**Housing Support Grant (HSG) Delivery Plan**

**2020 – 2021**

1. **Introduction**

The Vale of Glamorgan Housing Support Grant Strategy outlines the need for housing related support funded by the Housing Support Grant (HSG) in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The HSG is an amalgamation of three existing grants; The Supporting People Programme Grant, The Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement Grant.

The HSG is an early intervention grant programme to support activity, which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation, or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation. The HSG does not fund the statutory duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness, instead HSG funded services augment, complement and support the statutory service to ensure that the overall offer authorities provide helps people into the right homes with the right support to succeed. It supports vulnerable people to address the, sometimes multiple, problems they face, such as debt, employment, tenancy management, substance misuse, violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, and mental health issues. Support is person centred, aimed at supporting people to secure and maintain sustainable housing by addressing their needs and working with them to develop the skills needed to maintain a tenancy.

The HSG came into being in April 2019 following the Welsh Government funding flexibilities pathfinder project. A Ministerial decision was made in October 2018 to form two grants from the Early Intervention, Prevention and Support grant (EIPS) work, separating the housing-related grants from non-housing elements for all local authorities. Consequently, from April 2019, the Welsh Government established a Children and Communities Grant (CCG), encompassing Flying Start, Families First, the Legacy Fund, Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People, St David’s Day Fund, Communities for Work Plus and Childcare and Play; and the single HSG. Welsh Government has set clear expectations that the CCG and the HSG should work in a seamless fashion, providing integrated services where appropriate.

At the core of the grant is the prevention of homelessness. There is substantial flexibility in the use of the HSG funding, compared to the previous grants which it replaces.

The Vale of Glamorgan HSG Delivery Plan outlines the need for housing related support funded by the HSG. The continuing aim is for less dependence on institutions and statutory services and more independence and, as such, there is a greater emphasis on people remaining in their own homes.

The Vale of Glamorgan aims to ensure that vulnerable people get the support they need. We want quality of life, safety, health and independence for all of the Vale of Glamorgan's community, and we intend that our HSG programme will fully contribute to our agenda for action.

This central purpose forms the basis of our Strategy. We believe that top-quality housing related support services are the key to preventing homelessness, enabling independent living across the continuum of support and care needs and helping those who are most vulnerable to find their place in the Vale of Glamorgan's community.

The vision for the Vale is a place that is:

* safe, clean and attractive, where individuals and communities have sustainable opportunities to improve their health, learning and skills, prosperity and wellbeing, and
* where there is a strong sense of community in which local groups and individuals have the capacity and incentive to make an effective contribution to the future sustainability of the area.

1. **Strategic Priorities**

**National Influences**

The HSG programme makes a significant contribution to the implementation of Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which is focused on homelessness prevention. It also reduces or prevents the need for, often more costly interventions, by other public services including the NHS and/or social care for individuals and families.

On a national scale the grant also contributes to The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, The Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, The Welfare Reform Act 2012, The Strategy for Mental Health and Wellbeing in Wales (2010) and The Substance Misuse Delivery Plan (Wales) (2019 – 2022).

Current threats to the HSG include the redistribution of funding across Wales, and the potential for Learning Disability Funding to be removed from the grant, as well as any impacts caused by Brexit. It is therefore essential that services are future proofed and we continue to have contingency plans for the essential services the programme funds should there be any cuts to our allocation.

**Local Influences**

The Vale’s vision of housing is based on the five key aims identified within the Local Housing Strategy 2015-2020. These are:

* To provide more homes and more choice; ensuring that all residents have access to suitable and affordable accommodation.
* To improve homes and communities; by ensuring housing is maintained and fit for purpose.
* Increasing the supply of good quality, energy efficient homes in vibrant and sustainable communities.
* To provide better housing advice and support; ensuring that residents have access to the housing and services they need to live independently and plan their housing futures.
* To promote equality of access to housing and housing services.

On a local level the HSG also underpins *The Community Strategy 2011 to 2021* as well as The Public Service Board’s *Wellbeing Plan* *2018 to 2023* “Our Vale – Our Future” which has identified four priority outcomes for the Vale of Glamorgan. The locally delivered HSG Programme will contribute to these priorities and assist in the delivery of the required outcomes in the following ways:

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| **Priority outcome 1**  People are enabled to get involved to participate in their local communities and shape services locally.  **The HSG programme will contribute to the following outcomes being achieved:**   * People in the Vale of Glamorgan are linked into their local communities. * People are informed of local services that they are able to access. * There is a reduction in social isolation. * People in the Vale of Glamorgan feel empowered to help shape the services that matter to them. * People know how to get involved with shaping services that matter to them.   **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * Working with service users to link them into other local services that they will be able to continue to access when Housing Related Support services are no longer being provided to them. * Informing service users of the services that are available to them locally. * Ensuring effective working relationships between HSG providers and other local services. * Informing service users of the ways in which they can help to influence service development. * Ensuring that there are a wide range of options for people living in the Vale of Glamorgan to get involved in service development. * Working to improve service user involvement within the Vale of Glamorgan. * Service user consultation to establish how people living within the Vale of Glamorgan would like to be involved in shaping services. * Encouraging people to engage in volunteering opportunities where appropriate**.** |

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| **Priority outcome 2**  Poverty and inequalities linked to deprivation are reduced.  The HSG Programme will contribute to the following outcomes being achieved:   * Less people in the Vale of Glamorgan are living in poverty. * Inequality across the Vale of Glamorgan is reduced. * Differences in educational attainment, adult skill levels, income, crime rates and a range of health factors are reduced between the east and west side of the Vale of Glamorgan. * The difference in the expected healthy life expectancy is reduced between residents living in the most and least deprived areas of the Vale of Glamorgan.   **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * Working with people living in the Vale of Glamorgan to ensure that income is maximised and that people are receiving the financial support they are entitled to. * Working with residents of the Vale of Glamorgan to support them back into education, training and employment. * Working with residents of the Vale of Glamorgan to ensure that they understand healthy lifestyle choices. * Ensuring that people living in the Vale of Glamorgan are accessing health services appropriately. |

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| **Priority outcome 3**  Children living in the Vale of Glamorgan are given the best start in life   * The HSG programme will contribute to the following outcomes being achieved: * The number of children experiencing adverse childhood experiences (ACES) in the Vale of Glamorgan is reduced. * Parents understand the way their behaviour impacts on their children’s wellbeing. * Children living in the Vale of Glamorgan are more resilient.   **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * Improving our understanding of adverse childhood experiences and their impact on people’s overall lifecycle. * Improving our understanding of how resilience is developed. * Improving our understanding of harmful behaviours and how these can be reduced. * Ensuring that service users are able to access and engage with support for health issues, substance misuse issues and other issues that contribute to the ACES agenda. * Close working relationships between the HSG and Children and Communities Grant. |

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| **Priority outcome 4**  People living in the Vale of Glamorgan value and enhance their environment.  The HSG Programme will contribute to the following outcomes being achieved:   * People living in the Vale of Glamorgan value their environment. * People living in the Vale of Glamorgan understand how their actions can impact on the environment.   **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * People living in the Vale of Glamorgan are informed about the impact of their action on the environment. * People are encouraged to recycle and carry out other environment enhancing activities. * People living in the Vale of Glamorgan are informed about how to recycle, dispose of waste etc. |

The HSG Delivery Plan should be read in conjunction with the Vale of Glamorgan’s Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 to 2022 (attached at annex A and B).

Key priorities identified within the Homelessness Prevention Strategy are shown below. The HSG will contribute to these in the following ways:

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| **Priority Outcome 1**  Early intervention/ prevention in order to encourage better, more targeted, prevention work to reduce the number of households experiencing the trauma of homelessness.  **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * Joint working between the Supporting People Programme, the Housing Solutions Team and Shared Regulatory Services including ensuring a Housing Solutions presence on all Supporting People Gateway Panels. * Pre tenancy work with service users where required. * Utilising the Tenancy Ready Course for clients ahead of them moving to independent accommodation. |
| **Priority Outcome 2**  Improved access to services/ information for the service user to assist them to address the causes of homelessness and to make informed decisions on the correct solution to their housing problem.  **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * The introduction of a One Stop Shop for Housing Support Services, complimented by other housing related services. * Evaluate current social media exposure and identify future opportunities. * Advertise services in critical areas such as Job Centre, GP surgeries etc. |
| **Priority Outcome 3**  Ensuring suitable accommodation and support is available by making more effective use of the private rented sector, and clients are referred to Housing Support Services.  **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * The continuation of the Private Rented Sector Team based within Housing Solutions. * The introduction of a Single Point of Access to Supporting People Services to ensure that people are prioritised appropriately. * The introduction of a dedicated support service for people accommodated through the Vale Assisted Tenancy Team in the private rented sector. * Regular monitoring of HSG Services to ensure that services are delivering against the required outcomes and remain strategically relevant. * Continued working relationships between the Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme (VATS) and Environmental Health to ensure that all properties utilised by the VATS scheme are free from Category 1 Hazards. * Continued work between the VATS scheme and Environmental Health to enforce the requirements set by Rent Smart Wales. |
| **Priority Outcome 4**  Ensuring service users are provided with a client centred and holistic service.  **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * Regular reviews of HSG funded services. * Consultation with service users and front line staff. |
| **Priority Outcome 5**  Improving the quality of advice for all households threatened with homelessness  along with the required, advice and information.  **The outcomes will be achieved by:**   * Review and update information currently available regarding the Housing Solutions Service and associated advice on website. * Create a list of documents and links on the website in conjunction with the Communications Team. * Review information currently available from the Housing Solutions Service relating to partner organisations; amend/update current info and create a list of documents and links required to be uploaded through liaison with relevant partners. * Provide shadowing opportunities to key partners to ensure the support and advice being provided is consistent. |

Working across traditional geographical and service boundaries has been a priority for the Supporting People Programme since its inception in 2003. The introduction of Regional Collaborative Committees (RCC) in 2009 strengthened this commitment by bringing key agencies together across the region. The new grant removes the governance role of the RCC, while continuing the spirit of collaborative and regional working with the introduction of Regional Collaborative Groups (RCG).

The Housing Support Grant aims to work across the traditional boundaries of the many different organisations that are responsible for services for vulnerable people. We recognise that our agenda for health, housing, social care and community safety can only be achieved effectively through modern partnerships, which share objectives, programmes and operational working methods. Welsh Government has therefore provided a platform for the HSG to be represented at the Regional Partnership Board (RPB), through the RCG to ensure that strong working relationships across a variety of sectors continue to be a priority under the grant, despite the dissolution of the Regional Collaborative Committees.

1. **Delivery Priorities**

In 2019 the grant allocation for Supporting People remained static for the financial year at £3,466,829. From April 2020 the Supporting People Funding will be merged with the Homelessness Prevention Grant and the Rent Smart Wales Enforcement Grant, which receive grant funding of £110,800 and £9,522.52 respectively, to form the Housing Support Grant with a combined value of £3,587,151.52. Indicative allocations will be delayed this year due to the elections on 12th December, with Welsh Government expecting indicative allocations to be announced on 16th December 2019.

The draft HSG guidance was issued on 7th October 2019 for consultation with all stakeholders. Welsh Government intends to issue the final guidance in January 2020 ready for implementation on 1st April 2020. The draft guidance gives more autonomy to Local Authorities to allocate the grant based on the need of the local area. The emphasis on the grant is to underpin the homelessness agenda by commissioning complementary services to assist people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness to find or sustain suitable accommodation. The message from Welsh Government underpinning the new guidance is that homelessness should be rare, brief and un-repeated.

During this financial year we have worked with our Social Services colleagues to reduce the funding in the LD schemes and ensure we are only funding housing related support. The new service will commence on 1st February 2020 with the service being based solely on need and not tenure.

A new service working specifically with the private rented sector has been developed during 2019/20. This service has the added value of making the offer made by the Local Authority’s Housing Solutions Team more attractive to private sector landlords by offering intensive support to every client accommodated through the Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme.

Eight additional units of supported accommodation have been commissioned to accommodate people with criminal justice issues. The additional units will help to address some of the need created for this client group since prison leavers ceased being part of the priority need order under the new Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Going forward the Council’s Supporting People Team continue to liaise with service providers and service users to ensure the services provided are meeting the needs of the people who use them as well as improving the efficiency of the programme in order that more people can be supported at the point they need it.

Measures identified to reduce the budget and not effect front line services are:

1. Develop a One Stop Shop for Housing Related Support Services to deliver support at the point people need it the most.
2. Continue to monitor the throughput of services and the length of time people are supported in order to prevent the waiting list from becoming backlogged.
3. Work closely with the Housing Solutions Team and Shared Regulatory Services to administer the new Housing Support Grant effectively and ensure compliance with Welsh Government Grant Conditions.
4. Continue to monitor supply and demand to ensure that all services remain strategically relevant and funding is targeted appropriately.
5. Continue to monitor any new initiatives that develop within the sector in order to establish if any of these are suitable to implement in the Vale of Glamorgan.
6. Continue to make best use of and develop resources available in the private rented sector.
7. Ensure that the principles developed by the End Youth Homelessness Cymru Group are embedded in our work with young people.
8. Continue to maximise the housing solutions available within the private rented sector.
9. Ensure relevant actions and initiatives of best practice identified through the Housing Action Group are considered for delivery.
10. Ensure the HSG continues to underpin the actions being delivered through the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022.

**Background for Analysis**

The data at Annex C shows levels of unmet need across the Vale of Glamorgan divided by client group. This, along with consultation with providers, including front line workers and service users has informed the basis of commissioning decisions, along with the deliverability of each scheme.

We believe it is important to recognise that clients who require accommodation would in the main put homelessness as their lead issue, even though in many cases they had other very high support needs. This has been evidenced in the past from support plans, which have shown that in most cases clients have a dual or triple diagnoses and once in accommodation these other support needs come to the fore. However this year mental health overtook homelessness as the highest unmet need client group, with homelessness showing as the second highest unmet need in the Vale of Glamorgan. It is also important to note that although older people’s services show an over subscription due to the amount of sheltered and alarm services, this is misleading as there is still a high demand for support services from older people. However, much of this need is now being met by the Older Person’s drop in based within the Extra Care Scheme.

The percentage of household renting privately in the Vale has however risen over the last 20 years; from 9% of households in 1991 to 16% in 2011. Whilst the percentage increase may not appear too significant, the actual number of households renting privately has more than doubled, from 4,033 households in 1991 to 8,379 in 2011, and continues to rise.

Over the same 20-30 year period of time the percentage of households living in the social rented sector has declined, from 24% in 1981 to 12% in 2011. Social renting is the only tenure in the Vale of Glamorgan where the number of households has declined, from over 9,000 households in 1981 to under 6,500 in 2011, a decline of over 30%. The 2011 Census showed that for the first time in 30 years the private rented sector had grown larger than the social rented sector in the Vale of Glamorgan.

Increasingly therefore there is a growing dependence upon the private rented sector and the Council is committed to further developing its relationship with private landlords, which is reflected in the Action Plan that accompanies this Strategy.

The main reason for homelessness presentations under Section 66 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 in the Vale of Glamorgan is “loss of rented or tied accommodation”, with 40% of applicants presenting under Section 66 falling into this category. Only 25% of applicants in this category were owed a duty under Section 73 of the Act. The difference in this figure can be attributed to the successful prevention work undertaken by the Housing Solutions Team as part of their duties under Section 66 of the Act alleviating homelessness at this early stage.

For all other categories the numbers presenting under Section 66 and Section 73 of the Act remain reasonably consistent. However, it should be noted that the total number of presentations under Section 73 is considerably lower than those under Section 66, with 1179 households presenting under Section 66 and 859 presenting under Section 73 during the same period. This is a reflection of the preventative work that is now embedded in the service that has stopped a number of households escalating to a point of crisis.

The following graph shows the reasons for homelessness across the Vale assessed under Section 66 of the Act. The second graph shows the reasons for homelessness assessed under Section 73 of the Act.

***Graph 1 – Reasons for Homelessness under Section 66 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014***

***Graph 2 – Reasons for homelessness under section 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014***

1. **Local Commissioning Plan**

The Vale of Glamorgan Council commenced the assessment of support needs utilising the Welsh Government Individual Needs Assessment Mechanism (INAM) in April 2002. This mechanism has been used throughout the Vale by Housing Associations, Voluntary Sector Groups, the Local Health Board, Probation and individuals to ensure as complete a picture as possible of support needs are identified.

In September 2018 the Vale Supporting People Team introduced a single point of access, commonly known as a Gateway, in order to prioritise clients based on need and also to assist in collecting more comprehensive statistics on need. A new referral form named the Housing Related Support (HRS) Form was also introduced at this stage to replace the original INAM form. This is now used by all agencies referring into the scheme. A single assessment form was also introduced at this point in order that needs can be more easily identified and duplication is reduced for both the client and the services that provide support.

In terms of the detailed support needs of clients assessed under the HRS model in 2018/19, 2541 clients (100%) assessed identified a support need. The most significant lead support issues relate to Mental Health (599) and Homelessness (509). Again this year only Refugee’s recorded no returns although the Council has housed Syrian refugees who are supported via a bespoke scheme called the Syrian Refugee Resettlement Scheme funded by The Home Office.

The needs assessment information can also be broken down into area specific support needs so that if new funding should become available, services can be developed in the areas showing most need. In addition providers have been approached to suggest ideas for “off the shelf” project proposals as required by the new guidance. These are projects that can be commissioned at short notice if funding becomes available. However they will need to be strategically relevant and will be subject to approval via the traditional planning processes.

**Identifying Gaps in Services**

By combining the data collected over the last year with the additional information provided through the Supporting People planning and consultation process with the existing supply of services, a picture of the gaps in services emerge. These findings (see graph1 below) are presented to the core members of the Supporting People Local Planning Group in the Vale of Glamorgan who determine the future local service priorities for development.

In 2020-2021 any additional funding will be directed towards Mental Health Supported Accommodation, Supported Accommodation for people with a Learning Difficulty that does not reach the level for statutory services and specialist support for people living in the Private Rented Sector.

4. Local Spend Plan

Sets out spending intentions for the year

1. **Stakeholder engagement**
2. **The Supporting People Local Planning Group**

The core members continue to meet to examine the needs data once it is collated.

The core members of the Supporting Planning Group are:

• Operational Manager Public Sector Housing (Chair)

• Operational Manager, Mental Health Services

• Operational Manager Public Health Wales

• Operational Manager Social Services

• Vale Manager, South Wales Area National Probation Service

• Vale Locality Lead Nurse, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board

• Voluntary Sector Representative (Vale Housing & Homelessness Forum)

• Voluntary sector Representative (Vale and Cardiff Regional Providers Forum)

1. **Consultation**

As a Local Authority we recognise that in order to ensure any services being developed are fit for purpose a coproduction approach is essential. We therefore carry out consultation on a regular basis and through a variety of formats to capture as much information from our clients and stakeholders as possible.

1. **The Supporting People Liaison Group**

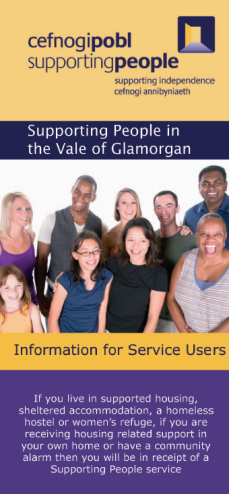
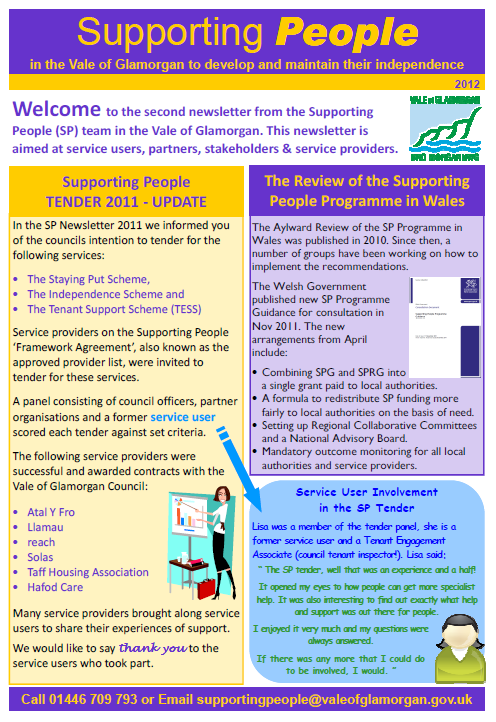
This is a forum for all Supporting People stakeholders and allows for the exchange of information and for all stakeholders to participate in the planning process. Meetings take place quarterly. This is an inclusive forum, to which service users are also invited.

1. **Service User Consultation**

In 2010 the Council commissioned external Consultants to work with service users to put together a Service User Participation Framework to set out how they wanted to engage with the Council, both on service improvement and new developments.

The responses received showed that service users did not want a formal engagement process. Whilst they were happy to be interviewed by Council staff at the time of service reviews in order to provide feedback on their level of satisfaction with the support, they thought that their support provider participation events provided sufficient engagement opportunities for them and therefore did not want them replicated by the Council.

In response to this consultation, the Service User Consultation Framework was developed and the following procedures were introduced by the Council’s Supporting People Team:



**Supporting People Leaflet, Newsletter and Pop-Up Banner**

* At least 20% of both existing and former service users are interviewed as part of each service review (10% in alarm services).
* Posters and leaflets are available and circulated to service users to advise them how to contact and provide feedback to the Supporting People Team, if they wish.
* The Supporting People Team attends all support provider participation events, with a stall. A questionnaire is used to gather service user feedback.
* An annual Supporting People Newsletter is circulated to all service users.
* A web based service user questionnaire is available on the Vale of Glamorgan Council’s website for completion.
* All support providers must provide an annual Service User Participation report detailing how service user views are gathered, the impact on the service, and how feedback is provided to the service users.
* Housing Solutions client satisfaction survey to be completed to ensure the customer remains at the centre of the service and their care remains excellent.

The Regional Collaborative Committee also developed a Regional Service User Participation Framework in early 2015, which has been implemented by the Supporting People Team. The findings continued to reflect the position outlined above.

However due to the increased focus on service user involvement with the HSG Programme and developments in technology a new Service User Engagement Strategy Task and Finish Group was formed in 2018 by the RCC, consisting of the Supporting People Leads, the Regional Development Coordinator, provider and landlord representatives. This group held a consultation event with service users hosted by Cymorth Cymru in late 2018 which informed the direction of travel for the group. The group has developed a strategy to engage with service users in a variety of ways based on the information they learned from this event, including through the use of social media, online surveys and traditional face to face settings. A survey has been developed that will be used on the website in order to give service users another means to tell us what they want from support.

This year we held two consultation events. One was aimed at managers of Supporting People funded services and other stakeholders. The other event was aimed at front line staff and service users. Both events were well attended and gave us lots of information to use in future service development. The overwhelming message from the events was that more “drop in” support services were needed so that service users can get support at the point they need it. We also asked how people would like this type of service provided and what they think would improve our current drop in services. This information helped to inform the service specification for the One Stop Shop that is being commissioned, which is expected to open in spring 2020.

**6. Equalities Impact Assessment**

An Equalities Impact Assessment is carried out for each new service that is developed and ahead of any changes to service delivery.

**Appendices**

Annex A: Homelessness Prevention Strategy

Annex B: Homelessness Prevention Action Plan

Annex C: Need and Supply Data used at Chapter 3