remain consistent.	There is the need for a multi-agency approach to information and advice.	
Availability/location of information	There is the need for information to be accessible.	Onestop shop approach to providing advice. To support advice and prevention. Home visits in rural areas. The need for the appointment of a Tenancy Relations Officer.	
Quality of advice and information	Consistency and quality is key.	There is the need for a multi-agency approach to information and advice. Outsource the provision of specialist advice to other agencies	
Training requirements of staff			
Training needs analysis	There is the need to identify the core competencies required.	The need to pool together the training budgets of the forum and local authority. Develop a set of core competencies.	

Theme	Issue	Action	Comments
Fringe professionals who impact on homelessness	Training provided needs to be consistent. Need a collaborative approach to training.	Induction training provided by the local authority could be offered to all forum members. Inductions are particularly important, as agencies need to know where they all fit into the bigger picture.	
Whole County seminars	Need a combined approach to promote information sharing. There is the need for greater consistency with other local authorities. And organisations need to measure against a checklist.	Share training costs (whatever they are i.e. accommodation).	
Quality of professionals	Training must include specialist and expert training, as well as training on the provision of local advice.	The need for more joint training between specialists. Move towards greater standardisation.	

The following recommendations arise from the findings of workshop 1 and workshop 2:

Recommendation 5

That a feasibility study, utilising corporate funds which have been set aside for that purpose be undertaken including capital and revenue costs to develop a multi-agency information website and housing advice centre within existing resources in an accessible location in Barry.

Recommendation 6

That the Homelessness Forum (with the support of this IDT review team) identify duplications in provision with partners and examine overall resource capacity within the Vale of Glamorgan. The findings from the research of the homelessness forum will form the basis of recommissioning of homelessness services within the Vale.

Recommendation 7

That the Homelessness Forum develop a mechanism for providing a promotional housing road show/outreach service to cover all parts of the Vale of Glamorgan by September 2007.

These recommendations do not cover issues such as standardisation of homelessness information material, pooled training resources and a training needs analysis and the development of an agency/user website. The Vale of Glamorgan Council's Community Services Directorate is currently not in a position to resource these improvements. It is therefore not considered viable to enforce recommendations that would impact on all partners within the Homelessness Forum. It is hoped that the outcomes from recommendations 5 and 6 will help resource and influence improvements in these areas.

3.1 Gaps between the National Homelessness Strategy and the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Action Plan

The National Homelessness Strategy details 10 overall objectives, which the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) hope will be achieved throughout Wales by 2008. In order to achieve those objectives the related action plan consists of 61 activities that the WAG expect local authorities and their partners to undertake. However, WAG resource allocation does not match needs in this area. A full list of the expected actions and responsibilities can be found at appendix 5. A study of the WAG action plan shows that the Vale of Glamorgan Council is already delivering the majority of the actions for which it is responsible due to the proactive efforts of the Homelessness Team. It must also be noted that all actions from the Vale of Glamorgan's Homelessness Prevention Plan 2004 – 2009 are being undertaken within the required timescale.

There are a number of actions within the WAG Strategy that this Council is well placed to deliver. These actions are listed under the Housing Services expectations at appendix 5. One action expected of local authorities is to appoint a 'Homelessness Champion' within the Council. The Scrutiny Committee for Community Wellbeing and Safety considers the best placed person for this role is the Cabinet Member who has responsibility for the housing portfolio and therefore makes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 1

That the Executive Member with the housing portfolio or other nominated Member adopts the role of a champion for homelessness issues within the VOG.

In order to ensure to raise the profile of homelessness within the Council and to enable completion of the Vale of Glamorgan Homeless Prevention Plan 2004 – 2009 the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation 2

That the next issue of the Corporate Plan currently being drafted include homelessness issues and making relevant links to Community Strategy.

There are a number of actions that are the responsibility of the Council but are not considered achievable due to the lack of resources. Nationally, other local authorities have also raised their concerns regarding the achievability of these actions within the WAG Strategy and the resource issues. In light of these concerns the WAG Strategy is under audit by the Wales Audit Office.

In order to achieve these expectations the Scrutiny Committee Members and the Homelessness Forum considered that it would be prudent to first undertake an audit of homelessness/rough sleeping within the County. Since the first workshop the WAG has requested that audits be undertaken throughout Wales during March 2007, but have not provided resources to undertake this exercise. The Scrutiny Committee recommend that the remainder of the Section 180 monies be utilised to undertake an audit of homelessness and to establish a system for proactive monitoring of homelessness within the County.

Recommendation 3

That the remainder of the Section 180 monies be utilised to engage a voluntary sector partner to undertake an audit of homelessness/ rough sleeping in the Vale of Glamorgan by March 2007 as required by the Welsh Assembly and to establish a system for proactive monitoring of homelessness within the county

3.2 Funding

Funding is allocated to local government in different ways in Wales and England, making an exact comparison of the resources being invested in homelessness between the two countries problematic. Resources allocated to local government specifically for the purpose of tackling/preventing homelessness in each of the countries is set out below.

Wales:

- Government funding settlement - no specific amount hypothecated for homelessness; Resources allocated directly into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). However, in 2004/05, the Assembly made available £4.917 million of Section 180 Housing Act 1996 funding for voluntary sector schemes aimed at tackling homelessness and rooflessness in Wales.

England:

- £60 million in 2004/05 Homelessness Directorate budget designed to supplement mainstream funding sources. This funding has been made available to local authorities to help maintain government B&B use and rough sleeping targets and to implement their homelessness strategies. There is no separate Section 180 budget. Each local authority receives a set allocation from the total budget and also has an opportunity to seek additional funding for priority services that contributes to positive outcomes on homelessness.
- Local authorities' Revenue Support Grant increased by £8 million per annum to reflect the additional duties placed on them by the Homelessness Act 2002.
- Homelessness Directorate is also responsible for £23.5 million for bricks and mortar allocated by the Housing Corporation within its Approved Development Programme.

The Vale of Glamorgan Council:

- £40,000 received in 2005/06 of Section 180 Housing Act 1996 funding for voluntary sector schemes aimed at tackling homelessness and rooflessness in Wales. This is to be reinvested this year to support the existing schemes which are considered to be strategically relevant, and to undertake an audit of homelessness and to establish a system for proactive monitoring of homelessness within the County
- Officer undertaken work based on the findings of the Tarki report and have highlighted that the following “MoT checks” need further development:
 - **MOT check one**
Understanding where the local authority is now
Comparing performance across Wales and the Sub region
 - **MOT check two**
Review the local authority structure for managing homelessness and identifying whether the right people in place to prevent homeless
 - **MOT check six**
Overhaul all first contact processes to assess whether people are being inadvertently driven into the homeless process at first contact
 - **MOT check nine**
How does the local authority manage performance?
Have the local authority developed a set of meaningful performance information?
 - **MOT check twelve**
Managing temporary accommodation and assessing whether we are on target to meet the WAG Bed & Breakfast target in the next twelve months
 - **MOT check fourteen**
Ensuring access for all, and identifying whether prevention and options services are available for all potential homeless people and not just those who are likely to be statutory homeless

In order to progress these actions the Homelessness Team has recognised the need to adopt what the Tarki report refers to as an “Inverted Triangle” approach. The inverted triangle structure has a team of prevention staff interviewing clients at the point of contact with a range of options available to prevent homelessness. The clients are filtered through these options until, as a last resort, a homeless application is taken if the prevention measures are unsuccessful. This structure allows the homelessness service to provide a proactive rather than a reactive approach to homelessness.

In order to meet the requirements set out in the Tarki report and to readdress the imbalance of workloads the Homelessness Service recommend that there is a reconfiguration of the Homelessness Team so that the prevention team are the first point of contact for the clients. The Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee support this reconfiguration and see it as being essential to progress both the remaining gaps between the Welsh Assembly Strategy and the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Action Plan by adopting and implementing the remaining “MoT checks from the Tarki report.

Recommendation 4

That the Housing Service review and reconfigure existing staff resources so that prevention is the initial response to all homelessness enquiries.

3.3 Interviews with homelessness service providers within the Vale of Glamorgan

Following the workshops the review team undertook a series of semi-structured interviews with 11 external partners who work directly with homeless members of the community and 7 internal colleagues from different departments within the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The questions around which the interview was structured can be found at appendix 7. The key findings from each interview have been summarised below:

Name of Interviewee/s	Heidi Samuel and Sian Sexton
Organisation	Shelter Cymru
Role in relation to homelessness	Shelter Cymru is a leading housing and homelessness charity. The organisation provides independent housing and legal advice for members of the general public in the Vale.
Main Issues/improvement option	Local authority improvements noted in recent months but information needs to be wider, timely and more consistent. Need for a direct access and supported living hostel in the Vale due to lack of appropriate temporary accommodation. Prison leavers a considerable problem for the service and high likelihood of re-offending due to lack of support. Gap in Vale market on maximising income and debt advice. Social services, housing and finance do not tend to work together on clients behalf. A tenancy awareness officer role would help reduce homelessness.

Name of Interviewee/s	Emma Blake
Organisation	Spurgeons Child Care
Role in relation to homelessness	Spurgeons Child Care is one of the largest Christian Charities in the UK working with Children, Young People and their families. The organisation provides advocacy services to young people and children in the Vale.
Main Issues/improvement option	Insufficient supported accommodation for 18 year olds leaving care. They are not ready to live independently and when no living arrangements are made they tend to end up in B & B accommodation moving on constantly until secondary accommodation is found for them. Too distinct a gap between leaving care and adult services and funding battles regarding placements. Tenancy support workers only provided if initial visit has been made to housing services and young person has

	received a referral. Housing offices are too formal and intimidating for young people due to unstable lifestyle of being moved on young people do not keep appointments. Where family situations break down prior to child reaching the age of 16 yrs there is a gap in service provision and children have ended up sleeping rough.
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Name of Interviewee/s	Sue Bowyer
Organisation	Case worker for Jane Hutt
Role in relation to homelessness	Front line independent contact point to deal with issues or complaints via Assembly Member.
Main Issues/improvement option	Key housing complaints tend to be in relation to Homes4U mainly as complainants do not fully understand the system. They do not understand the priority ratings in relation to feedback. Welfare rights services appear to be stand alone and not cross cutting through Council departments

Name of Interviewee/s	Gareth Downes
Organisation	Youth Offending Team VoG
Role in relation to homelessness	Main role is Bail/remand officer, however due to previous experience role has diverged towards becoming the named accommodation officer.
Main Issues/improvement option	Good support from Tai Trothwy at 217 Holton Road, need more second stage accommodation. Homes 4 U criteria has changed so that some young offenders do not automatically achieve gold card status. This makes securing accommodation increasingly difficult. Within the Vale little or no support after 5.00pm. Also needs of some client groups so great that it is impossible to cater for all individuals with current staffing levels.

Name of Interviewee/s	Malcolm Evans
Organisation	SOVA (Supporting Others Through Volunteer Action)
Role in relation to homelessness	SOVA have a contract with the job centre to provide extra support and assistance with regards to form filling and entitlements. The client age group tends to be between 18 and 24 years.
Main Issues/improvement option	Housing support workers need to be trained to a consistent level. Access to information for all agencies and service providers would be beneficial. The Council housing reception is too formal. Numbers of private landlords who do not accept DSS clients are high in the Vale. Some landlords who have accepted DSS have experienced slow payment of rent. High private rental rates make people over reliant on social housing. Leaflets addressing myths around housing would be a good idea.

Name of Interviewee/s	Miles Utting
Organisation	Hafod Housing Association
Role in relation to homelessness	Provide general needs properties as well as specific care for the elderly. Located mainly in Penarth, Barry and Rhoose with a small number scattered in rural Vale, available for single persons or families on long-term basis. Hafod also run support schemes in

	association with other agencies such as Llamau and the Local Authority specifically aimed at young people, the elderly and clients with mental health problems.
Main Issues/improvement option	Have good working relationships with housing benefits with a bi-monthly forum meeting to discuss any issues in relation to housing benefits. Currently in talks to sign up for Homes4U but feel that not enough client information is available with new system leading to possible mismatches for properties. Good communication link with homelessness team.

Name of Interviewee/s	Dewi Owen
Organisation	Refugee Council
Role in relation to homelessness	Advice, support, casework and advocacy for asylum seekers and refugees. One stop services provide help with National Asylum Support Service (NASS) applications, advice on accommodation, travel assistance for asylum interviews, benefits, housing, health, immigration and education. Development support for refugee community groups. Translation service. Offices in Newport, Swansea and Wrexham.
Main Issues/improvement option	Main problem with clients who use the service is their lack of knowledge of what they are entitled to or what to do when they find themselves homeless. Currently no one from Refugee Council attends the forum. There are very few asylum seekers in the Vale as they tend to stay in Cardiff where there are established communities.

Name of Interviewee/s	Sam Austin
Organisation	Llamau
Role in relation to homelessness	Llamau works in seven local authority areas in Wales (Bridgend, Cardiff, Caerphilly, Newport, Torfaen, Monmouth and the Vale of Glamorgan). In each area Llamau is developing an interlinked 'holistic' range of services – a continuum of provision - from addressing street homelessness through to long-term sustainable independent living. Schemes that run in the Vale include Jigso project, the safe house, a bond scheme and a furniture grant. Llamau also provide support for their clients by making tenants visits, checking and chasing housing benefits, liaising with tenants and landlords and acting as a resettlement worker when tenancies break down. Llamau also provide a 24-hour project for high needs young people, a floating support and tenancy support schemes. Llamau provided family mediation to 121 young people and their families during 05/06 & 72% of these were able to remain/return home
Main Issues/improvement option	There is the need for a greater number of private sector lettings that are willing to accommodate the non-statutory homeless. Although the Homelessness Strategy states that the Vale needs to have a bond scheme, there has been duplication by three agencies. Problems facing many innovative projects that rely on grants and trust funds, is that less and less money is becoming available, and increasingly trust funders tend to favour the newer projects rather than well established ones. A direct access hostel is needed.

	However, there is the concern that it would be engulfed by referrals from Cardiff. There is also the need to explore all options and stages of accommodation, as a direct access hostel is not the sole answer to the housing problems in the Vale.
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Name of Interviewee/s	Chris Clarke
Organisation	Tai Trothwy –
Role in relation to homelessness	Provide supported accommodation for young people who have either offended or are at risk of offending. The project offers four bedsits with shared kitchen and bathroom facilities. Residents are offered licence agreements. The project is staffed 24 hours a day and provides an on-call service. Average length of stay 9-18 months. Also provides supported accommodation for people who have either offended or are at risk of offending. The project offers three self-contained flats, one-two bedroom flat, and one studio flat. Residents are offered 6 month assured shorthold tenancies. Average length of stay 12 months. The project operates an out of hours on call service. Scheme has access to three units of move on accommodation in Barry.
Main Issues/improvement option	Would like access Housing Benefits forms to fill out in advance of visiting office but not allowed. Lack of probation facility in the Vale. Project would be more viable if accessible to other Local Authorities

Name of Interviewee/s	Pam Toms
Organisation	Supporting People VoG
Role in relation to homelessness	<p>Supporting people was first established in 2003 as a result of pooling monies to form one supporting people funding stream. Supporting people activities are closely correlated with homelessness and housing services. Supporting people fund can fund support to any adults across all tenures. Many of the clients going through the Homelessness Service are supported, and this would include assistance with life skills, claiming benefits and being helped with their Homeless application, reviews and accessing permanent accommodation. For example, in the SAFE House run by Llamau, the support is funded by SP, without this there would not be any support planning and work carried out with the young people to develop them sufficiently to move on to live independently. In the Treharne hostel, if the client indicates that they need support, they are allocated a support worker through the Tenancy Support Scheme and they are then assisted to find accommodation, either through Homes 4 U or privately.</p> <p>A lot of liaison work takes place between Homelessness staff, Housing Officers and Support Workers to prevent homelessness or repeat homelessness, for example in respect of rent arrears and neighbour nuisance issues, as many tenants respond much better to an independent person not employed by the Council. All applicants are requested to complete a needs assessment in line with WAG guidance. The support provided is designed to help and</p>

	assist individuals to better integrate and develop within their communities. There are 6 monthly checks of needs assessments with social services and regular liaison between departments. However, there is no direct referral from the leaving care team, but projected figures of those leaving care are provided.
Main Issues/improvement option	Cuts in budgets have meant that demand for support is far greater than supply and often the homeless are the most needy. Unfortunately funding cuts has meant that there are fewer resources in order to expand and further develop support services. The only additional monies that were available this year were specifically to support substance mis-users and ex-offenders. There is the greater need for local authority to work closely together to bring about a collective response to issues in relation to funding. Supporting people funding is only available to individuals who have accessed housing through housing services such as the VATs scheme and social housing and hostel.

Name of Interviewee/s	Sallyanne Hemingway
Organisation	Child Protection and Looked After Children - VoG
Role in relation to homelessness	Provides support and advice for on accommodation for young people moving from looked after situation. Developing formal protocols for inter departmental and external agency working.
Main Issues/improvement option	Lack of appropriate supported accommodation within the Vale. Lack of resource with regard to supporting people operation. Duty of care undermined by both above. Good working relationships with supporting people and very much improved working relationships with housing officer. Very much dependant on individual contacts.

Name of Interviewee/s	Ann Unitt
Organisation	Health Promotion -Vale Local Health Board
Role in relation to homelessness	Position suitable to consider health and dentistry issues for homeless people.
Main Issues/improvement option	Main problem are many conflicting priorities within Health Promotion and lack of available resource to explore issue of health and homelessness. Fast turnover of staff recently within Vale LHB hindering progress.

Name of Interviewee/s	Sandra Russ
Organisation	Inroads Street Drugs Project
Role in relation to homelessness	Inroads is a registered charity, which provides a free and confidential service, offering advice, information and support to anyone whose lives have been affected by their own, or someone else's drug use. Basic general information and advice on housing issues, money management, benefits and other welfare rights issues with signposting, liaison and referral to appropriate agencies.
Main Issues/improvement option	

Name of Interviewee/s	Chris Walton
Organisation	Wales and West Housing Association
Role in relation to homelessness	Registered social landlord signed up with Homes4U allowing 100% of available properties to be advertised on system.
Main Issues/improvement option	Homes4U is key for trying to address homelessness in the Vale. Performance information around void properties is an issue within the Vale. Void properties need to be turned around more quickly.

Name of Interviewee/s	Maureen Neave
Organisation	Housing Benefits Manager - VoG
Role in relation to homelessness	Provision of housing benefits service within the Vale of Glamorgan.
Main Issues/improvement option	Good liaison with Registered Social Landlords and Private Sector Landlords with bimonthly meeting to discuss housing benefit issues established. Training sessions provided to support services on form filling as form is very complex and there is a high turnover of staff in that sector. Work closely with pensions service and hols surgery once a week. Visiting officers also signpost clients to other benefits that they could be accessing.

3.4 Joint working with the Benefits Team

Generally the Homelessness Team felt that communications between Housing and the Benefits Team is good. However, they felt that a 'them and us' culture was emerging. The main issue related to mislaid application forms and client information. There is currently no mechanism in place for the teams/lead officers to meet regularly to discuss any issues or outstanding claims. Whenever, a client takes on a new tenancy (Council or VATs) a pre-tenancy determination form is completed by the Homelessness Team/Prevention Team. The Homelessness Team faxes the completed form to the Rents office (Pontypool) that calculates the correct level of rent payable by each client. The form is then returned back to Housing Benefits and a copy is sent to the homelessness team. Processing these claims can be slow and can fail to take into account any pre-tenancy determination forms. As a result, an indicative amount is usually set, that is usually below the required amount to cover the rent. Although such issues are generally resolved and rents are backdated, it does increase the risk of a tenancy breaking down.

The team suggested that it would be helpful to know the progress of claims and to be kept up to date with any issues in relation to the claim or the claimant. In addition, regular feedback about problems/delays in processing Housing Benefits would prevent complaints from the private landlord. The team felt it would be useful to have read only access to the Benefits system, so that they can view client information on screen and be kept up to date with progress of their claim. The team commented that they currently have read-only access to the rents information.

Greater understanding by Benefits staff of the variety of functions of the Housing and Homelessness service including, for example, the VATs scheme. There have also been changes that enable new tenancies to start from any day of the week rather than traditionally the Monday, but not always acknowledged. A greater understanding would result in fewer mistakes when processing client benefit claims. Inconsistent advice due to the level of staff

turnover, has led to the Homelessness Team assisting more vulnerable clients to fill in the lengthy and complicated claim forms.

3.5 Homelessness Advice Team

The Homelessness Advice Team is currently understaffed. Originally there were 2 full-time Homelessness Advice Assistants along with 2 part-time Advice Assistants as well as an Administrative Assistant. The team is currently providing a 5-day service with only 1 ½ staff (one full-time advisor has left and not yet been replaced and one part time advisor is on maternity leave). This has generated significant workload pressures, as staff from the Prevention Team and the temporary Review Officer are currently providing cover

Whilst the issue of staffing levels is acknowledged it is not considered possible to make a recommendation to increase staff levels due to the financial pressures currently faced by the Community Services Directorate. However, a funding bid for a temporary Private Sector Co-ordinator post was agreed by the WAG. This post could be beneficial to improving working relationships between Housing Benefits and the Homelessness Team and impact on service improvements for the user and external agencies. Therefore the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation 8

1. That the temporary WAG funded post of the new Private Sector Co-ordinator be added to the establishment under the terms of the grant and that on appointment, the remit of the new Private Sector Co-ordinator include:
 - Shadowing Housing Benefits staff and coordinating improved joint working.
 - Read-only access to Housing Benefits information and identifying and resolving potential problems.
 - Co-ordination of regular liaison meetings between Housing Benefits and Homelessness Prevention Teams.
 - Nomination of lead Housing Benefits officer or the placement of a Housing Officer within Housing Benefits section to liaise with Homelessness Team.
 - Development of Housing Benefits performance indicators for pre-tenancy determinations and clients on indicative rents.
 - Review of discretionary payments.
 - Regulation of quality of landlords in order to increase housing stock

Recommendation 4 may also go some way to help alleviate the MoT action:

“That the Housing Service review and reconfigure existing staff resources so that prevention is the initial response to all homelessness enquiries.”

Joint working with Social Services

The Team was positive about their relationship with Social Services, with the exception of experiencing difficulty when trying to contact some Social Workers. There were also problems associated with high turnover of social workers.

Information Management

The Homelessness Team has a database system that is used for capturing client details and recording statistics, but it is currently not fully operating to its full potential. The current

system is slow and restrictive making it difficult to access the information required. The Homelessness Team currently run two database systems; an Access database for prevention and an ANITE database for Homelessness Section. The team felt it would be beneficial if the two databases were linked to enable the sharing of information. The team also highlighted the benefits of linking information on the benefits system to their own databases.

Recommendation 9

That a review of the ANITE database be conducted to examine opportunities for further development

When a client presents as homeless, it is a Homelessness Advice Assistant that has first contact. They provide the client with information and advice and conduct an initial assessment to find out if they are eligible for assistance. The advisors conduct in-depth investigations to determine whether the individual can be classified as homeless or intentionally homeless. 75% of all cases are referred to the Prevention Team. The Homeless Prevention Officer will assist the client through providing mediation and other support services and help them find appropriate accommodation through the VATs scheme. If the individual cannot be prevented from becoming homeless, they are then referred back to the Homeless Advice Assistants who will then attempt to find them temporary accommodation whilst a final decision is made on their homelessness application.

The Prevention Team also locates landlords and properties and sets up VATs tenancies and securing tenancies. They are also responsible for managing and securing these tenancies once they have been set up. The Homelessness Team has started utilising private landlords to use their properties for temporary accommodation. This works on a leasing basis, whereby the Council would lease the property from the private landlord for fixed number of years and then use that property as temporary accommodation. This has the benefit of keeping vulnerable groups/families out of a hostel environment.

This work will help address the Council's scarcity of suitable temporary accommodation. However, further innovations will be required to continue to reduce homelessness figures and to comply with new WAG requirements in 2007 and 2008. Therefore the following recommendation is made:

Recommendation 10

That in light of the new suitability order, the Housing department continues to examine alternative accommodation options to increase the level of temporary accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan and that the timescale for turning around void properties be improved in order to ensure that at risk groups are accommodated.

3.6 Service User Interviews

Service User A: Accommodated through Homes 4 U

Service Rating: 1/10

Case Study

This service user moved in with her parents when she became pregnant and the relationship her partner broke down. Shortly afterwards her father passed away. Her mother was experiencing problems repaying the mortgage and subsequently sold the house. With no onward address, the service user along with her mother presented themselves to housing services. The service user, felt little was done to prevent them becoming homeless. At this point, as far as the service user was aware, there had been no liaison between Housing Services and Housing Benefits to attempt to make appropriate assessments and keep the family within their home. Had the service user received advice from housing benefits at this stage the service user and their family could have potentially been prevented from becoming homeless. It was only once the house was sold and they had to move out was assistance provided.

The service user was then referred to the Treharne Hostel in Barry; but was not advised what belongings to take with her. On arrival, no blankets were provided and the heavily pregnant service user had to share bathroom facilities with tenants on the same floor. Overall, the service user felt that Treharne hostel was good. But, felt that some of the rules such as no visitors, curfews etc are appropriate to some residents and not others. Safety was mentioned as an issue within the hostel, as the pregnant service user was accommodated next to single males that had a history of substance misuse. This she felt was inappropriate and contributed to her anxiety during her time there.

The service user spent approximately 3 months in the hostel before securing a tenancy through the Council's Homes 4 U scheme. The service user did not fully understand the Homes 4 U process and found the ratings and categories confusing. On moving in, the standard of the accommodation was poor; there was little to no workspace in the kitchen and no flooring. The council only provided free paint for the walls, but no other materials were supplied. The service user is now settled into her new house, but felt that the council's Housing Services could have done more to support her.

Improvement Areas:

- More consistent and regular advice to service users on their situation
- Improve the standards of permanent accommodation.
- Improve communications between Housing Services and Housing Benefits, so that the service user receives accurate up to date advice that could potentially prevent homelessness.

Service User B: Accommodated through the VATs scheme

Service Rating: 7/10

Case Study

The family are from outside the area, and moved into private rented accommodation. Difficulties were experienced with the private landlord, which put the family at risk of homelessness. During this time, the family presented themselves to the housing offices and were awarded silver status through the Homes 4 U system. The Homeless Prevention Team provided good up to date advice. However, over time the quality of this advice was inconsistent due to staff vacancies. As a result, the family felt that they were not being kept up to date with progress in relation to the Homes 4 U process.

The family spent over a year bidding for houses on Homes 4 U, with no success. They felt their experience could have been improved had their been a more comprehensive information leaflet explaining the different stages of the Homes 4 U process, with an idea of realistic waiting times. Regular contact between client and Housing Officers would have also improved communications. In relation to Housing Benefits advice, the family felt that little information was explained to them in relation to what they were entitled to claim.

Whilst on the Homes 4 U waiting list, the family were advised that they could access alternative accommodation more quickly through the Vale's VAT scheme. The Homelessness Prevention Team helped the family find suitable private accommodation and paid for the first month's rent along with a bond to help them on their feet. When the family moved in, the condition of the property was poor, with broken glass in one of the bedrooms and a faulty fuse box. This has since been rectified.

Improvement Areas:

- There is the need for regular updates and feedback between client and housing officers regarding the status of applications and Homes 4 U process.
- Improve sign posting and accessibility to information and advice i.e. in the form of an information leaflet.

Service User C: Found intentionally homeless

Service Rating: 5/10

Case Study

The service user was privately renting accommodation in Barry, but could not keep up the rent repayments whilst in prison. The service user recalled, that prior to release, no support was provided by the probation service to assist him in finding suitable accommodation.

The service user was released late on a Friday, so had to wait until the Monday before he could report to Housing Services. As a result, he spent two evenings sleeping on a friend's sofa and the third night sleeping rough. The following Monday, the service user reported to the Homelessness Officers and was accommodated in Treharne hostel whilst he underwent assessment.

Whilst in Treharne, the Homelessness Team found the service user to be intentionally homeless because his previous conviction put him in breach of his license. Consequently, he was served 4 weeks notice to leave the hostel. The service user feels that he has received little support from Homelessness Team in finding alternative accommodation.

The service user has since been in contact with Llamau, who are now working closely with him to secure a private tenancy through their bond scheme and provide him with the necessary support he needs.

Improvement Area:

- Further develop appropriate systems that can support those who are found intentionally homeless-particularly those at risk at becoming serial service users

Service User D: Young Person Accommodated at Safe House by Llamau

Service Rating: 8/10

Case Study

Originally the service user lived with his adoptive parents. Whilst he was just 16, his adoptive father asked him to leave due to difficulties at home. His adoptive mother took him to Housing Services for advice. Llamau provided mediation between the service user and his adopted parents, but over time this proved unsuccessful. Due to his age, Llamau immediately found him accommodation at the Safe House that is specifically designed for young people aged between 16-18 years old.

Llamau also directed him to Housing Benefits to make a Benefits application. The service user found claiming Housing Benefits a confusing process and felt that council staff did not really fully explain the process. The staff would often use difficult language that he struggled to understand.

On arrival at the Safe House, he completed a short pre-entry questionnaire with his support worker to develop a support plan tailored to his needs. He currently has contact with his support worker on a weekly basis, who helps him to become more independent by developing his budgeting, cleaning and cookery skills.

Once the service user is 18, the support worker will explain how he can apply for a Homes 4 U priority card. His readiness to move on and begin bidding for homes, is a joint decision that is made by both the support worker and the client. Throughout his time at the Safe House the young person has felt safe and supported.

Improvement Area:

- A youth focused leaflet that fully explains the housing and homelessness process to young people.

Service User E: Young Person Accommodated at Safe House by Llamau

Service Rating: 8/10

Case Study

Service user left home due to family difficulties. He was referred to Llamau, who initially provided some mediation support over a couple of months. Mediation was proving ineffective so they found him a place within the Safe House.

The service user has had little advice and support from Housing Services or Housing Benefits. He felt that information was not readily available and accessible to young people.

The Llamau support worker provides a good level of support and advice. He described the support worker sessions as good fun and felt that the sessions promoted greater independence. Through Llamau, the service user has also accessed a range of training opportunities including an NVQ in retail. He feels that the Safe House has provided him with good stability and opportunities for the future.

Improvement Area:

Information and advice service that is accessible to young people.

Service User F: Young Person Accommodated at Safe House by Llamau

Service Rating: 5/10

Case Study

The service user moved to this country with her older sister over 2 years ago. However, due to a family dispute, her sister gave her two weeks notice to leave the flat they shared. The service user was under 18 and had no other direct family or friends in the area, so was referred to Llamau by Housing Services. Llamau attempted to mediate between the sister and the client, however when this failed, she was accommodated in the Safe House.

Llamau referred her to Housing Benefits, but she found the process slow and frustrating. Some problems were experienced processing her Housing Benefit, due to passport delays. Although this was outside the Council's control, the service user felt that this was not fully explained to her.

The service user does not fully understand the Homes 4 U process such as how the system works and how to bid for homes. She felt that a leaflet designed specifically for young people would be useful.

Improvement Area:

Up to date and accurate information and advice, so that service user is kept informed of any delays or difficulties when processing claims.

Recommendation 13

That the Council invests in the production of a video/DVD highlighting the realities for young people leaving home and be shown at all Vale of Glamorgan schools.

Service User G: Private Rented Accommodation through Llamau bond scheme

Service Rating: 1/10

Case Study

Originally this service user was accommodated in Treharne hostel. He spent a couple of months in Treharne, before Housing Services issued a notice for him to leave. He was then referred on to the Llamau Jigso project. Llamau immediately helped him to find a private rented flat and provided him with a bond.

Since approaching Llamau, the service user has received help from two support workers. Llamau also referred him onto Turning Point (a substance misuse agency), who have provided free forklift truck training to help him progress back into work.

Service User H: Private Rented Accommodation through Llamau bond scheme

Service Rating: 7/10

Case Study

- This service user spent 8 years on the road, until finally coming to Cardiff. After some time he decided to move to the Vale, where he spent 6 months sleeping rough in Barry.
- Eventually he presented himself to Housing Services and was then directed to Llamau for help. He felt that Housing Services were not very sympathetic to his needs. Llamau quickly helped the client to find suitable private rented accommodation and provided a bond so that he could move in quickly. Llamau also helped him to apply for Housing Benefit, which was processed very quickly.

Service User I: Currently living in temporary accommodation

Service Rating: 3/10

Case Study

The service user, her boyfriend and young child were living in cramped conditions in the family home. The service user had to share a small room with her boyfriend and child. Life at home became particularly more difficult, with her brother has learning difficulties. As a result, the service user approached Housing Services. Initially, the service user felt that information was not freely available, however when she did meet with Homelessness Prevention Team potential options open to her were fully explained.

Subsequently, she was allocated a gold card through the Homes 4 U system and accommodated temporarily at the Treharne Hostel. She felt that the Hostel staff were very helpful and supportive, however felt that the accommodation was not suitable for herself, boyfriend and child. The service user described the Hostel as being dirty and at times felt unsafe as fire exit door was not working. She commented on the problems associated with sharing a bathroom with other residents, especially in terms of privacy and cleanliness when attempting to bathe her young child.

Even though the service user has a gold card she has been unsuccessful at bidding for properties. The service user commented on the lack of suitable accommodation advertised in Homes 4 U. For example, in one week out of the 10 properties advertised, 5 were specifically for the over 55s. Very few properties seemed to be available for families. The service user felt that the Homelessness Prevention Team did not fully explain the homelessness system and VATs scheme and found the team to be very supportive and helpful. However, the service user felt that her experience could have been improved if there was a leaflet explaining the process fully and improved sign posting of services available to the service user and her family.

Improvement Actions:

Need to improve suitability of current temporary accommodation at Treharne. It would be preferential to accommodate certain groups of people i.e. pregnant women by floors. This would improve security and their own sense of safety and privacy.

- There is also the need to improve standards of cleanliness.
- Improve sign posting of information to better direct service users to different services and support agencies.

3.7 Assembly Member Interviews



Name: Mark Isherwood
Region: North Wales AM
Political Party: Conservative Group

Key challenges facing Local authorities:

- High expectations on local authorities to deliver more through their homelessness strategies;
- Young homelessness and repeat homelessness;
- Meeting the increased demand for housing; and
- Local versus regional issues.

Good practice Examples:

Save the Family-

A Church based charity that helps homeless families and those at risk of becoming homeless usually as a result of anti-social behaviour or substance misuse problems. This project provides emergency accommodation for over 24 families with 19 placements supported through supporting people funding. On average the project receives 7 referrals a day and over 78% of families never become homeless again.

Support is provided to each family through a dedicated support worker. There is also an exclusion unit on site for children who have been excluded from school enabling them to continue their education. The level of support provided is tailored to the individual and an appropriate resettlement programme is designed for each family to enable them to become more independent and move on.

Community Warden Scheme:

Community wardens work closely with the Police to tackle issues associated with homelessness such as anti-social behaviour and substance misuse. The community wardens not only improve the neighbourhoods by picking up used syringes etc, but also work closely with the community and attend youth clubs and conduct outreach work those living on the streets. This approach has helped to break down barriers and build bridges between clients and agencies.

Key Improvement areas:

- Greater emphasis on sharing good practice within Wales;
- Making homelessness a community wide issue;
- More supported living transitional schemes; and
- More engagement with housing associations and voluntary social landlords.



Name: Lorraine Barrett
Region: Cardiff South and Penarth AM
Political Party: Labour Party

Key challenges facing Local authorities:

- Lack of available housing stock;
- Depletion of social housing; and
- Community ties to an area that makes rehousing/relocating difficult.

Good practice Examples:

Ty Gobaith-

This is a project run by the Salvation Army in Cardiff. The centre provides single bed accommodation for 61 males. There are also self-contained units for move on. These self-contained units are designed to promote client independence whilst receiving one to one assistance from a support worker.

Young Builder's Trust:

This was a project in the Cardiff area that provided young people with the opportunity to learn how to build houses. These young homeless people were then given first refusal to the accommodation once the building work was complete. This project not only helped these young people secure permanent accommodation, but also have input into the design and developmental stages of building a house and acquire practical workforce skills.

Key improvement areas:

- Extend the suspension of 'Right to Buy' schemes in areas where homelessness and housing demands are high



Name: Leanne Wood
Region: South Wales Central AM
Political Party: Plaid Cymru

Key challenges facing Local authorities:

- Lack of appropriate temporary accommodation, unsuitable B&B accommodation used for families;
- Emphasis on housing stock transfer, increased risk of tenant evictions by housing association;
- Lack of accommodation for vulnerable groups; and
- Depletion of social housing as a result of right to buy schemes;

Good practice Examples:

Open Door Project

This is a project run by Barnados in Pontypridd aimed at Looked after Children who are at risk of becoming homeless after leaving care. Young people leaving care were given training to build their own homes with support and expert help and advice. This two-year one off project trained the young people in all aspects of housing building. At the end of the programme they were able to live in their home and were provided ongoing support through a support worker to enable them to live independently.

One-stop shop

Libraries in Treorchy have developed their own version of one-stop shops to provide all Members of the public with housing information and advice.

Key improvement areas:

- Provision of more specialist units tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups;
- Greater focus on supported temporary housing for all high risk groups;
- Large-scale re-investment by Central Government into Council Housing Build programme; and
- Pooling of partnership resources to tackle the crosscutting homelessness issues.

3.8 Site visit homelessness centres in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan – 2nd May 2006

Site visits were undertaken to four selected schemes to demonstrate the range of facilities available and to compare schemes within and outside of the county. As a number of the Vale area homeless individuals tend to migrate to Cardiff as the capital city, review members thought it most appropriate to look at accommodation provision in Cardiff.

The Huggard Centre

The Huggard Centre in Cardiff was established and is run by Cardiff Action for Single Homeless (C.A.S.H.). It was formed in 1989 when the Cardiff Cyrenians were no longer able to provide Day Centre facilities for homeless people. Temporary accommodation ("the cabins") was set up with the help of the former South Glamorgan County Council and many other funders. The new purpose built Centre consisting of a Day Centre and Emergency Bed Unit (The Huggard Centre) was opened in August 1993 with funding from the Huggard Charitable Trust, Housing for Wales and the Local Authority.

A small number of Members were given a tour of the facility by Darryn Thomas, a key support worker with the Centre. All of the support services offered by C.A.S.H. are free of charge and available to everyone. Members were impressed by Darryn's dedication and enthusiasm for the work undertaken in the centre.

The Emergency Bed Unit (EBU)

The Emergency Bed Unit (EBU) is one of Cardiff's principal frontline direct access accommodation services. This unit was developed by C.A.S.H. to meet the needs of those who found themselves homeless and living on the city streets of Cardiff. Since opening in 1993, the 20-bed unit has been permanently full and heavily oversubscribed. Each individual has their own room and the communal areas are all regularly refurbished to maintain high standards. Individuals are able to stay here until the support team are able to help them find suitable long-term accommodation to meet their individual needs, and to help them along the road to independence. Each service user is allocated with 2 Key Workers. This level of support is highly effective and allows the Huggard centre to boast one of the most efficient move on ratios of the city's hostels. The EBU is vacated each morning at 9am and is re-opened at 5pm.

The Day Centre

The Day Centre is open throughout the day and evening, 7 days a week. Monday – Friday 9am – 9pm, Saturday & Sunday 9am – 5pm. It operates an open door policy and aims to turn no one away. The Centre offers free soup and bread and meals at a subsidised price, it also has support workers on hand offering advice to all service users.

C.A.S.H's 12 Houses

C.A.S.H run 12 shared houses in and around the city of Cardiff maintaining 38 individuals in supported accommodation. Each tenant is allocated a support worker, the aim of the project is to support tenants and prepare them for independent living.

Winter Night Centre

During the colder months November – March the Day Centre re-opens 10pm each night to allow up to 12 people to use the centre, people who would otherwise be sleeping rough. Priority is given to couples and people with dogs.

User Development Programme

C.A.S.H. employ a User Development Officer and their main job is to encourage their service users to participate in training, education and employment.

Ty Seren

Ty Seren is one of three temporary supported accommodations provided by Taff Housing Association to young, homeless women through its Support Services department in Cardiff. Members were particularly impressed by the security procedures involved in entering the house and the safety provision for these vulnerable young women. Unlike our own hostel, Hafan Treharne, the front door is manned 24 hours a day. Clare Hollinshead, Project Manager of Ty Seren, showed members around the facility.

It provides supported housing to 29 single women aged between 16 and 25 in a combination of self-contained flats and rooms with shared facilities. Support and life skills programmes are designed to enable residents to move on to independent living and in-house activities are provided to encourage resident participation in their home and community. Working with external agencies, residents are given the opportunity to take part in training schemes, further education and volunteering projects. The residents at Ty Seren are supported with move-on and this has recently been extended with the opening of Ty Haul as a move-on facility for women leaving Ty Seren.

Members were able to speak to a number of residents, all of whom expressed satisfaction with the facility and the support received from members of staff. One resident noted “it was good to be able to speak to someone in the early hours of the morning when she felt most lonely if unable to sleep”. This statement contrasts directly with the vulnerable feeling a number of the residents expressed they had felt at both day and night in the Hafan Treharne Hostel in the previous case studies.

Ty'r Fro SAFE House

Ty'r Fro is Llamau's fourth “SAFE” project and is a partnership between Llamau and the Vale of Glamorgan Council. SAFE stands for Supported Housing Advice, Family Mediation, and Empowerment. It is a short-term assessment project for homeless 16 and 17 year olds. Ty'r Fro has five bed spaces, a communal living room, kitchen, games room and office. The project is staffed 24 hours a day. This model of support and accommodation was developed by Llamau as a direct response to the change in homeless priority need groups introduced by the Welsh Assembly Government in March 2001.

Young people are referred to Ty'r Fro via the Vale of Glamorgan Council's Homelessness Department and Jigso, the Llamau advice centre for housing for 16 – 21 year olds in the Vale. Once a young person enters Ty'r Fro they are allocated a key worker who builds a comprehensive assessment of their needs. This includes support needs, living skills, education, training and financial status. The key worker then supports the young person in all of these areas. The Key worker helps to identify and agree on move-on accommodation that is appropriate and sustainable. The young people housed in Ty'r Fro may stay for as long as they feel they need to.

A family mediation worker is attached to Ty'r Fro and aims where appropriate to help young people and their families find some common ground on which to rebuild relationships. Llamau also provide outreach training sessions at Ty'r Fro on a weekly basis including activities such as cooking, discussion groups art and crafts etc., The aim of which is to encourage young people to engage in training, particularly those who are not ready for or interested in mainstream training and education.

The success of Ty'r Fro can be seen from the case studies, where young people who were using the facility were very complimentary of both the facility and their own key workers.

Hafan Treharne Hostel

Gary Griffiths, Homelessness and Accommodation Officer for the Vale of Glamorgan Council based at Hafan Treharne Hostel gave a detailed tour of the facilities in Barry. Gary had also prepared a useful briefing note for the Members, which can be found at appendix 6. Hafan Treharne comprises of 26 units of accommodation, with 24 places in the main body of the hostel, plus two family flats adjacent to the main hostel, the exteriors of which are covered by CCTV cameras. These figures are given in units of accommodation rather than individual rooms, as it is often the case that more than one person is housed per room. The main hostel is arranged in 6 groups of 4 rooms (landings), with each landing sharing access to communal bathrooms and kitchens. The family flats have 2 bedrooms, with separate lounges, kitchens and bathroom facilities.

Hafan Treharne currently have six members of staff, the Homelessness Accommodation Officer who supervises the running of the hostel and undertakes the support for clients in Bed and Breakfast. Three Hostel Support Workers who act as key workers and provide support for clients within the hostel if the client does not have any other support. Where there is existing support the Hostel Support Workers liaise on a regular basis with the Support Provider and assists them with the implementation of the individual support plan developed by the Support Provider. There are also two Hostel Wardens who have a caretaking role and ensure that the hostel building and grounds are maintained. They also assist with admissions, discharges and sleepovers at the hostel.

The hostel is staffed on a 24-hour basis, with three shifts:

Early Shift 08.00 – 15.30 or 08.30 – 16.30

Late Shift 15.30 – 24.00 or 16.30 – 24.00

Sleep in shift 00.00 – 08.00 (1 member of staff)

The hostel staff work closely with other agencies and Council departments, such as Children's Services, for which there are joint protocols to ensure that there is high quality support and to help identify and manage risks. During office hours all referrals are made to the Hostel through the Vale Council's Homelessness Section. Outside office hours, referrals are made via Vale Community Alarm Services (VCAS), who contact Hostel staff to arrange accommodation if required. Hafan Treharne is not a Direct Access Hostel, as individuals cannot simply turn up at the hostel without first being referred and accepted.

Admissions and Discharges are available at appendix 6. It must be noted that the turnover of clients is quite high, the hostel being the main source of temporary emergency accommodation in the Vale. Whilst staff at the hostel constantly attempt to segregate different types of client it is not always possible. It is sometimes the case that due to numbers of residents a young mother may find herself sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities with single males. In this respect the hostel will not achieve the suitability order required for 2011.

Consideration has been given to the provision of a new hostel in the County. This option would require the Council to tackle a number of issues and requires significant Capital and Revenue funding streams. A budget bid was made for the 2004/5 year but was not supported. The main issues can be summarised as follows:

- Identification of suitable site and obtaining planning consent
- Costs
 - Capital – Anticipated at £ 570,000
 - Revenue – Anticipated at £ 65,000 per annum (net of income)
- Time – Hostel would take 18 to 24 months to complete

The Housing Department is currently pursuing an opportunity to expand the facility at Hafan Treharne through taking over the ownership of 4 flats adjacent to the property currently owned by Hafod Housing Association. Should negotiations prove unsuccessful a further budget bid will be made for 2006/07.

4.0 Good and Notable Practice

Many local authorities and partner organisations have demonstrated positive and innovative practice in relation to preventing and tackling homelessness. Listed below are some examples from Wales and England that have adopted particularly innovative practice in relation to tackling and preventing homelessness.

4.1 England

Partnership working

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Broadland Council	To tackle homelessness issues and review current levels of service on a larger geographical sub-region. Conduct partnership approach through conducting a joint review across the sub-region.	Broadland, South Norfolk and Norwich Councils worked together in partnership following the production of the Homelessness Act 2002. These three authorities worked in partnership to carry out a joint review of homelessness services for the whole sub-region. This approach was not only beneficial to building relationships and partnerships between local authorities and agencies, but also reduced the number of meetings that agencies would need to attend during the review. This approach also proved an effective way in which to engage agencies and the public in the review process. For example, various meetings and focus groups were arranged across all three districts involved. There was also a weeklong event of review activities that enabled the public to have their input into the review. All this resulted in the production of a final joint review document, which contained individual strategies applicable to each district involved. Where actions apply to a single area, these feed into individual action plans for that authority. Where there are shared actions between the three authorities a combined sub-regional action plan has been produced.
Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council	Providing support and information for victims of Domestic Violence. Preventing homelessness.	Both authorities identified the significant link between homelessness and domestic violence as an issue for their areas. In response, they have worked collaboratively to develop a multi-agency Domestic Violence forum that has a membership of over 45 agencies. The forum has set out clear aims, objectives and developed an action plan. In addition to this forum, the two authorities recognised the need for an independent outreach service that would offer information and advice to victims on a variety of issues including housing. Funding was received from the ODPM to run a one-year pilot programme. Within the first 6 months the project assisted over 51 adults and 53 children and in many cases prevented these families becoming homeless. One part-time worker employed by a local Housing Association provides outreach support.

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Croydon-Joint working with Health Services	To assist homeless households in temporary accommodation to access health services.	<p>Croydon has enabled greater access to health services for homeless households in a variety of ways:</p> <p>Information Packs-In collaboration, Croydon Council and PCT produced 'A guide to health and community services' providing homeless clients in temporary accommodation information on how to access a range of health, education and social services as well as other advice agencies. Within the guide there is also information about local services and amenities near to where temporary accommodation is located.</p> <p>Regular liaison between the temporary accommodation team and health visitors. This ensures that all families with young children in Bed and Breakfast accommodation has regular visits from a health visitor and helps to reinforce health service links when they move on.</p> <p>Surgeries- Council resettlement officers hold regular surgeries in bed and breakfast hotels to provide information and advice to clients and to register them with a GP.</p> <p>Healthy living centres-Council has developed good links with local health living centres to enable homeless households benefit from outreach services.</p>
Pendle Borough joint protocols for young homeless 16-17 year olds.	Develop and implement a protocol aimed at young homeless 16-17years to clarify roles and responsibilities of social services and local housing authorities.	A Countywide group was established through the Lancashire Youth Homelessness Forum to look at ways of developing a joint protocol for young homeless people. There were senior representatives on this group from borough councils, social services and Barnados. As a result of these joint meetings the group agreed a new model of working in principle and a methodology for joint working in the future. Subsequently, a procedural document and flowchart and simplified referral form has been produced.
North Yorkshire districts- Richmondshire, Hambleton, Harrogate, Craven, Selby, Ryedale and Scarborough.	To work collectively together to tackle homelessness issues for relevant groups and develop a set of protocols/procedures to serve specific client needs.	<p>This was a North Yorkshire 7 district partnership that also included representatives from Social Services, the Probation Service, a Homeless Advocate, Supporting People and a Primary Care Trust. Even though each district had a duty to undertake its own homeless review, the partnership did work effectively together to identity joint protocols for the assessment of all client groups. The partnership also sought to develop protocols specific to each relevant client group. For example, Richmondshire and Selby developed a protocol for the assessment of ex-offenders, whilst Scarborough and Ryedale worked on a protocol for families including 16-17 year olds and care leavers. Harrogate and Hambleton focused on a protocol aimed at the elderly and individuals with learning disabilities, whilst Selby and Craven focused on developing an assessment protocol for mental health. Finally, Richmondshire and Hambleton concentrated on developing a protocol for ex-service personnel. To keep the rest of the partnership up to date with progress, regular feed back meetings were arranged to agree the protocols as they were developed. Following the development of these client specific protocols a series of training sessions were rolled out to all agencies co-ordinated through the North Yorkshire Training Group. The funding was pooled by the 7 district councils as well as social services.</p>

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Develop a client-centred service through effective partnership working.	Rochdale MBC homelessness services has developed joint Assessment Criteria in collaboration with Social Services. The purpose of these joint criteria is to facilitate information sharing between departments, and ensure that a joint approach is taken to tackle homelessness amongst 16/17 year olds. The development of such criteria enables young people to receive the appropriate level of support and advice to prevent them becoming homeless. Personal Medical Service is collaboration between the health and voluntary sector and homelessness services. This service enables homeless clients to access to health surgeries at two-day centres, direct access hostels as well as town centre surgery.
Bradford Metropolitan Borough Council and Bradford West City Housing Trust	To provide specialist support and services to clients and households that are at risk of repeated homelessness due to anti-social behaviour.	'About Turn' is a partnership project between Bradford MBC and Bradford West City Housing Trust. This is joint working project that aims to recognise and support the needs of the client. There is a single point of contact for the client through which then a variety of statutory and voluntary organisations interact. The 'About turn's' tenancy compliance officer works directly with the client whilst continuing to seek specialist help and support from other agencies. The tenancy compliance officer builds up a case file on each client, that details all the agencies involved with each individual's case. Case conferences are held before tenancies are secured for the client. This enables agencies to share and discuss information in relation to the client's support needs and ensure that action plans are in place to ensure client can maintain their tenancy in the long term.

Expanding Temporary Accommodation

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Croydon	To develop an effective response to the growing homelessness demand. To develop further temporary accommodation options and initiatives to tackle this demand.	A variety of initiatives and schemes have been developed by Croydon to further develop and expand temporary accommodation schemes. Housing Association Leasing Scheme (HALS) has been expanded through some funding via the ODPM. Sponsored Tenancy Scheme (STS). This option provides families with a greater choice of location and type of accommodation. Throughout the tenancy, landlords and tenants are give support to maintain long-term tenancies. Market Rent Schemes- Croydon has worked closely with London and Quadrant Housing Trust and ODPM funded £17.5million to start up the scheme to build 500 properties in London. This scheme involves RSLs acquiring the properties without Social Housing Grant and then leasing these to the Council for a period of 5-10 years at current market rates. After this period, they can use Social Housing Grants to make properties their permanent stock or alternatively sell/let some property to fund retention of remaining stock. The Council maintains nomination rights for this permanent social housing. This approach has been particularly effective and seen Bed and Breakfast figures drop significantly from 575 in Nov 2003 to 70-80.

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	To expand availability of temporary accommodation available.	Trafford MBC have transformed their temporary accommodation; replacing the old hostel accommodation with self-contained units. This has been the result of Trafford MBC utilising their housing stock for the provision of self-contained temporary accommodation. And consequently, the Homelessness Service no longer uses B&B accommodation. In addition, to improved standards of accommodation, Trafford MBC tailors a support and resettlement package and referrals to specialist agencies to meet the needs of each family.

Advice and Advocacy and Mediation Services

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Tamworth Borough Council	To provide learning opportunities for school children to better understand the realities of housing and homelessness.	A Homelessness Educational Programme was developed as a collaborative project between Tamworth BC and Tamworth Cornerstone Housing Association, Prince's Trust as well as some other organisations. This project has visited 6 secondary school in the area o engage young people in discussion about housing and homelessness issues.
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	Providing advice and information and support to prevent homelessness.	Trafford have developed a variety of projects that are aimed at preventing homelessness. For example a young person's educational programme where housing advisors target schools to raise awareness of housing rights and options. The homelessness team also works closely with private landlords through the development of a landlord forum and the establishment of an accreditation scheme for local landlords. Trafford also provide an advice service to offenders by visiting prisons and young offender institutes. Trafford MBC also assists homeless people to access a variety of training and employment opportunities as well as support and resettlement programmes designed to prevent tenancies from breaking down.
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	Preventative and focused service provision that targets the needs of individuals.	Rochdale MBC have adopted a pro-active approach to preventing homelessness by providing a range of advice and advocacy services for housing issues to mitigate the risk of homelessness. Resettlement support is also provided to clients who have challenging behaviour, to enable them to better integrate within their communities. For example, the 'Shelter Inclusion' is a resettlement project that assists clients who are at risk of homelessness due to anti-social behaviour.
Telford and Wrekin Borough Council	Advice services targeted at clients who are at risk of repossession.	Telford and Wrekin offer a variety of advice and support services to social housing clients who are at risk of repossession. In such cases the Council offers clients legal advice, will make representations at court on behalf of the client, provide debt counselling and advocacy services to enable them to stay in their properties.

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Bournemouth Borough Council	Integrated and co-ordinated information service.	Bournemouth BC has an integrated housing advice service that is provided under a contract through Shelter. The housing advice service otherwise known as Bournemouth Housing Advice Network (BHAN) involves a collaboration of over 50 agencies that are experts at provides housing and homelessness advice. This integrated approach to information and advice provision has significantly enhanced homelessness prevention, with agencies making referrals to the BHAS prior to the client reaching crisis point. Shelter provides all BHAN agencies with appropriate training, so those clients can be referred to BHAN service. The BHAN service has developed its own monitoring framework to collect case-data on each new client. The information that is collected can be shared between agencies and further improve service delivery and improvement.
Ealing London Borough Council	To identify mediation of client/s at first contact.	Ealing LBC have changed their mediation referral process, by getting the housing advice centre to conduct mediation assessments instead of the Homeless Persons unit. This has had the effect of being able to offer mediation services at first contact with clients.
Colchester Borough Council	A staged process aimed at improving relationship difficulties between parent/carer and child.	Have developed a four-staged mediation process. The first stage involves focusing on the need of the young person before then taking into account the perspectives of the parent/carers involved at stage 2. Stage 3 usually involves then a meeting between both the young person and the parents/carers. At this point the mediator remains neutral and acts as communication channel between parent/carer and child. The final stage is where any further support can be provided or referrals made to other agencies for substance misuse and counselling services.

Finding alternative accommodation and supporting Private Landlords

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Harrow London Borough Council	To prevent tenancy breakdowns amongst priority need groups.	Harrow LBC has developed a landlord liaison service that is aimed at priority need families that are at risk of eviction/tenancy breaking down. Disputes between tenants and landlords are usually due to rent arrears or compensation for damage caused by the tenant. In these cases, Harrow landlord liaison staff can access 'fix it funds' to resolve financial problems between the tenant and landlord before it escalates out of control. Harrow LBC has also successfully seconded housing benefits officers to their own teams to specifically tackle housing benefit problems.

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Bristol City Council	To increase level accommodation levels. To encourage landlords to let properties to Council tenants.	An introductory service for landlords was developed to encourage private landlords with property to let seek tenant nominations. The property needs to be inspected and meet specified criteria before the landlord can be accredited and become part of the scheme. In return, landlords receive the benefits of 12 months free contents insurance, 12 months guaranteed rent, deposit paid, fast-tracked housing benefit and the provision of professional and advice and support for both tenant and landlord. Once the landlord is accredited, the Council then identifies a suitable tenant to take on a minimum 12-month tenancy subject to the landlord's approval.
Colchester Borough Council	To facilitate access to private rented accommodation.	Colchester operated two assisted rent deposit schemes. The first scheme is primarily aimed at families, known as the family bond scheme, which enables homeless households access private tenancies on a temporary basis until they are re-housed. This involves a flexible arrangement between the Council and landlord, who agrees a tenancy of 11-12 months where there is the understanding that the tenant, will live temporarily until appropriate Council is found. The second scheme known as 'homefinders' is designed for households that have been classified as homeless where a referral can result in a discharge of the Council's re-housing duty. Tenants are not obliged to accept private tenancy offers and can reject in favour of waiting on direct council housing or social rented accommodation. Both these schemes are aimed at relieving homelessness rather than preventing it, however both schemes have been effective.

Supported Housing Schemes

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Vale Royal	To provide floating support for substance mis-users recently released from custody.	This is a support service that is individually tailored to the client's needs. The Vale Royal Borough Council in partnership with the Weaver Vale Housing Trust provides 6 self-contained units that can be let on a short-tenancy basis for up to 2 years. The floating support is provided through the Turning Point agency, who engages individuals in activities designed encourage clients to keep drug/alcohol free as well as develop new life skills. The prisons refer potential clients to Turning Point, who assess their suitability for the scheme. Progress of individuals on the scheme is monitored at quarterly meetings between Vale Royal BC, The Weaver Vale Housing Trust, Turning Point and Probation Services.

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Leicester City Council	To develop a tailored support plan to enable singles and couples sustain tenancies and resettle in communities.	The RISE resettlement and tenancy support scheme is targeted at single people and couples without any children over 16 years old who are at risk of becoming homeless. This project is client-focused that involves the identification of needs by conducting an individual assessment. Based on this initial assessment an individual support plan created by the support worker in agreement with the client. The support worker also visits the client to provide ongoing support. Each case is reviewed every 3 months to ensure that needs of the client are being met.

Tailoring Services to Individual Client Groups

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Leicester City Council	Provide support that meets the complex needs of a variety of client groups.	Leicester City Council has pioneered a number of initiatives that are targeted at specific client groups: Vulnerable single homeless people: this is multi-disciplinary team that delivers physical and mental health care services for homeless people, wet day centre and night shelters. Family and child support- is provided in the form of groups activities, parenting and stress management classes, play and breakfast clubs and resettlement and support. Asylum seekers and refugees-Leicester City Council in association with specialist RSLs have developed housing options, allocations policy, refugee resettlement, refugee hosting scheme with on-going support, translation and neighbourhood preparation and involvement project. Substance mis-users-specialist advice and support is provided for substance mis-users in the form of wet day centre and longer-term supported hostel accommodation. High risk offenders-Leicester City Council has developed joint protocols with Probation service and RSLs on the provision of specialist hostels, advice and support for ex-offenders.
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council	To develop a partnership approach to tackling Domestic Violence as a common cause of homelessness.	In response to the homelessness challenges as a result of domestic violence, Trafford MBC have developed a service level agreement with Trafford Women's Aid. The Council funding that Women's Aid receives has enabled the refuge to expand its accommodation as well as develop a community house for the outreach service.
Sutton London Borough Council 'Route to Rent'	Scheme is designed to assist young people at risk of becoming homeless find private rented accommodation.	The Route to Rent scheme runs weekly self-help workshops to assist young people gain access to private rented accommodation. The Council will refer a client to this scheme following an initial housing options interview. This is an excellent example of how the Council is working hard to assist non-priority groups find suitable accommodation. During these sessions clients are given advice regarding their own housing options and given recommendations of local

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
		landlords ad coached on presentation and negotiation skills. Although the focus is to empower individual responsibility, Council officers do provide direct support where required by negotiating with landlords on their behalf, conducting pre-tenancy determinations (to work out if housing benefit payments will cover the rent and be affordable to the client) and completing tenancy agreements. There is also direct liaison between Housing Options staff and Housing Benefits department to prevent/resolve housing benefit problems on behalf of the client.
Bristol Prison Service	To secure pre-conviction accommodation during early custodial period.	The Bristol Prison Homelessness prevention Project has developed a number of actions that are designed to secure accommodation for prisoners during a custodial period. These actions include: Petitioning against possession actions; Arranging lodgers or renting out the property during this period; Negotiating suitable repayment of rent arrears; Advocating on behalf of clients with housing benefits department; and Sourcing discretionary housing payments.
HM Prison Service/Youth offender Institution	Enable the prisoner to save their tenancy whilst serving a custodial sentence.	VISION is a cash initiative designed to tackle the rent arrears of a prisoner. This involves developing compact between the prisoner and housing provider where there are rent arrears associated with the property. The compact enables the prisoner's wages to be paid directly to the housing provider to reduce the level of rent arrears. Although in some cases this may have little impact on significant rent arrears, it does provide a means through which rent arrears is addressed and so increase the likelihood of saving the tenancy prior to release.
Probation service	To find suitable accommodation for prisoners prior to release.	The probation service employs a housing officer whose role it is to seek appropriate short-term tenancy for prisoners who would otherwise be at risk of homelessness upon release. The housing officer will: Make referrals to hostels; Assist prisoner in finding suitable private rented accommodation; Identify and apply for local authority rent deposit schemes; Make applications for shared ownership and social housing. In addition, the housing officer will encourage any prisoners who are serving longer than 6 months are encouraged to register on the local authority's housing waiting list.
Canterbury County Council	Enabling vulnerable client groups to access housing stock and live independently.	East Kent Cyrenians have been given nomination rights (up to 30 a year) by Canterbury CC. It is the role of the East Kent Cyrenian support worker to identify the clients they feel are capable of living independently and holding down a tenancy even if there are still some support requirements. The support worker will then nominate this client directly to Canterbury CC to secure social housing. This scheme has been successful at ensuring that vulnerable clients can gain access to council housing stock as well as receive all the necessary support they

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
		need.
Leicester City Council	To enable ethnic minority clients access housing service advice.	Leicester City Council has developed a tenancy sustainment project aimed at serving the needs of ethnic minority group clients. The STAR project consists of a multi-ethnic team that is able to communicate in thirteen different languages and also produce promotional material about its services in a variety of community languages.
Shelter Worcester rough sleepers project	To provide counselling advice to street homeless people to enable them to sustain tenancies in the future.	Shelter supports the Worcester rough sleeper project, by providing a counselling service to individuals who are homeless and live on the streets. The rationale behind this is to tackle the issues of these individuals, which will indirectly increase the likelihood of sustaining a tenancy in the future.
Teeside Homeless Action Group	To empower street homeless people.	This is a user-led approach, whereby street homeless people can share their experiences and express their needs. The group aims to empower street homeless people, so that they have a voice to shape services that are delivered by various mainstream agencies. This user group is also as a forum by agencies to conduct innovative research and consultation.
Shelter Inclusion Project	Provides tailored support and advocacy to individuals who are at risk of becoming homeless due to antisocial behaviour.	This project works closely with households and individuals that are homeless or at risk of homelessness as a consequence of their anti-social behaviour. The project provides tailored support and assessments to these individuals and tackles their anti-social behaviour, through addressing any additional support needs they may have.

Staffing and Structures

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Leicester City Council	Staff develop specialist homelessness skills.	Staff within the housing options team is each assigned a specialist role. For example, re-housing ex-offenders, housing benefits liaison and tenancy relations. This has not only enables officers to become expert in their fields, but also improves communications through the nomination of a key point of contact.
Bournemouth Borough Council	To respond to the growing demands of homelessness.	Bournemouth BC has separated out the operational and strategic element of homelessness services by the creation of specific managerial posts in relation to these two areas.

Performance and Service Monitoring

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Bristol City Council	To ensure homelessness prevention services are operated effectively.	Bristol City Council has commissioned external services to operate a number of its homelessness prevention services. To ensure that services are effective, responsive and delivered to the highest quality standard, the Council has developed a service monitoring and evaluation framework. All new contracts have prescribed service outcomes and specified performance measures and targets. Service quality can then be monitored on a regular basis. Such services may also be reviewed by Homelessness Prevention officers to ensure services that have been commissioned externally continue to be efficient and effective. The overall review is overseen by a Commissioning Advisory Panel that is made up of senior managers from a cross-section of partner agencies who are involved with homelessness prevention.

4.2 Wales

Partnership working

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Shared nomination agreements	To better co-ordinate the letting of new properties to priority need groups.	Pontypridd and Rhondda Cynon Taff Housing Authorities are working closely with Rhondda Cynon Taff Council to develop a shared nomination agreement. This will enable all social landlords to work together to let out homes as they are available to the highest need groups. The common housing register means homeless applicants are accommodated as a priority.
Secondments	To prevent 'log jams' in hostels and enable client to get the support they need.	Cardiff Council has seconded an officer from Cadwyn housing association to their team. The role of this individual is to oversee and support hostel providers. This joined up approach enables clients to get the support they need whilst in the hostel.

Tailoring Services to Individual Client Groups

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Valleys Inclusion Project	To tackle the causes and circumstances behind anti-social behaviour and prevent future homelessness.	This project is funded through the Welsh Assembly Government and covers both Rhondda Cynon Taff and Caerphilly regions. This Shelter project has been operating since 2005 in partnership with the two local authorities, TPAS Cymru and NCH Cymru. The project has been split into two phases. Phase 1 focuses on consultation and the collection of research evidence of anti-social behaviour. Phase 2 will involve the implementation of a pilot programme aimed at working

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
		with a small selection of households across the two boroughs with anti-social behavioural problems. Phase 2 is an intervention project to better integrate households into the community and prevent eviction and potential homelessness.
Housing Advice Project for ex-offenders	Enabling probation clients access suitable accommodation and assist them in sustaining their tenancy.	This programme is delivered in collaboration with Bridgend probation service. This is a specialist advice service targeted at ex-offenders who have been referred by the probation service. The advice centre runs every lunchtime Monday to Wednesday, where an advice worker will assist clients in finding suitable accommodation, access housing and benefits advice as well as provide advocacy on behalf of the client.
Multi-disciplinary Street Outreach Service	Aims to engage with the homeless individuals who are living on the streets and enabling them to access advice and services.	This scheme is targeted at street homeless individuals aged between 18-64. The outreach service provides advice and assistance to individuals who would otherwise be unable to access appropriate mainstream housing and other support services. The specialist outreach team provides advice and assistance on welfare rights, housing and benefits, health and substance mis-use. Caer Las provides drop-in sessions where the project is based, conducts outreach work on the Streets throughout Swansea city centre as well as conduct external surgeries throughout the area.
Dragon Arts Centre	To provide friendly and accessible arts and training opportunities to adults that has experienced homelessness.	The Dragon Arts Centre based in Swansea is an innovative project that provides free arts classes and various training opportunities for adults who have experienced homelessness. Typical activities and training opportunities include: pottery, carpentry and computer skill courses that will soon be accredited through the 'Open College Network'. These qualifications are nationally recognised and will assist Dragon Arts Centre members in finding employment or take up further education.
Personal Housing Plans-Shelter and Bridgend Council.	To assist single parents and young families in identifying housing options.	This is a pilot project that is being operated in conjunction with Bridgend County Borough Council. The project is aimed at single parents and young families and assists them in identifying their housing needs and develop a series of housing options in the form of a Personal Housing Plan. The Personal Housing Plan provides the client with housing advice and information. The plan also assesses the client's family circumstances and housing options that are available. This plan is tailored to each client's needs containing details of practical support that is available to them with regular follow up for ongoing support.
Prison Link Cymru	To prevent homelessness amongst ex-offenders.	This is national link service that covers the whole of Wales. It is an example of joint working involving the prison service, local authorities, Tai Trothwy and Shelter. Shelter Cymru provide support to 6 North Wales authorities, whilst Tai Trothwy cover the remainder of Wales. This project involves providing support to prisoners prior to their release. This encapsulates interviewing all prisoners who are likely to be homeless on release. A PLC homeless assessment form is then

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
		completed that will include additional support needs information. This information is then circulated to the relevant local authority to enable them to proactively identify appropriate accommodation and support when they are released.
Young Person's Project	To support young people and enabling them to access accommodation and sustain tenancies.	Shelter operates this project in collaboration with CAIS (a recognised drug and alcohol agency). The project is specifically aimed at providing advice and support to young people aged 16-25 years old. Typical services available to young people include: drop in centre, housing advice, advocacy, substance misuse support, outreach, soup kitchen assistance in finding accommodation and the provision of tenancy support.

Rent deposit/bond schemes

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Agorfa bond scheme	Enables low income households to secure a tenancy in the private rented sector.	This bond scheme is aimed at low-income clients who are unable to afford a deposit to secure a tenancy in the Arfon and Ynys Mon areas. This Agorfa scheme run by Cywaith Joseff provides a non-cash bond to individuals enabling them to access private sector rented accommodation. Agorfa also provide "Starter Packs" providing client with essential items such as bedding and other household necessities.

Prevention Initiatives

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Homelessness Prevention	Proactive measures to tackle homelessness.	The County Court Manager will liaise with the Housing and Social Services Department to inform them of any likely evictions. This enables the Homelessness officer to take a proactive approach by sending the individuals likely to be evicted a letter to offer them an appointment.
Independent Tenancy Advice and Support Projects-Shelter Cymru	To sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness.	Shelter Cymru work in partnership with Flintshire and Gwynedd County Council to provide tenancy support to local authority tenants. The purpose of this project is to enable clients to sustain their tenancies and prevent homelessness. The support that is provided by Shelter is intensive and on a one to one basis over the course of 6 or more months. The level of support provided is tailored to the individual client needs. Typical support includes advice on welfare rights, tenant rights, budgeting and debt advice and advocacy etc.
Grwp Gwalia	To encourage tenants to come off benefits and become more independent.	Grwp Gwalia have provide childcare, play and nursery facilities. The aim of this is to give tenants the freedom to find employment and encourage them to come off benefits.
Time Bank Scheme	To provide an opportunity for individuals to learn new skills and trade services.	This scheme is operated by Taff Housing Association. The purpose of these time banks is a way that enables a variety of people to come together and share their

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
		skills and expertise and help others. In relation to tenants, it is a way in which they can develop and exchange new skills. It works by participants depositing/sharing their time and expertise to help others.

Advice and Advocacy and Mediation Services

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
HOP Project and JIGSO project.	To provide wide ranging housing and homelessness advice and solutions to prevent homelessness amongst young people.	Housing Options Project is a front line service in Cardiff providing advice to 16-21 year olds who find themselves homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This advice centre helps young people to find suitable accommodation, provide act as an advocate on behalf of the young person for general housing and benefit issues, negotiate with landlord regarding rent, tenancies as well as provide family mediation service.
JIGSO Project	To provide wide ranging housing and homelessness advice and solutions to prevent homelessness amongst young people.	This is also a front line advice service provided by Llamau for the Vale of Glamorgan area. Equally it is an advice centre aimed at young people aged 16-21 who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The JIGSO project will provide wide ranging advice regarding housing and benefits issues, help find suitable accommodation, run a bond guarantee scheme to enable young people to access private accommodation and specialist support for 16/17 years and care leavers.
Llamau Family Mediation Service	Aims to encourage and enable young people to stay or return to the family home and rebuild family relationships.	The Llamau Mediation Service is designed for 16-17 year that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless due to family difficulties. This project was kicked started in both Cardiff and the Vale in response to the growing numbers of young homeless individuals and the lack of appropriate temporary accommodation. This service has now been extended to 5 other local authorities within the SE Wales region. This scheme has been particularly effective with a home return rate of 44% for 5 SE Wales Counties. When a young person is unable to stay at home a Llamau mediation worker will find suitable temporary accommodation for the young person whilst facilitating mediation opportunities between the young person and their family/carer. Even if the young person is unable to move back home, the mediation worker will continue to rebuild and establish support networks with the parent. The success of this project has prompted Llamau to pilot a similar service to young people aged between 14-15 to try and reach them before a family situation reaches crisis point.
Community Advice and Information Partnership	To improve information sharing and co-ordination between agencies.	Advice services for a variety of agencies in Anglesey are co-ordinated through a Community Advice and Information Partnership. This has formed a network of agencies that can provide expert information, advice and legal services. This partnership has also developed a series of protocols designed to clearly signpost client to the most suitable advice agency.

Specialist Supported Housing Schemes

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
SAFE Projects	Supported living for vulnerable young people who don't have the capacity to live alone.	The SAFE projects were established in response to changes in homeless law. The SAFE project provides supported living for 16-17 year olds who become homeless. Residents in these supported units have their own bedrooms, but share communal facilities. These SAFE houses are staffed 24 hours a day by support workers who provide high and consistent levels of support to the client. During a young person's stay at one of these projects, the young person is offered family mediation services to help rebuild relationships with their families, provided support for the emotional health and well-being and develop new life skills through a tailored programme of that develops basic skills, cookery and budgetary skills
Floating Support	To provide flexible support to young people aged 16-24 years old to sustain long-term tenancies.	Floating support is provided by Llamau and targeted at young people aged between 16-24 years old. These generally are young people that have a history or problems associated with securing tenancies. Llamau provides a range of advocacy and advice services that facilitate the young person to live independently. Floating support in the form of regular contact between client and support worker is provided ongoing and consistent support necessary to sustain a tenancy whilst encouraging the young person to become independent. Under this scheme, the level of support provided gradually decreases over time as and when the client demonstrates independence and capacity to sustain the tenancy on their own.
Supported Shared Housing	To provide supported living for singles, who have additional support needs and are unable to live independently.	Caer Las provide a supported shared housing scheme in three locations across South Wales including Neath Port Talbot, Swansea and Brigid. The projects are aimed at singles aged between 18-64 years old. The properties are furnished with shared communal bathroom, kitchen and lounge. This is a form of semi-independent accommodation where the individual is capable of independence but is in need of additional support before they have the capacity to sustain a long-term tenancy. A Tenant support worker visits each client on a weekly basis and provides advice and assistance on benefits, accessing services, making referrals and resolving problems. All the support that is provided is designed to encourage greater independence.
Aberfa project Swansea	Specialist supported housing for clients with mental health needs that enables them to progress to independent living.	Aberfa is a specialist supported housing project for clients with complex mental health needs. This supported living project is operated in conjunction with Caer Las Cymru, Tai Esgyn, Swansea Housing Association and Swansea City and County Council. The project is split into two parts. There is core accommodation for 5 tenants that is staffed 24 hours a day, where clients have complex mental health and behaviour needs so require intensive support. Floating support scheme is also run that provides additional support for 20 clients within their own homes to enable them to continue to live independently. Every client on this supported living programme receives ongoing support develop their life skills and independence as well as develop social opportunities for their own physical

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
		health and wellbeing.
Llys Y Gwynt Hostel	Intensive supported living project for young people aged 16-25 that is designed to support them through to independent living.	Llys y Gwynt is a hostel that specifically provides accommodation and support to young people aged 16-25. This hostel is staffed 24 hours and operated by a voluntary group Digartref Ynys Mon. Each new resident is allocated a key worker that will help the individual access learning and training opportunities as well as work placement. In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government have provided funding for a life and skills worker, resettlement worker, community development worker and a finance and administration assistant. On site there are two purpose built move-on bungalows that enable the young person to develop more confidence and independence before moving into permanent accommodation. Digartref Ynys Mon will continue to provide outreach support once the young person is re-housed.
Ty Gobaith	Specialist substance misuse support.	This is a 66-bed Salvation Army hostel in Cardiff that has developed a specialist substance misuse wing.
Tai Hafan	To assist women and their children who are victims of domestic violence.	Provides accommodation and supported living for women and their children fleeing domestic violence. These refuges are based throughout all of Wales, not only providing accommodation but also meeting the clients support needs.
Yellow Scheme	To provide supported living and life long learning opportunities to single vulnerable people.	Hafod Housing Association is collaborating with Llamau and Bridgend Council to deliver a project that provides accommodation and intensive support for single vulnerable individuals. Support is tailored to the individual and is offered life long learning and training opportunities enabling them to eventually live independently.
Save the Family Project	To provide emergency accommodation to homeless families and single females. To keep families together and enable resettlement into the community.	This is an innovative beacon Flintshire based project that provides emergency accommodation to primarily family, but also provides some services to couples and single females. There is a specialised child and adult centre, self-contained accommodation units as well as independent family housing units. As well as accommodation the charity provides life skills training, educational opportunities and resettlement work to enable them to move on. The family will spend some time in the centre receiving ongoing support until they have the capacity for greater independence. Save the family can accommodate up to 24 families in the main centre at Bellin Hall, but also have a variety of resettlement community houses throughout the area. Outreach and training also takes place at a resource centre in Wrexham whilst single females can be accommodated in hostel in Flintshire.

Other types of accommodation and Leasing

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Isle of Anglesey	To minimise dependence on bed and breakfast accommodation.	Anglesey has an excellent track record of minimising the use of Bed and Breakfasts for temporary accommodation. They have achieved this by offering homeless clients short-term introductory tenancies within their own housing stock.
Leasing proposals between Newydd and Torfaen Council	Increase accommodation availability.	Newydd has an agreement with Torfaen Council to provide 30 homes that have been bought on the open market which can then be leased to the council over a 5-year period.
Leasing Scheme –Private landlords	To expand leasing options to the private sector to increase availability of accommodation.	Cadwyn is working closely with Cardiff Council and has developed a leasing scheme involving private landlords.

Educational/learning opportunities

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Learning 4 Life-Llamau	Programmes aims to tackle anti-social behaviour and encourage young people to engage in training and learning opportunities.	This is an alternative personal development and learning programme aimed at young people between 16-21 that are unable to participate in a formal educational/training environment. This is a flexible programme that provides a variety of activities for young people designed to improve their employability, increase their self-esteem, motivation and their interest in learning. Throughout the life of the programme, clients are offered one to one or small group support to encourage and enable them to access further education, training and work opportunities. This project has effectively enabled otherwise marginalised individuals to access learning opportunities in a friendly environment. The programme of activities helps them to address problematic and anti-social behaviours that increase the likelihood of homelessness.
Housemate Project-Shelter Cymru	Educational prevention programme targeted at school aged children throughout Wales. To raise awareness of issues in relation to housing and homelessness.	Housemate is a learning resource for anyone who works with young people such as teachers, youth workers and carers etc. The project is targeted at young people to raise their awareness and understanding of housing issues and homelessness so that they can make their own informed decisions when they leave home. This project has both an education and information function. In relation to education, there is a website where adults who work with young people can access and download resource packs and activities for group work. The project is also a source of information to both young people and adults. One such activity, is the key to the door board game. The game has been developed to raise awareness of leaving home and homelessness.

Miscellaneous

Area/Project	Aims/Purpose	Description of notable practice
Independent Customer Satisfaction	To monitor customer satisfaction with homelessness service to inform improvement.	Following an initial homelessness interview, all clients are provided with a customer satisfaction questionnaire. Questionnaires that are returned are analysed independently.
File and Case Management Procedures	To ensure that decision making is effective and cases are dealt with fairly and accurately.	The Council has developed clear decision making procedures in relation to homelessness applications. As a result it has achieved the Community Legal Services Partnership Quality Mark. A senior officer regularly reviews casework documentation. On a monthly basis, a 10% sample is checked for accuracy against a 22-point checklist.
Welsh Specialist Support Service	Specialist team of advisers to assist agencies, solicitors and clients.	This is a specialist team employed by Shelter to provide expert housing, welfare benefit and debt advice to advisers and solicitors and other agencies. Within this function there is also a legal services team that assists clients with any housing or homelessness issues/appeals.

5.0 Conclusions

In terms of the original scope of the scrutiny review '*A review of the effectiveness of the Council's Homelessness Strategy and the impact on the community*' it is fair to say that the preventative approach adopted by the Homelessness Team, supported by the Housing and Homelessness forum and the housing department, has had a positive impact on reducing both the numbers of homelessness acceptances and the time that people who find themselves homeless have to spend in temporary accommodation.

Interdepartmental working could be improved in some areas. This work has been strengthened by individual initiatives and the adoption of a number of protocols between departments. However, further work needs to be undertaken in order to provide a consistent standard of advice and support. The new post of Temporary Private Sector Co-ordinator will link effectively the functions of Housing Benefit and the Homelessness Team and should further improve the provision of services for both the user and external agencies.

Whilst the WAG Strategy objectives provides a vision that all organisations working with homeless people would wish to achieve, the resource allocation associated with this policy decision is not equitable. The WAG Strategy lists 61 expectations for organisations involved with homelessness. National concern has been raised by all concerned with regard to the achievability of those expectations within the time targets and without adequate resource. The Wales Audit Office is now considering the strategy and the targets set.

Until the outcome of the review by the Wales Audit Office, the Scrutiny Committee for Community Well being and Safety recommend that the Vale Of Glamorgan Council in partnership with the Housing and Homelessness Forum continue to work together to complete the actions within the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Plan and to adopt any action from the remaining list of expectations that can be achieved within the resources provided.

Recommendation 11

An action plan is developed to tackle existing gaps between the All Wales Strategy and the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Strategy and Prevention Plan.

Further improvements may then be considered following the implementation of recommendation 3 (audit of rough sleeping undertaken in March 2007) recommendation 5, (the outcome of the feasibility study for a multi-agency information website and housing advice centre) and recommendation 6 (work requested on duplication and capacity).

The Homelessness Team and Housing Managers are well supported by the Housing and Homelessness Forum and together have made good improvements to the service. The review team are of the opinion that should further resources become available they will be utilised to the best advantage of priority homeless groups within the Vale of Glamorgan.

Recommendation 12

That the Homelessness forum undertake a training needs analysis in order to identify any training needs which may be undertaken within the Council at little or no cost.

6 Recommendations agreed by Scrutiny

The Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny Committee made the following recommendations on 8th November 2006. These recommendations have taken into account issues identified during research, discussions with specialist officers, both internal and external and officers. Cabinet is requested to consider and approve each of the following recommendations made by the Community Wellbeing and Safety Scrutiny in relation to Homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan:

Recommendations

2. That the Executive Member with the housing portfolio adopts the role of a champion for homelessness issues within the Vale of Glamorgan.
3. That the next issue of the Corporate Plan currently being drafted include homelessness issues and making the relevant links to the Community Strategy.
4. That the remainder of the Section 180 monies be utilised to undertake an audit of homelessness/rough sleeping in the Vale of Glamorgan by March 2007 as required by the Welsh Assembly and to establish a system for proactive monitoring of homelessness within the county.
5. That the Housing Service review and reconfigure existing staff resources so that prevention is the initial response to all homelessness enquiries.
6. That a feasibility study utilising corporate funds, which have been set aside for that purpose be undertaken including capital and revenue costs to develop a multi-agency information website and housing advice centre within existing resources in an accessible location in Barry.
7. That the Homelessness Forum (with the support of the IDT review team) identify duplications in provision with partners and examine overall resource capacity within the Vale of Glamorgan. The findings from the research of the Homelessness Forum will form the basis of recommissioning of homelessness services within the Vale.
8. That the Homelessness Forum develop a mechanism for providing a promotional housing road show/outreach service to cover all parts of the Vale of Glamorgan by September 2007.
9. That the Council invests in the production of a video/DVD highlighting the realities for young people leaving home and be shown at all Vale of Glamorgan schools.
10. That in light of the new suitability order, the Housing department continues to examine alternative accommodation options to increase the level of temporary accommodation in the Vale of Glamorgan and that the timescale for turning around void properties be improved in order to ensure that at risk groups are accommodated.

Recommendations

11. An action plan is developed to tackle the identified gaps between the All Wales Strategy and Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Strategy and Prevention Plan, as set out in this report.
12. That the Homelessness forum undertake a training needs analysis in order to identify any training needs which may be undertaken within the Council at little or no cost
13. That the Council invests in the production of a video/DVD highlighting the realities for young people leaving home and be shown at all Vale of Glamorgan schools.

7 Decisions made by Cabinet

The report along with its recommendations that were endorsed by Scrutiny were presented to Cabinet on 29th November 2006 and following consideration, Cabinet resolved:

- (1) T H A T it be accepted that the Executive Member with the Housing portfolio be designated the Champion for homelessness issues within the Vale of Glamorgan.
- (2) T H A T, notwithstanding that Corporate Plan Actions CW8, 9, 10 and 11 already addressed this issue, it be accepted that homelessness issues be linked to the Community Strategy and be included in future issues of the Corporate Plan.
- (3) T H A T Section 180 monies were already proposed to be utilised to undertake an audit of homelessness/rough sleeping in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- (4) T H A T a Housing Service Review and reconfiguration of existing staff resources so that prevention was the initial response to all homelessness enquiries, had already been implemented by the Cabinet.
- (5) T H A T a further report be submitted to Cabinet assessing the feasibility of developing a multi-agency information website and housing advice centre linked with the possible integration with the Council's OneVale programme and the Council's new website Content Management System.
- (6) T H A T the position in respect of the Homelessness Forum identifying duplications in provision with partners in addition to examining the overall resource capacity within the Vale of Glamorgan, be noted and that a further report be submitted to Cabinet in relation to the feasibility of undertaking such including any resource implications for the Council.
- (7) T H A T recommendation (7) of the review be accepted in principle, the feasibility and financial implications of providing a promotional housing road show / outreach service be the subject of a further report to Cabinet.
- (8) T H A T the appointment of a new Private Sector Co-ordinator with the remit as set out in the report be accepted, subject to the above post being added to the Council's establishment as a "temporary post" and no commitment being given to fund the post beyond the period of the WAG funding.

- (9) T H A T as the ANITE Homelessness database was Oracle based, it could be integrated within the OneVale initiative.
- (10) T H A T recommendation (10) of the Review be noted and that work was presently ongoing and would be subject to a further report to Cabinet in December 2006 / January 2007.
- (11) T H A T an Action Plan in respect of identifying gaps between the All Wales Strategy and the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Strategy and Prevention Plan as detailed in the report be subject to a further report to Cabinet as soon as practicable.
- (12) T H A T recommendation (12) of the Review be accepted.
- (13) T H A T recommendation (13) of the Review be accepted in principle and that the Director of Community Services be requested to approach Media For Schools and Area 41 to ascertain whether they would be prepared to engage in making an appropriate video and in addition, the matter be referred to the Children and Young People Partnership for further consideration.

Appendix 1

1.1	Scrutiny Committee	Community Wellbeing & Safety
1.2	Scrutiny Chairman	Councillor Janice Birch
1.3	Scrutiny Review	Homelessness
1	Review Focus <p>A review of the effectiveness of the Council's Homelessness Strategy and the impact on the community.</p>	
2	Objectives and Purpose of the Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Review the actions achieved in the Homelessness Strategy to date and the impact of those actions on homelessness in The Vale of Glamorgan. • To identify any gaps between the Vale of Glamorgan strategy and the recently published Welsh Assembly Government Strategy for homelessness. • To make recommendations that will form further actions for life of the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Strategy. 	
3	Desired Outcomes of the Review <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A robust continuation of the vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Action Plan is developed. • Members understand Council's role in relation to Homelessness. • That the review acknowledges areas of good practice whilst identifying any service gaps. • That appropriate recommendations are put forward that will contribute towards preventing homelessness in the Vale. • To raise the profile of homelessness among the public, the Council and its key partners. 	
4	Information Required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Assembly Government National Homelessness Strategy • Tarki Technology Report commissioned and adopted by WAG • Data on incidences of homelessness compared with regional and national figures. • GAP analysis of current action plan. • An outline of key partners the Vale works with in relation to domestic violence. • Details of any Service Level Agreements the Council has with the key agencies in relation to Homelessness. • Information on best practice guidance in Wales and England. • Outline of any initiatives developed by the Council or other key agencies to tackle homelessness in the Vale. 	

5	Format of Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to be submitted by Scrutiny Chair. • Responses to member's questions. • External witnesses.

1.4	Scrutiny Committee	Community Wellbeing & Safety
1.5	Scrutiny Chairman	Councillor Janice Birch
1.6	Scrutiny Review	Homelessness
6	Methods to be Employed (to be decided) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research analysis - both past and present in the Vale compared nationally • Interview internal officers • Interview external partner agencies 	
7	External Witnesses and Council officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All members of the Vale Homelessness Forum • Alun Billingham – Acting Head of Housing and Community Safety 	
8	Co-options to Review Body (if any) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None. 	
9	Timescales Review start date: Feb 2006 Review finish date: April 2006 Reporting: May 2006	
10	Responsible Officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement and Development Team (Sarah Jeffery) • Democratic Services Officers (Karen Bowen) • Private Housing Service (Hazel Allen, Mike Ingram) 	
11	Resources and Budget <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff time • 	
12	Final Report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full report to Scrutiny Committee 	

Appendix 4

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

2006 No. (W.)

HOUSING, WALES

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This note is not part of the Order)

When discharging a housing function to secure that accommodation is available for an applicant who is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, under Part 7 (homelessness) of the Housing Act 1996 (“the 1996 Act”), a local housing authority must ensure that the accommodation is suitable (section 206(1)). Section 210 specifies matters to be taken into account when determining suitability of accommodation for the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

The National Assembly for Wales has the power to specify additional matters under section 210. The Secretary of State previously made the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 1996 (S.I. 1996/3204) which specified that in determining for the purposes of Part 7 whether accommodation is suitable for a person, there is to be taken into account whether or not the accommodation is affordable for that person. That Order listed particular matters to be considered with reference to affordability.

This order is called the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) Order 2006 and is in three parts.

Part 1 of this Order comes into force on 3 April 2006. It relies on the power in section 210(2)(b) of Part 7 of the 1996 Act. Part 1 applies to persons in priority need as defined by section 189 of the 1996 Act. Under section 210(2)(b), this Order specifies matters to be taken into account in determining whether accommodation is suitable for a person. These additional matters relate to the health needs of the person, any disability of the person and the proximity of social services and other support.

Part 2 of this Order comes into force on 2 April 2007. It applies to accommodation made available under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. This Part relies on the powers in section 210(2)(a) and (b) of Part 7 of the 1996 Act. Article 4 of this Order specifies that Bed and Breakfast (“B&B”) accommodation may only be regarded as suitable for the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act if it complies with a Basic Standard. The Basic Standard requires that the B&B accommodation must firstly meet all statutory requirements. Some examples are fire and gas safety, planning permission and HMO licencing (where required). The premises must also be managed by a fit and proper person. Local Housing Authorities must have regard to the statutory guidance issued under section 182 of the 1996 Act in assessing whether a person is fit and proper.

Part 2 then specifies, in Article 5, additional circumstances in which accommodation must not be regarded as suitable. It does this by specifying minimum standards for B&B accommodation used for households containing or consisting of a minor or a pregnant woman. This includes households consisting only of one or more minors aged 16 or 17. Article 5 specifies that, where accommodation is provided under a duty under Part 7 of the 1996 Act to a household containing a minor or a pregnant woman,

B&B accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable, subject to the exceptions contained in Article 6. Article 6 provides for certain exceptions relating to the length of time spent in B&B accommodation, the standard of the B&B accommodation, and the choice of the homeless household.

B&B accommodation is defined as commercially provided accommodation which, whether or not breakfast is provided, is not self contained or which involves sharing certain amenities with another household.

In calculating the total period of time during which a household containing a minor or pregnant woman has been housed in B&B accommodation, a local housing authority is to disregard any period spent in such accommodation before 2 April 2007. It is also to disregard any period spent in B&B accommodation where such an applicant was being housed by another local housing authority prior to the conditions for a referral being met in accordance with sections 198 to 200 of the 1996 Act. Those sections provide that, where a local housing authority is of the opinion that the conditions for a referral are met and that an applicant has a local connection with the district of another local authority, it may refer the applicant to that authority and, if the conditions for referral are met, the second authority is subject to the duty under section 193 of the 1996 Act (the main housing duty) in respect of the applicant.

Part 3 of this Order comes into force on 7 April 2008. It extends the Part 2 standards to all types of shared accommodation provided under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. It also extends restrictions on the provision of B&B accommodation to all priority need households. It contains exceptions which are similar to those in Part 2. There is an additional exception for accommodation managed by a local authority or registered housing association..

For existing social housing schemes, there is a transitional provision. This provides for a 3-year delay in application until 4 April 2011, for those housing schemes already used for housing homeless persons before 7 April 2008.

This Order does not apply where the local housing authority is exercising discretionary powers to assist homeless persons.

The dates when this Order is to come into force have been chosen to coincide with the start of the financial year for Local Housing Authorities in Wales.

2006 No. (W.)

HOUSING, WALES

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation)
(Wales) Order 2006

Made 2006

Coming into force

Articles 1 - 3	3 April 2006
Articles 4 - 6	2 April 2007
Articles 7 - 10	7 April 2008

The National Assembly for Wales, in exercise of the powers conferred on the Secretary of State by sections 210(2) and 215(2) of the Housing Act 1996⁽¹⁾, and now vested in the National Assembly for Wales⁽²⁾, hereby makes the following Order:

Title, commencement and application

- 1.—(1) The title of this Order is the Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2006.
- (2) Save as provided in paragraphs (3) and (4) of this Article, this Order comes into force on 3 April 2006.
- (3) Articles 4, 5 and 6 of, and the Schedule to this Order come into force on 2 April 2007.
- (4) Articles 7, 8, 9 and 10 of this Order come into force on 7 April 2008.
- (5) This Order applies in relation to the duties of local housing authorities in Wales under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 (homelessness).

Interpretation

2. In this Order —

“the 1996 Act” (“*Deddf 1996*”) means the Housing Act 1996; and any reference to a numbered section is a reference to a section of the Housing Act 1996;

“B&B accommodation” (“*llety Gwely a Brecwast*”) means commercially provided accommodation (whether or not breakfast is included)—

- (a) which is not separate and self-contained premises;
- (b) in which any of the following amenities is not available to the applicant or is shared by more than one household—
 - (i) a toilet;
 - (ii) personal washing facilities;

⁽¹⁾ 1996 c. 52

⁽²⁾ See S.I. 1999/672. The functions of the Secretary of State under sections 210 and 215 are, so far as exercisable in relation to Wales, transferred to the National Assembly for Wales by article 2 of, and Schedule 1 to, the National Assembly for Wales (Transfer of Functions) Order 1999. See the entry in Schedule 1 for the Housing Act 1996.

(iii) cooking facilities;

(c) which is not accommodation which is owned or managed by a local housing authority, a registered social landlord or a voluntary organisation as defined in section 180(3) of the Housing Act 1996; or

(d) which is not an establishment registered under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000⁽³⁾;

and “B&B” (“*Gwely a Brecwast*”) is to be construed accordingly;

“basic standard accommodation” (“*llety o safon sylfaenol*”) means accommodation that—

(a) complies with all statutory requirements (such as requirements relating to fire and gas safety, planning and licences for houses in multiple occupation, where applicable); and

(b) has a manager deemed by the local housing authority to be a fit and proper person with the ability to manage B&B accommodation;

and “basic standard” (“*safon sylfaenol*”) is to be construed accordingly;

“higher standard accommodation” (“*llety o safon uwch*”) means accommodation that meets—

(a) the basic standard; and

(b) the standards contained in the Schedule to this Order,

and “higher standard” (“*safon uwch*”) is to be construed accordingly;

“shared accommodation” (“*llety a rennir*”) means accommodation—

(a) which is not separate and self-contained premises; or

(b) in which any of the following amenities is not available to the applicant or is shared by more than one household—

(i) a toilet;

(ii) personal washing facilities;

(iii) cooking facilities; or

(c) which is not an establishment registered under the provisions of the Care Standards Act 2000;

“small B&B” (“*llety Gwely a Brecwast bach*”) means—

B&B accommodation—

(i) where the manager resides on the premises; and

(ii) which has fewer than 7 bedrooms available for letting.

⁽³⁾ 2000 c. 14

PART 1⁽⁴⁾

Additional matters to be taken into account in determining suitability

3. In determining for the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act whether accommodation is suitable for a person in priority need⁽⁵⁾ there must be taken into account the following matters—

- (a) the specific health needs of the person;
- (b) the proximity and accessibility of social services;
- (c) the proximity and accessibility of the support of the family or other support services; or
- (d) any disability of the person.

PART 2⁽⁶⁾

Circumstances applying from 2 April 2007 in which accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable

B&B accommodation used for housing a homeless person to meet the basic standard

4. For the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act, B&B accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable unless it meets at least the basic standard.

B&B accommodation not to be regarded as suitable for a minor or a pregnant woman

5. For the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act and subject to the exceptions contained in Article 6, B&B accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable for a person who is a minor or a pregnant woman.

Exceptions

6. - (1) Article 5 does not apply where—

- (a) the person occupies a basic standard B&B for a period, or a total of periods, which does not exceed 2 weeks;
- (b) the person occupies a higher standard B&B for a period or a total of periods which does not exceed 6 weeks;
- (c) the person occupies a basic standard small B&B for a period or a total of periods which does not exceed 6 weeks, and the local housing authority has, before the expiry of the two-week period referred to in sub-paragraph (a), offered suitable alternative accommodation, but the person has chosen to remain in the said B&B;
- (d) the person occupies a basic standard small B&B after exercising the choice referred to in sub-paragraph (c) above, and the local housing authority has offered suitable alternative accommodation before the end of the six-week period referred to in sub-paragraph (c) above, but the person has chosen to remain in the said B&B; or
- (e) the person occupies a higher standard small B&B, and the local housing authority has offered suitable alternative accommodation, before the expiry of the six-week period referred to in sub-paragraph (b) above, but the person has chosen to remain in the said B&B.

(2) If the suitable alternative accommodation offered for the purposes of paragraph (1) is shared, it must meet the higher standard.

⁽⁴⁾ *Cif*: 3 April 2006.

⁽⁵⁾ *See* the definition of “priority need” in section 189(1) Housing Act 1996 and S.I. 2001/607.

⁽⁶⁾ *Cif*: 2 April 2007.

- (3) In the case of households with dependant children or a pregnant woman, the offer made under sub-paragraphs (d) or (e) must be of suitable self-contained accommodation. In the case of an applicant who is a minor, the offer must be of suitable accommodation with support.
- (4) In calculating a period, or total period, of a person's occupation of B&B accommodation for the purposes of paragraph (1), there must be disregarded—
 - (a) any period before 2 April 2007; and
 - (b) where a local housing authority⁽⁷⁾ is subject to the duty under section 193 by virtue of section 200(4)⁽⁸⁾, any period before that authority became subject to that duty.

PART 3⁽⁹⁾

Extension from 7 April 2008 to all accommodation provided in discharge of homelessness functions

B&B accommodation not to be regarded as suitable for a homeless person in priority need

7. For the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act and subject to the exceptions contained in article 9, B&B accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable for a person who is in priority need.

Shared accommodation to meet the higher standard

8. For the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act and subject to the exceptions contained in articles 9 and 10, shared accommodation is not to be regarded as suitable for a person who is in priority need unless it meets the higher standard.

Exceptions

9. (1) Articles 7 and 8 do not apply where—

- (a) the person occupies basic standard B&B for a period, or a total of periods, which does not exceed 2 weeks;
- (b) the person occupies a higher standard B&B for a period or a total of periods which does not exceed 6 weeks;
- (c) the person occupies a basic standard small B&B for a period or a total of periods which does not exceed 6 weeks, and the local housing authority has, before the expiry of the two-week period referred to in sub-paragraph (a), offered suitable alternative accommodation, but the person has chosen to remain in the said B&B;
- (d) the person occupies a basic standard small B&B after exercising the choice referred to in sub-paragraph (c), and the local housing authority has offered suitable alternative accommodation before the end of the six-week period referred to in sub-paragraph (c) above, but the person has chosen to remain in the said B&B;
- (e) the person occupies a higher standard small B&B, the local housing authority has offered suitable alternative accommodation, before the expiry of the six-week period referred to in sub-paragraph (b), but the person has chosen to remain in the said B&B: or
- (f) the person occupies basic standard shared accommodation for a period, or a total of periods, which does not exceed 2 weeks;
- (g) the person occupies, for a period or a total of periods which does not exceed 6 weeks, basic standard shared accommodation owned by a local housing authority or registered social landlord, and the local housing authority has offered suitable alternative accommodation before the expiry of the two-week period referred to in sub-paragraph (f), but the person has chosen to remain in the said accommodation.

(2) If the suitable alternative accommodation offered for the purposes of paragraph (1) is shared, it must meet the higher standard.

(3) In the case of households with dependant children or a pregnant woman, the offer made under sub-paragraphs (d) or (e) must be of suitable self-contained accommodation. In the case of an applicant who is a minor, the offer must be of suitable accommodation with support.

⁽⁷⁾ See the definition of local housing authority in section 230 Housing Act 1996

⁽⁸⁾ Section 200(4) was substituted by paragraph 15 of Schedule 1 to the Homelessness Act 2002.

⁽⁹⁾ *Cif*: 7 April 2008.

(4) In calculating a period, or total period, of a person's occupation of shared accommodation for the purposes of paragraph (1), there must be disregarded -

(a) any period before 7 April 2008; and

(b) where a local housing authority is subject to the duty under section 193 by virtue of section 200(4), any period before that authority became subject to that duty.

Delayed application to Social Housing

10. Article 7 is not to apply until 4 April 2011 to any property owned or managed by a local authority or registered social landlord and used for the purposes of Part 7 of the 1996 Act on 7 April 2008.

Signed on behalf of the National Assembly for Wales under section 66(1) of the Government of Wales Act 1998⁽¹⁰⁾

Date

The Presiding Officer of the National Assembly

⁽¹⁰⁾ 1998 c.38.

SCHEDULE

Higher Standard

1. Minimum Space Standards

Space standards for sleeping accommodation

Room sizes where cooking facilities provided in a separate room or kitchen

Floor Area of Room	Maximum No of Persons
Not less than 6.5 square metres	1 person
Not less than 10.2 square metres	2 persons
Not less than 14.9 square metres	3 persons
Not less than 19.6 square metres	4 persons

Room sizes where cooking facilities provided within the room

Floor Area of Room	Maximum No of Persons
Not less than 10.2 square metres	1 person
Not less than 13.9 square metres	2 persons
Not less than 18.6 square metres	3 persons
Not less than 23.2 square metres	4 persons

For the purposes of the room size calculations above, a child less than 10 years old is treated as a half person.

- (a) No room to be occupied by more than 4 persons, except where the occupants consent.
- (b) No sharing of rooms for those of opposite genders, aged 10 or above unless they are living together as partners and both are over the age of consent, or where a parent or guardian elects to share with an older child.
- (c) All rooms must have a floor to ceiling height of at least 2.1 metres over not less than 75% of the room area. Any part of the room where the ceiling height is less than 1.5 metres must be disregarded when calculating the floor area.
- (d) Separate kitchens and bathrooms are unsuitable for sleeping accommodation.

2. Installation for heating

The premises must have adequate provision for heating. All habitable rooms and bath- or shower-rooms must have a heating system capable of maintaining the room at a minimum temperature of 18°C when the outside temperature is minus 1°C.

3. Facilities for the storage, preparation and cooking of food within the unit

- (1) In a unit of accommodation accommodating more than one person, the food preparation area provided within the unit must include the following facilities:

- (a) four burners or hobs, conventional oven and grill, or two burners or hobs and a microwave with a built in oven and grill,
- (b) a sink and integral drainer, with a constant supply of hot water and cold drinking water,
- (c) a storage cupboard of a minimum capacity 0.2 cubic metres excluding storage beneath the sink,
- (d) a refrigerator,
- (e) a minimum of four 13-amp sockets (single or double) situated over the worktop,
- (f) a worktop for food preparation of minimum dimensions 1 metre x 0.6 metre, and
- (g) a minimum of 1 metre circulation space from facilities to other furniture in the room.

(2) In a unit of accommodation accommodating one person, the food preparation area provided within the unit of accommodation must include the following facilities:

As (a) – (g) above but (a) to have a minimum of two burners or hobs.

4. Storage, preparation and cooking of food in a shared facility

(1) Where food preparation areas are shared between more than one household there must be one set of kitchen facilities for:

- (a) every 3 family households or fewer;
- (b) every 5 single-person households or fewer. (For between 6 and 9 single-person households an additional oven or microwave is required.)
- (c) every 10 persons or fewer where there is a mixture of family and single-person households within the same premises.

(2) Each set of shared facilities must provide the following facilities:

- (a) as for unit accommodating more than one person except that cooking facilities must consist of 4 burners or hobs, conventional oven, grill and microwave,
- (b) an electric kettle,
- (c) a toaster.

The food preparation area used by the management may be included when calculating the ratio, provided it meets the criteria for storage, preparation and cooking of food in a shared facility.

Where residents have no access to kitchen facilities and the proprietor provides at least a breakfast and evening-meal for residents, the requirements for shared kitchen facilities will be deemed to have been met.

Additional facilities to be provided in each bedroom or within the total accommodation occupied exclusively by each household must include:

- (a) a refrigerator; and
- (b) lockable storage.

Alternatively, these may be provided elsewhere within the building.

5. Toilet and washing facilities

(1) Facilities for the exclusive use of the occupant or household must include:

- (a) a bath or shower,
- (b) a wash hand basin with a constant supply of hot and cold water, and
- (c) a water-closet either en-suite or in a separate room reserved for the exclusive use of individuals or households.

(2) Shared facilities must include:

(a) One water closet and wash hand basin with a constant supply of hot and cold water within the building for every five households or fewer. This must be located not more than one floor away from the intended users. For the first five households the water closet and wash hand basin may be in the shower or bathroom. All additional water closets and wash hand basins for occupancies of six households or more must be in a separate compartment.

(b) One bathroom or shower-room to be provided for every five persons. This must be located not more than one floor away from the intended users.

(c) In premises accommodating children under the age of 10, at least half of the bathing facilities must contain baths suitable for children.

The number of persons occupying a unit of accommodation with a water closet facility provided for their exclusive use is not to be included in the calculation for shared water closets.

6. Security

The entrance door to each unit of accommodation must be lockable and be capable of being unlocked from inside without the use of a key.

7. Common Room (s)

Every premises must have a common room of at least 12 square metres unless all households have a living area separate from their sleeping area that is available for their exclusive use or the premises are for single person households only.

8. Management Standard(11)

(a) Each household must be issued with written 'house rules' which include details as to how sanctions will be applied. This document is to be approved by the local authority placing homeless households in the premises.

(b) Each household must be issued with written information relating to the premises including how to operate all installations, for example heating and hot water appliances and fire fighting equipment.

(c) Written information must be made available to residents relating to the local area including the location or contact details of local facilities, laundrettes, doctors' surgeries and schools.

(d) Residents must have access to their rooms at all times except when rooms are being cleaned or otherwise maintained. Provision must be made to accommodate residents at these times.

(e) Access is allowed for the appropriate officers of the local housing authority in whose area the premises are situated, and officers of any authority placing homeless households in the premises, to inspect the premises as and when they consider necessary, to ensure that the requirements are being complied with; and that the manager will allow such inspections to take place, if necessary without notice.

(f) Access is allowed for the officers of the local authority and authorised health and community workers for the area in which the premises are situated, to visit the occupiers of the premises and interview them in private in the room(s) they occupy.

(g) A manager with adequate day to day responsibility to ensure the good management of the property can be contacted at all times and that a notice giving the name, address and telephone number of the manager must be displayed in a readily visible position in the property.

(h) A clear emergency evacuation plan is in place setting out action upon hearing the fire alarm, escape routes and safe assembly points. The managers must ensure that each person newly arriving at the premises is told what to do in the event of a fire and about fire precautions provided.

(i) Each household must be issued with a complaints procedure which specifies how a complaint can be made. This information must also include where the complainant can obtain further advice and assistance.

⁽¹¹⁾ This standard will be in addition to the legal standard contained in 'The Housing (Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation) Regulations 1990' or the standard developed as a result of 'Licensing in the Private Rented Sector – A Consultation Paper on the Implementation of HMO licensing in Wales' published in January 2005.

Appendix 5

HOMELESSNESS EXPECTATIONS

1.6.1 Housing Services

Review services in light of Tarki Report.

Appoint homelessness champions

Adopt a “spend to save” approach to homelessness, investing in the refocusing of services towards prevention and housing options advice.

Joint planning of local housing advice services between local authorities and voluntary providers.

Staff teams are adequately resourced to fulfil their statutory duties to homeless people.

Staff are provided with initial and continuing training on application of homelessness legislation.

Procedures are in place on the administration of homelessness applications, which are properly monitored.

Local Housing Services and other organisation working with homeless children and young people establish guidelines for referring those at risk to social services.

Local authorities ensure that children in homeless families are linked to health and education services.

Local authorities and their partners to facilitate access to mediation services, particularly for young people.

Local authorities and partners to facilitate mediation between landlords and tenants where appropriate to prevent homelessness.

Local authorities and partners to consider the findings of research into rural homelessness and ensure their homelessness services are designed to address the particular needs of rural areas.

Take full account of their local homelessness strategies and forthcoming legislation on temporary accommodation in setting priorities for their social housing grant programme.

Adopt empty homes strategies, which link to local homelessness strategies.

Local authorities and housing associations to give reasonable preference to homeless people through their allocation scheme, and ensure that the needs of homeless people are taken account of in local lettings planning.

Explore the use of rent in advance and deposit schemes to increase access to private rented housing for people who would otherwise be homeless.

Local authorities and housing associations to exclude homeless people only where it is permissible under S160 of the Housing Act 1996.

Criminal justice agencies, local authorities and housing associations to work within revised guidance on multi-agency public protection arrangements in respect of homeless people who may pose a significant risk to the public.

Examine the full range of options for providing temporary accommodation as alternatives to B&B, and identify through their homelessness strategies how they will meet their policy agreement targets.

Meet their targets to reduce the time households spend in temporary accommodation.

Develop liaison arrangements with the private sector, and packages of support to facilitate the maximum use of private rented sector accommodation.

Local Authorities and Housing Associations to establish strategic move-on planning as part of their Supporting People Operational Plans and Local homelessness strategies.

Plan the provision of direct access services in their own area for rough sleepers, so that no one need to sleep rough or leave the area.

Proactively monitor rough sleeping through a combination of counts and continuous monitoring.

Submit SPOP's, which reflect the focus on corporate objectives to address homelessness.

Establish cross working arrangements at strategic and operational level between homelessness and supported housing services.

Voluntary organisations and local authorities to provide opportunities for homeless people to develop their skills and confidence to support progression to independent living in the community.

Local Authority, social services and housing services to work together to ensure the pathway planning process includes resettlement into suitable housing with appropriate support, and prevention of homelessness.

Local authority social services and housing services to have joint protocols in place for dealing with care leavers.

Local authority social services and housing services should establish specific assessment arrangements for care leavers prior to leaving care and liaison for those who are later at risk of homelessness after leaving care.

Review their services to ensure they are sensitive to the housing needs of LGB people taking account of the SPARK research report, and seek advice from Stonewall Cymru and other LGB organisations on how the recommendations should be addressed.

Include the provision of services to Gypsies and travellers as part of their local housing strategies.

Local authorities to review progress annually through their partnership arrangements and to revise their own action plans taking account of this national strategy and submit them to the Assembly.

Carry out a full review and revise their local homelessness strategies by September 2008.

Local Authorities and voluntary organisations to share information on the effectiveness of their working practices with other organisations involved in tackling homelessness.

Review current statistical and monitoring processes, identifying and resolving any likely causes of delays or misinterpretation through management arrangements and external advice where necessary.

Broaden the use of data on homelessness to include those not in priority need, and reflect this in the local homelessness review and strategy process.

HOUSING BENEFITS

Identify how they will optimise the UB system to prevent homelessness within their local homelessness strategies, particularly with the private rented sector.

Make full use of their Discretionary Housing Payment fund from the DWP.

Ensure they meet DWP performance requirements as speed and accuracy of settling claims and use the support of the DWP Support Unit as necessary to improve performance.

Adopt a partnership approach with the voluntary and private sectors to the delivery of housing benefits services, including clear commitments on service delivery.

Implement the recommendations in the Audit Commission report on Tackling Rent Arrears and Housing Benefit.

Adopt good practice – implement the recommendations in the Audit Commission reports.

Ensure tenants have access to specialist housing and debt advice as early as possible and before they seek final possession for rent.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTNERSHIP

Local YPP's to audit the housing needs of young people and develop 2 year action plans with built in outcome measures to address them.

Local YPP's to work jointly with LA housing services to identify and plan for the needs of homeless young people.

EDUCATION

Local education services to make use of "housemate" and other resources to promote awareness of homelessness amongst young people.

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Housing Associations to contribute fully to help local authorities meet their statutory responsibilities in respect of homelessness.

Housing Associations to assist in local authorities in meeting their duties to provide temporary accommodation to homeless people, and collaborate with them on re-housing homeless people through local lettings, planning and nomination arrangements.

Housing associations to agree formal joint working arrangements to prevent and tackle homelessness within the area.

VOLUNTARY PARTNERS

Set service standards with independent quality review mechanisms where they are delivering services to rough sleepers.

Work in partnership with local authorities to support the monitoring of rough sleeping.

SPECIFIC AGENCIES

The DWP, JobCentre Plus, and the Basic Skills Agency to provide focus and resources specifically to address the needs of homeless people.

Cymorth Cymru to disseminate good practice from the pilot projects funded by ELWa.

YOT

Local Authorities and Criminal Justice Agencies to work in partnership with local planning arrangements to secure appropriate housing and secure support for ex-offenders including adoption of protocols in line with Assembly guidance.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Local Authority SSDs to engage constructively with their housing and support provider partners in tackling homelessness through the local strategic and service planning arrangements.

Local Authority SSDs and housing services to establish formal joint working arrangements for dealing with care leavers, young people, older people, people with mental health problems and learning disabilities, and other vulnerable groups when they are at risk of homelessness.

LOCAL HEALTH BOARDS

Local authorities and LHB's to review their Health Social Care and Wellbeing Strategies in order to ensure that they have arrangements in place, which address the specific needs of homeless people. These arrangements will have to be published and disseminated to organisations working with homeless people.

LHB's to play a full part in planning for homelessness services including supporting people planning groups.

LHB's and local authorities to work in partnership to ensure health services maintain contact with homeless people and particularly with homeless families with young children through referral arrangements.

WOMEN'S AID

Local authorities and Women's Aid groups to work in partnership to provide community based and refuge provision for women at risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse, and consider also the needs of men who may be at risk.

COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

CSP's to address the needs of homeless people within their substance misuse actions plans.

VETERANS ORGANISATIONS AND HOMELESSNESS FORUM

The Veterans Agency and Veterans organisations to promote awareness amongst the veteran population or services available to homeless veterans.

Organisations working with homeless people to identify and advise veterans on the support available from veterans organisations.

TAI PAWB AND WELSH REFUGEE COUNCILS

Tai Pawb to provide support and monitor how local authorities are addressing the needs of refugees.

The Welsh refugee council through the Well Housing Project to work with partners to ensure refugees are aware of and have access to their homelessness prevention and advice service.

Tai Pawb to monitor and advise LA's on implementing their responsibilities with BME homeless people.

LA's to work with Tai Pawb in identifying and meeting the needs of BME homeless people.

STATUTORY BODIES

Expect statutory health, social services and criminal justice organisations in particular to engage with Local Homelessness strategy planning and reflect this within their own planning arrangements.

The WLGA and the WFMA, the CIH and Cymorth/Homeless link to promote good practice in tackling homelessness as part of their core activities.

Appendix 6

Member Visit to Hafan Treharne Hostel: Tuesday, 2 May 2006

Briefing

Accommodation

Hafan Treharne, presently, comprises 26 units of accommodation, with 24 places in the main body of the hostel, plus two family flats adjacent to the main hostel. These figures are given as accommodation units rather than individual rooms as it is often the case that more than one person is housed per room.

The main hostel is arranged in 6 groups of 4 rooms (landings), with each landing sharing access to bathrooms and kitchens.

The family flats have 2 bedrooms, with separate lounges, kitchens and bathroom facilities and are self-contained.

To whom is accommodation provided?

The council has a two-fold duty to provide temporary accommodation:

1. To persons who appear to be homeless and in priority need. This duty is set out in Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996. Such persons are subject to the investigation of their homelessness claims by the authority and the duty continues for as long as such an investigation continues.
2. To persons whose homelessness status has been determined by the authority and for whom a duty has been accepted by the authority to provide more permanent housing. This is the duty set out under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.

In addition:

- a. The council has a duty to provide accommodation for a 'reasonable' period to those who have been found to be intentionally homeless. In this authority this period is defined as 28 days.
- b. In a few cases persons have been accommodated under other legislation, for example the Children's Act and the National Assistance Act.

The Hostel staff work closely with other agencies and Council departments, such as Children's Services, for which there are joint protocols, to ensure that there is high quality support and that risks can be identified and managed.

Staffing

Hafan Treharne currently has six members of staff as follows:

The homeless Accommodation Officer who supervises the running of the hostel and undertakes the support for clients in Bed and Breakfast.

3 x Hostel Support Workers who act as key workers and provide support for clients within the hostel, if the client does not have any other support. Where there is existing support the Hostel Support Workers liaise on a regular basis with the Support Provider and assists them with the implementation of the individual support plan developed by the Support Provider.

2x Hostel Wardens who have a caretaking role and ensure that the hostel building and grounds are maintained. They also assist with admissions, discharges and sleepovers at the hostel.

The hostel is staffed on a 24-hour a day basis. There are three shifts:

Early Shift	08:00 - 15:30 or 08:00 - 16:30
Late Shift	15:30 - 24:00 or 16:30 - 24:00
Sleep-In Shift	00:00 - 08:00

Referrals to the Hostel

During office hours all referrals are made to the hostel through the homelessness section at 2-8 Holton Road.

Outside office hours referrals are made via VCAS, who contact staff at the hostel who then arrange accommodation if required.

Admissions & Discharges

Table 1: Total Admissions & Discharges, by quarter, 2005

	Quarter 1 1 Jan 2005 to 31 Mar 2005	Quarter 2 1 Apr 2005 to 30 Jun 2005	Quarter 3 1 Jul 2005 to 30 Sep 2005	Quarter 4 1 Oct 2005 to 31 Dec 2005	TOTAL for 2005
Admissions for Period	30	32	47	34	143
Discharges for Period	32	32	42	35	141

Table 2: Discharge Summary (Numbers), by quarter, 2005

	Quarter 1 1 Jan 2005 to 31 Mar 2005	Quarter 2 1 Apr 2005 to 30 Jun 2005	Quarter 3 1 Jul 2005 to 30 Sep 2005	Quarter 4 1 Oct 2005 to 31 Dec 2005	TOTAL for 2005
Section 193 Households: Rehoused in LA or HA Stock	10	7	8	5	30
Section 193 Households: Rehoused by VATS	0	0	4	7	11
End of LA Duty to House	2	3	7	2	14
Transferred With Duty	7	9	7	5	28
Left Hostel (with or without notice)	7	7	8	7	29

EVICTED: Not Staying at the Hostel	4	3	5	3	15
EVICTED: Violent or Disruptive Behaviour	0	1	1	4	6
EVICTED: Drug Misuse	2	2	2	2	8

The categories contained in the discharge summaries above are described as follows:

1.7 Section 193 Households: Rehoused into Social Housing Stock via HOMES 4U

Clients who are owed a duty by the Council, under Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996. That is to say, the council has accepted a duty to provide accommodation because of their homelessness situation.

A total of 30, or 21% of households being discharged, moved through the 'Homes 4 U' scheme during 2005.

1.8 Section 193 Households: Rehoused by VATS

The 'Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme', provides accommodation in the private sector to facilitate the move of homeless households into private sector tenancies, thereby enabling the authority to satisfy its duty under Section 193.

The VATS team commenced work with hostel households in the second half of the year and during that period rehoused 11 households (8% of all those discharged during the year). This compares very favourably with the numbers rehoused by 'Homes 4 U' during the period, standing at 13.

1.9 End of Local Authority Duty

These are clients who have been found to have no duty owed to them by the Council and are therefore given 'Notice to Quit' the hostel.

It should be noted that accommodation may continue to be provided if the client requests a review of their case and the Council agrees to accommodate them whilst the review is carried out.

10% of all cases ended with the household being asked to leave the hostel when the council's duty to accommodate ceased.

1.10 Transferred With Duty

In a number of cases households residing at Hafan Treharne Hostel can be transferred, with the council retaining a duty to house. During the course of 2005 such alternatives have included:

- Bed & Breakfast Accommodation.
- The SAFE House: A project run by Llamau Housing Association, providing resettlement services to persons of 16 and 17 years of age.
- A project run by Tai Trothwy, aimed at providing resettlement work with ex-offenders or those at risk of offending.

- Church Road Flats: Comprises of 5 flats for which the Council has nomination rights and Llamau provide support at the beginning and end of the tenancy.

Left Hostel (with or without notice)

This category covers two groups of households:

- 1) Households abandoning their place at Hafan Treharne Hostel without informing staff of their intentions.
- 2) Households securing alternative forms of accommodation without the assistance of the council.

By far the greatest proportions are those in the first category.

1.11 Evicted: Not Staying at the Hostel

When a household accepts a place in temporary accommodation, which is provided by the council as part of its duties, then it is assumed that the household has no other form of accommodation available. There is an expectation that households will occupy the hostel for seven nights a week, without breaks. The hostel licence agreement sets out that persons who have absented themselves for two nights in any seven day period, without seeking the permission of hostel staff could be evicted, at the discretion of the hostel management.

However, it is accepted that there are certain circumstances when absences are unavoidable: if there is a hospital admission, for example, then it is expected that the client informs staff of their absence and the reasons for this. It is accepted that persons could be out of the hostel for other reasons and it is the hostel staff's practice to allow a maximum of two nights out in any seven-day period, as long as staffs are informed of the reasons. It is, possible that permission will be given for a longer absence, as long as this absence is discussed beforehand with staff. Evictions of household not staying at the hostel represent the largest group of all those evicted, more than half of the total.

1.12 Evicted: Violent or Disruptive Behaviour

The Hafan Treharne Hostel Licence Agreement is aimed at facilitating safe environment for all hostel users: members of households; members of staff; visitors. Violence in any form, threatened or actual, will not be tolerated and a person committing such an act can be evicted with immediate effect.

Disruptive behaviour, covers a wide range of issues, for example: playing loud music at night and causing a disturbance; petty vandalism; damage to property; theft. Depending upon the seriousness of the incident, at the management's discretion, a person could be evicted immediately, or given a notice to quit the hostel, or issued with a written warning about the incident and their future behaviour. In these cases evictions usually occur if a household has to be warned about their behaviour on more than one occasion¹².

During the course of 2005 6 households have been evicted for violent or disruptive behaviour, 3 of which were given immediate evictions for violent behaviour. The three evicted for disruptive behaviour were evicted after they had ignored previous warnings.

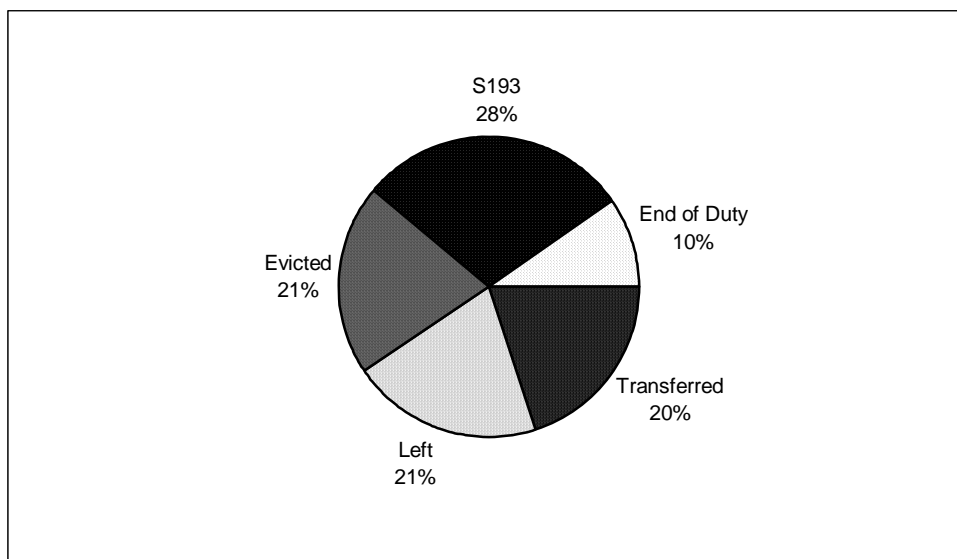
¹² Hostel policy and the licence agreement allows for a verbal warning, to be followed by a first written warning, a second written warning and then a notice to quit. The range of penalties can be entered at any level, depending upon the seriousness of the incident.

1.13 Evicted: Drug Misuse

Hafan Treharne Hostel's licence agreement allows for the immediate eviction of any person discovered to be misusing drugs, either prescribed or non-prescribed. All clients entering the hostel are asked to sign a drugs declaration, stating that they understand the provisions of the licence agreement in this regard and also asking that staff be informed if any household members are undergoing any course of drug rehabilitation. This latter is asked for so that staff are aware that a person might, for example, have methadone or other substitutes in their rooms.

During 2005 8 persons were evicted for drug misuse, the majority for cannabis use. However, it is worth noting that 3 of the persons evicted were subsequently arrested and convicted for drugs offences by Barry Police, following on from close work between hostel staff and the drug squad.

Table 3: Discharge Summary, 2005



From the illustration given above it can be seen that the largest discharge grouping during the course of 2005 was that for persons rehoused from the hostel under Section 193, where a duty had been accepted by the council to provide on-going housing to households to whom a duty was owed under the Housing Act 1996. Both those rehoused through Homes 4 U and through VATS have been included together, for purposes of summary.

The joint second largest category of discharges covers those who were evicted from the hostel, for whatever reason and those who left the hostel, with or without notice.

These latter two categories were closely followed by those transferred, whilst those for whom the council found that it had no duty trailed behind at only 10%.

Lengths of Stay

A household's 'Length of Stay' is defined as the as the number of nights' occupation of a hostel place, between admission and discharge. The minimum length of stay during 2005 was 1 night, whilst the maximum length of stay was 362 nights¹³.

¹³ It should be noted that not all of those discharged during the course of 2005 were admitted during the year.

Table 4: Comparative Lengths of Stay (Nights Occupied), by quarter, 2005

	Quarter 1 1 Jan 2005 to 31 Mar 2005	Quarter 2 1 Apr 2005 to 30 Jun 2005	Quarter 3 1 Jul 2005 to 30 Sep 2005	Quarter 4 1 Oct 2005 to 31 Dec 2005	TOTAL for 2005
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY: Rehoused Under Section 193	125	93	122	119	117
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY: Other Discharges	48	34	31	64	43

Or alternatively:

Table 5: Comparative Lengths of Stay (Weeks Occupied¹⁴), 2005

	TOTAL for 2005
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY: Rehoused Under Section 193	17
AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY: Other Discharges	6

Section 193 households that are rehoused stay nearly three times as long as those who do not. At the time of this meeting the hostel is accommodating:

56 Persons

26 Households

comprising

38 Adults

and

18 Children

¹⁴ Rounded to the nearest whole week.

2 May 2006

Appendix 7

Homelessness Questions

- Have you had opportunity to look at the outcomes of the workshop?
- Do you feel there were any gaps with the findings or comments?
- Is there any homelessness issues specific to your organisation?
- With regard to homelessness prevention, what role could your organisation play?
- Do you have any innovative ideas for increasing the level of temporary and second stage accommodation?
- How can we ensure that we meet the needs of individual groups?
- How do you envisage the Vale of Glamorgan Council providing consistent Vale wide advice and information? How best could this be achieved?
- Would your organisation be interested in participating in a Vale wide training needs analysis?
- How could we ensure that all organisations are kept up to date with advice, information, courses and seminars?
- Can you provide any examples of good practice you are aware of within your organisation or others?
- How can we better target our resources and work more effectively with other agencies?
- How do you ensure that your services are tailored to the needs of individuals?
- There were a range of key actions that came out of the workshops can you tell me whether you feel any or all of these actions are an appropriate way forward.

Action	Yes	No	If no, why?	If yes, what are the main barriers?
All agency survey				
Raise profile of the forum				
Task and finish group				
Direct Access hostel				
Feasibility of friendly lodging scheme				
Audit of advice service and of individual needs				
Information management system				
Inter-agency website and service user portal				
Onestop shop/Rural home visits				
Tenancy relations officer				
Pooling of training budgets and sharing training programmes				