

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 17th December 2018

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services

Vale of Glamorgan Council Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018/2022

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek Cabinet approval to commence an eight week formal consultation on the Vale of Glamorgan Council's draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 - 22 and associated Action Plan.

Recommendations

That subject to consideration by Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee:

- 1 That Cabinet notes and endorses the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy at Appendix 1 and Action Plan at Appendix 2 for consultation purposes and approves the commencement of a formal consultation exercise.
2. That following consideration by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee any comments be referred back to Cabinet for final determination in advance of formal consultation. .

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. To ensure that all partners and stakeholders are consulted on the draft Strategy and Action Plan and all responses are considered before it is finalised and submitted to Welsh Government.
2. To ensure that the comments of the Scrutiny Committee are taken into account in determining the Strategy.

Background

2. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 took effect on 27th April 2015 and placed a number of new duties on local authorities in respect of homelessness, which included the following;

To provide assistance to anyone threatened with homelessness.

To help provide appropriate help and support to any homeless person to help them secure a suitable home.

To provide new powers to local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty into the private rented sector.

3. The Housing Wales Act 2014 is the biggest change in tackling homelessness in Wales since the first Homeless Person's Act in 1977. Its aim is to transform homelessness by creating a modern safety net where no one is turned away without help.
4. Section 50 of the Act requires local authorities to undertake a Homelessness Review and to produce a Homelessness Strategy which sets out how the Vale of Glamorgan Council in partnership with other stakeholders will address:
 - the prevention of homelessness;
 - the availability of suitable accommodation for people who are homeless or may become homeless;
 - the availability of appropriate support and assistance for people who are homeless or may become homeless;

Relevant Issues and Options

5. The draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy attached at Appendix 1 is accompanied by a draft Action Plan at Appendix 2 which sets out the steps and activities that will be undertaken by the Council and its partners to deliver the required strategic outcomes for clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, including:
 - people leaving prison or youth detention accommodation,
 - young people leaving care,
 - people leaving the regular armed forces of the Crown,
 - people leaving hospital after medical treatment for mental disorder as an inpatient, and
 - people receiving mental health services in the community.
6. The responses received from the consultation period will be used to inform the final Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan, which will be submitted to Cabinet for approval prior to its adoption and submission to Welsh Government.
7. The finalised Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan will cover the next four year period but will remain a working document and be kept under regular review.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

8. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan will be delivered within existing resources identified in the Council's Housing General Fund.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

9. The implementation of a Homelessness Prevention Strategy will ensure there is an effective homelessness service in place in the Vale of Glamorgan, which promotes community sustainability and supports the most vulnerable and socially isolated residents.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

10. The development of a Homelessness Prevention Strategy is a statutory requirement under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and will assist the Council to fulfil its statutory homelessness duties as set down within the Act.

Crime and Disorder Implications

11. The development of effective homelessness services across the Vale of Glamorgan will positively impact on the lives of those threatened with homelessness, and help to protect the most vulnerable from crime.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

12. The development of a Homelessness Prevention Strategy will enable the Council to ensure its statutory homelessness service complies with the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which is focussed on addressing one of the most acute forms of social exclusion in Wales.

Corporate/Service Objectives

13. This report is consistent with the following Corporate and Service Objectives of the Council's Corporate service plan:
14. Wellbeing Outcome 1: An inclusive and safe Vale
15. Objective 2: Provide decent homes and safe communities.

Policy Framework and Budget

16. This report is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

17. All Vale of Glamorgan elected Members have been consulted.
18. All partners and stakeholders have been consulted, including service users through an independent service user consultation exercise conducted and facilitated by GWALIA commissioned by the Council's Supporting People Team.
19. A further 8 week formal consultation will commence following draft approval.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

20. Homes and Safe Communities

Background Papers

Part 2 Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Housing (Wales) Act 2014 Code of Guidance

Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales 2009 - 2019 Welsh Assembly Government

National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate - December 2015 Welsh Government

How Local Government Manages Demand – Homelessness - Wales Audit Office 8th January 2018

Vale of Glamorgan Local Housing Strategy 2015-2020

Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan 2018-2021

Corporate Strategy & Action Plan for Children & Young People Who Need Care & Support 2016-2019

Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018 - 2023

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VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL



Homelessness Prevention Strategy

2018 - 2022



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1. Forward by Councillor Andrew Parker – Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services

Homelessness remains a key priority and the Council is committed to early intervention and prevention of homelessness wherever possible; in partnership with our statutory and non-statutory partners. This strategy and supporting action plan sets out the practical ways the Council will achieve this, including underlining the Council's corporate commitment to not use bed and breakfast accommodation unless in an emergency and in any event for no longer than six weeks.

I am therefore proud to present this Homelessness Prevention Strategy which will be a key tool in helping the Council to deliver the Council's Housing Strategy 2015-2020 which sets out the long term strategic vision for housing in the Vale that:

“All residents in the Vale of Glamorgan have access to good quality, suitable housing and are able to live happily and independently in vibrant, sustainable communities.”

The Vale of Glamorgan is a wonderful place to live, with over 80% of the area being rural but it has a very diverse population. Whilst many areas are very affluent, there four areas located within the top 10% of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014, all of which are in Barry where the majority of housing solutions tend to exist. Although Barry has a buoyant private rented sector, rents are also increasing and are often out of reach of those on low income. Therefore affordability remains a challenge in all areas of the Vale of Glamorgan

Vulnerable and disadvantaged households are particularly at risk of homelessness, and meeting their needs is a particular focus for this Strategy. The Council recognises that it needs to offer a range of housing options for people, including support to prevent homelessness and to maintain a home and is committed to working closely with a wide range of partner agencies to deliver the services needed through a clear single point of access to services in order to ensure that we make efficient use of the resources available..

Finally, the Council understands the need for continuous improvement in front line housing services and we are delighted to have been the first authority in the country to undertake a peer review which we will continue to develop in line with the new Welsh Government service standards.





Councillor Andrew Parker

Cabinet Member for Housing & Building Services



2. Introduction

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 came into force on 27th April 2015. The Act replaced *The Housing Act 1996* and is the first Housing Act to be introduced by Welsh Government. The Act puts a duty on local authorities to provide assistance to everyone who is threatened with homelessness regardless of whether they fall into a priority need category or have a local connection to the authority. It also places greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention by placing a duty on local authorities to work with people who are at risk of losing their home within 56 days to help find a solution to their problems. Other important changes introduced in the Act include the ability for Local Authorities to discharge their duties into the Private Rented Sector and the removal of the automatic priority previously given to prison leavers.

In addition, the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* sets out the need for all local authorities to publish a new Homelessness Strategy, including a review of the services available and an action plan for the next four years, which is co-produced by other professionals working in the sector and people who have accessed the homelessness service.

The focus on early intervention is also intrinsic within Welsh Government's *Ten Year Homelessness Plan 2009-2019*. It places an emphasis on preventing homelessness wherever possible; working across organisational and policy boundaries; placing the service user at the centre of service delivery; ensuring social inclusion and equality of access to services and making the best use of the resources available

The Vale of Glamorgan Housing Solutions Team has completed a full review of the services available to people who are facing homelessness and undertaken extensive consultation with the people who have accessed the service in addition to all other stakeholders. This information has been used to inform the development of a robust Homelessness Prevention Strategy that will assist the Council to meet the increasing demands on the Service and to provide the required outcomes for clients.



3. Background Information

This is the Vale of Glamorgan's first Homelessness Strategy since the introduction of the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* and it comes at a time of considerable change. Whilst Welsh Government considers changes to the funding streams that support homeless clients and Universal Credit is rolled out in the area, there is increased pressure on housing services.

Following the exit from the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy arrangements however, the Council has an exciting opportunity for the first time in many years to build council housing in order to contribute to meeting the increasing need for affordable housing. In addition, following a peer review exercise of our Housing Solutions Service, we have pledged to continually improve our front line services to meet the highest standards in conjunction with Welsh Government's proposed new service governance arrangements.

The Vale's vision of housing is based on four key aims. 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.

We are also very proud to report that, due to the Council's corporate commitment and the introduction of a proactive front line prevention service, bed and breakfast accommodation has not been used in the last three years (with the exception of emergency use). This is a significant achievement given that nationally there is still a reliance on this form of accommodation. It has not only improved the quality of life of our homeless households; it has also reduced the cost to the public purse and allowed the service to redirect resources to achieve better outcomes for service users.

We recognise the benefits of working in partnership and have accordingly strengthened our links with other organisations and landlords that can help us to deliver sustainable housing solutions. We know that as a local housing authority we cannot tackle homelessness in isolation and we will continue to build a strong network of partnerships and services that can



be monitored and supported through the Homelessness Prevention Strategy's action plan. Service Level Agreements and the required information Sharing Protocols and procedures will be put in place to take these forward.

Going forward many of the challenges and issues facing The Housing Solutions Service remains outside the direct control of the Council but this Strategy will build on our partnership working achievements to help deliver solutions.

Geography/ local economy/ demographics

The Vale of Glamorgan covers an area of 33,097 hectares of which 85% is rural. It is a county of great contrasts, with both urban and rural areas and communities that range from considerably affluent to some of the most deprived in Wales. The main population centers are Barry, Cowbridge, Llantwit Major and Penarth; along with a number of smaller and minor rural settlements.

The total population of the Vale of Glamorgan at the time of the 2011 Census was 126,336; an increase of 5.9% compared to the previous Census ten years prior. The majority of the population is of working age. When compared to Wales as a whole, the Census indicates that the Vale of Glamorgan contains a lower proportion of the population that are of working age than is found nationally and regionally; 62.9% in the Vale of Glamorgan compared to 63.5% across Wales. The Vale also has a higher proportion of children than is found nationally; 18.9% in the Vale of Glamorgan compared to 18.2% across Wales. The percentage of the population of people aged 65 and over is representative of Wales as a whole. The Vale has an unemployment rate of 8.75%, while 4.8% of the Vale's residents are economically inactive due to long term sickness or disability.

Local Housing Market

At the time of the 2011 Census the Vale had an estimated 53,505 dwellings. The majority of households in the Vale, 72%, owned their own home; this is higher than the Welsh average. This was followed by 16% of households who rent from a private landlord, either from a landlord or letting agent. The smallest tenure in the Vale of Glamorgan in 2011 was the social rented sector, 12% of households rent from a social landlord, either the Council or one of the four registered social landlords operating in the county.

Whilst home ownership has remained the most prevalent tenure in the Vale and the number of households who own their home has grown over the last 30 years, the percentage of owner occupiers actually fell from 78% in 2001 to 72% in 2011. 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.

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.

Average property prices in the area are in excess of £207,000 however; there are a number of distinct housing markets within the Vale of Glamorgan, in particular geographically; there are distinct price differences between the major towns and rural areas. The towns of St Athan and Barry have the lowest average property values; £135,000 and £144,000 respectively. These are urban settlements, located in the south of the county. Barry is the largest town in Wales and has good rail links to both Cardiff and Bridgend.

Penarth and Llandough have noticeably higher property values with an average property costing £245,000. The high values in this area are unsurprising given the close proximity to Cardiff and good transport links into the city. The highest property prices in the Vale are however found in the rural areas, particularly those in the north and west of the county; Llandow/Ewenny has the highest average property price of over £363,000. These high prices reflect the desirable nature of the rural Vale as aspirational areas to live. They are characterised as low density settlements in and around market towns, villages and hamlets. These areas, although rural, have good transport links onto the A48 and M4 providing easy access to areas within and around the Vale.

The 2014 CACI Paycheck data tells us that the mean household income band in the Vale of Glamorgan is £35,000-£40,000, whereas the median is £25,000-£30,000. The former is 'susceptible to small numbers of very high earners', whereas the latter measures 'the amount earned by the typical individual within a domain' without being skewed by extremities. The median figure is thus a more appropriate measure of income levels when looking at housing affordability, although this obviously varies considerably across the locality.



Barry has the highest proportion of households earning less than £10,000; attributable to 15% of the households living in this area. This is followed by Penarth and Llandough and St Athan which have 11% of households earning less than £10,000. As may be expected, Barry and St Athan also have the smallest proportions of households earning £80,000 and over in this area, attributable to 5% and 6% of households respectively. However Penarth and Llandough do not follow this trend, with 10% of households earning £80,000 and over. The majority of households in Barry, Penarth and Llandough, St Athan, Llantwit Major and Dinas Powys earn £10,000-£20,000; whereas most households in Cowbridge, Llandow/Ewenny, Peterston-Super-Ely, Rhoose, St Brides Major, Sully and Wenvoe earn £40,000-£60,000.

Between 30% and 45% of households do not have the means to rent a two bedroom property on the open market. This figure rises to 68% for newly formed households. There is high competition for rented accommodation between professional people and other local households who cannot access social rented housing. Many households therefore find themselves unable to compete effectively in the market place for private rented accommodation without some form of assistance. The current programme of welfare reform creates further uncertainty over how a number of those facing homelessness might achieve a housing solution which is affordable to them. Similarly, we are facing growing concerns over levels of fuel poverty, which in turn can impact significantly upon housing affordability. There are 3882 housing applicants on the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Register seeking affordable rented accommodation. Of those, approximately 70% of households have no earned income. Of the 30% of applicants in paid employment the majority of households (29%) earn between £100 and £199 per week. Increasing the supply of affordable rented housing, both social and intermediate therefore remains a high priority for the Council.



4. Homelessness Position since the introduction of the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014*

The *Housing Wales Act 2014* is the biggest change to tackling homelessness in Wales since the first Homeless Person's Act commenced in 1977. Its aim was to transform homelessness by creating a modern safety net where no one is turned away without help.

The Act has introduced a number of new duties to support the prevention activity. These have been explained below:

Section 66 – Duty to help to prevent an applicant from becoming homeless

(1) A local housing authority must help to secure that suitable accommodation does not cease to be available for occupation by an applicant if it is satisfied that the applicant is a) threatened with homelessness, and b) eligible for help.

Section 73 - Duty to help to secure accommodation for homeless applicants

(1) A local housing authority must help to secure that suitable accommodation is available for occupation by an applicant, if the authority is satisfied that the applicant is

(a) homeless, and (b) eligible for help.

(2) But the duty in subsection (1) does not apply if the authority refers the application to another local housing authority

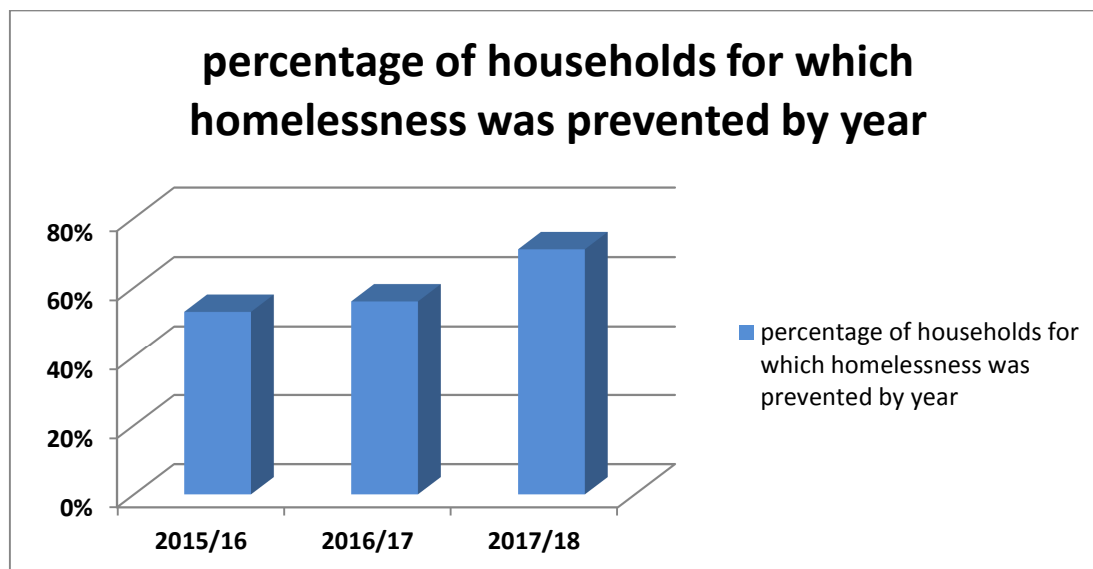
Section 75 - Duty to secure accommodation for applicants in priority need when the duty in section 73 ends

(1) When the duty in section 73 (duty to help secure suitable accommodation for a homeless applicant) comes to an end in respect of an applicant in the circumstances mentioned in subsection (2) or (3) of section 74, the local housing authority must secure that suitable accommodation is available for occupation by the applicant if subsection (2) or (3) (of this section) applies.



Much has been achieved since the introduction of the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* on the 27th April 2015. In the last three years we have seen a reduction in homelessness acceptances and an increase in homelessness prevention as evidenced in the graph below:

Graph 1 – Percentage of households for which homelessness was prevented by year



However it should be noted that it is difficult to compare this Strategy with previous Homelessness Strategies due to the different legislative frameworks in place at the time.

Key issues:

- There were 111 households living in temporary accommodation between April 2018 and June 2018, 33 of whom were families with children.
- There have been no families placed in Bed and Breakfast Accommodation since prior to the commencement of the new Act. In April 2015.
- In 2017/18 the Housing Solutions Team accepted a Section 75 duty (households are awarded section 75 duty in accordance with the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* when deemed to be eligible, in priority need, homeless, unintentionally homeless, have a local connection and when all other prevention opportunities have been unsuccessful. This would have been regarded as a section 193 duty under the Housing Act 1996) to 120 households, of which 96 were resolved positively.
- The Housing Solutions Team prevented 252 households from becoming homeless since April 2015
- There were no rough sleepers recorded over the same period



- The average stay in temporary accommodation has increased to 25 weeks over the past 12 months and is continuing to increase. This figure is exasperated by the lack of single person move on accommodation in the Vale.
- No families were found to be intentionally homeless since the introduction of the *Housing (Wales) Act* in April 2015
- The main causes of homelessness over the same period were loss of private rented accommodation, relationship breakdown, evicted by family and people leaving prison as demonstrated in the chart below:

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.

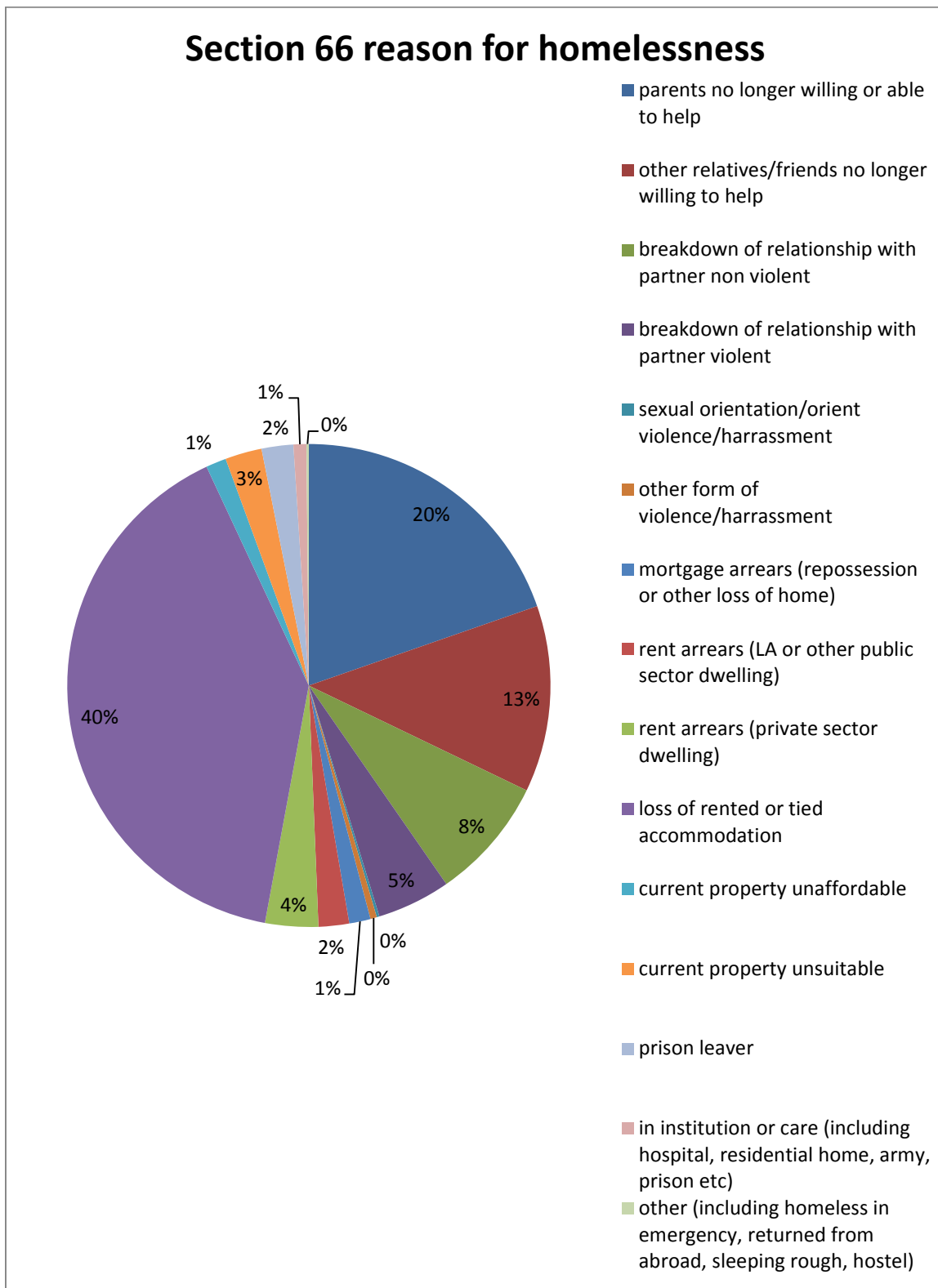
The main reason for homelessness presentations under Section 66 of the Act and Section 73 of the Act vary considerably. Under Section 66 the main reason for homeless presentations The main cause of homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan is “loss of rented or tied accommodation”, with 40% of applicants presenting under Section 66 falling into this category and only 25% of applicants falling into this category under Section 73. 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.

Conversely the number of prisoners presenting under Section 73 of the Act is 17% higher than those presenting under Section 66 of the Act. This is due to the fact that the majority of prisoners will be placed immediately under Section 73 as there is no dwelling from which the Housing Solutions Team can attempt to prevent the applicant becoming homeless.

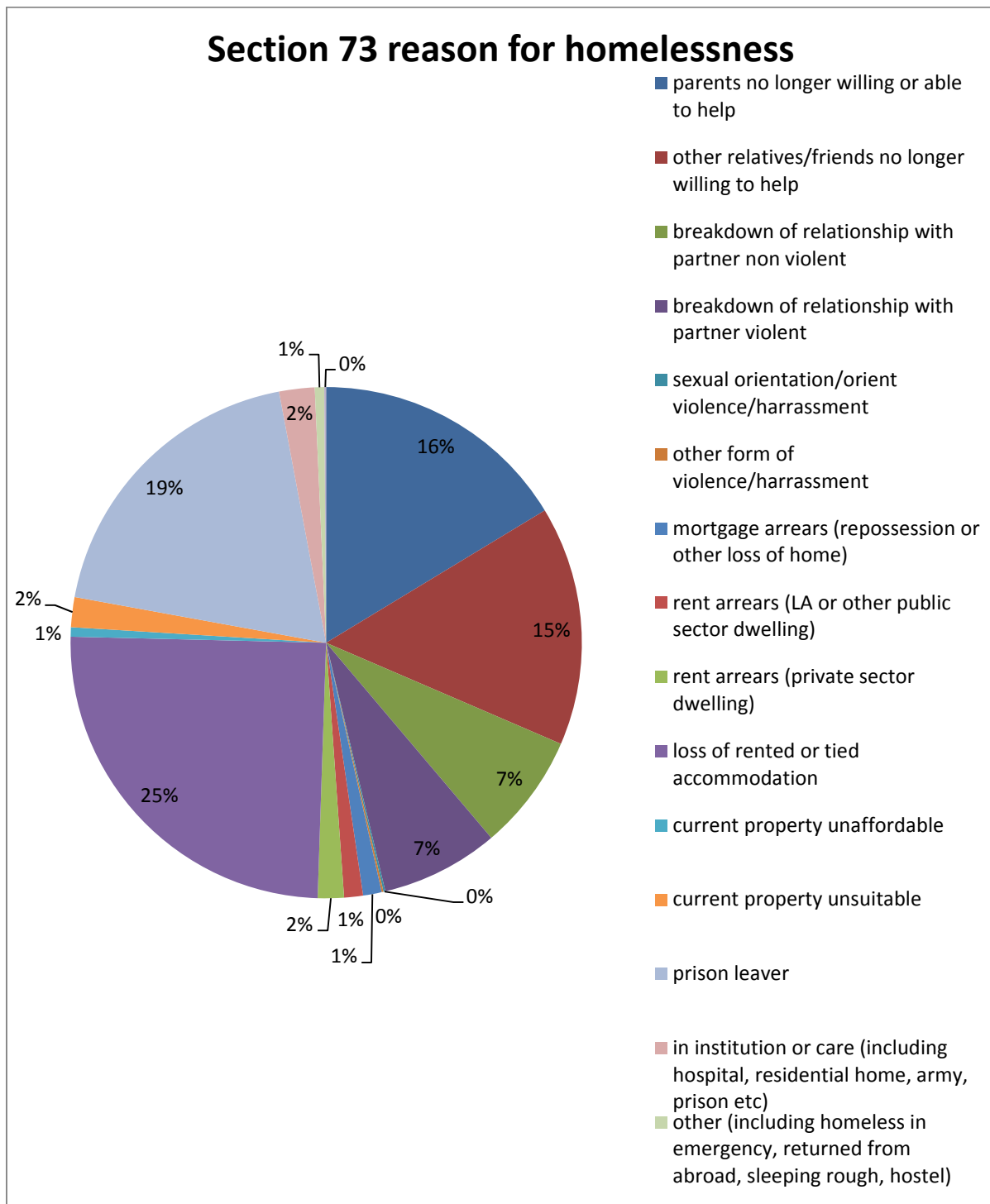
For all other categories the numbers presenting under Section 66 and Section 73 of the Act remain reasonably consistent. However, it should be noted that the total number of presentations under Section 73 is considerably lower than those under Section 66, with 1179 households presenting under Section 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 section 73 status.



Graph 2 – Reasons for Homelessness under Section 66 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014



Graph 3 – Reasons for homelessness under section 73 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014



Historically rough sleeping across the Vale has not presented a challenge to homelessness services. The annual rough sleeper count has indicated that there are no people sleeping rough in the Vale of Glamorgan. However it is important to note that rough sleeper counts only provide a snapshot of the situation and do not always reveal the true extent of rough sleeping within a given area, especially in rural areas as rough sleeping would generally be



less visible were it to be an issue. The Vale of Glamorgan Council is however committed to working with partners to link rough sleepers if identified with the services that can help them find a way off the streets and into settled accommodation. However, in times of extreme cold weather, a rough sleeper would be particularly vulnerable to harm and even death. For this reason the Council has introduced a *Cold Weather Protocol* in order to ensure that any rough sleeper has the opportunity to have access to appropriate support and assistance if it is believed that they are at risk during severe cold weather.

There is also increasing recognition and corporate support to provide effective housing options for non-statutory homeless people, and the Council has implemented a range of measures to improve the services it can offer to these clients. These include a frontline comprehensive housing advice service, including direct help where necessary to mediate, negotiate stays etc. and the provision of bonds and rent in advance to help secure privately rented accommodation.

Despite our achievements, we have in the last year seen an increase in homelessness acceptances, mostly due to a changing economic climate and new duties placed on the local authority under the new *Housing (Wales) Act 2014*.

The transition from the old legislative framework of the *Housing Act 1996* into the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* led to the need to make fundamental changes to the Council's service delivery. Although prevention work was being undertaken prior to the April 2015 implementation date, formalising these processes in order to comply with the Act and the associated legal duties led to administrative challenges.

The aim of the current legislation is to focus more intensely on prevention rather than cure. The front loading of advice and support is targeted at saving tenancies to a much greater degree. Although this process allows for more pro-active preventative methods, the benefits of this process are offset, somewhat, by the increased administrative burden placed on staff due to the more complex and layered structure of the various duties and decisions required.

Examples of the changes required included the introduction of hourly appointment slots, in order to allow time to collect the additional information required under the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* and to make the presentation process a more client focussed experience.

The Service has made significant progress over the past 3 years. Collaborative working has become embedded in the Service allowing access to specialist advice/support offered by partner agencies. A Shelter Cymru advice worker was seconded to the team to assist with the transition period. In addition, the Housing Solutions Team has continued to work very closely with the Supporting People Team to identify and develop complementary services to assist clients more effectively. The homelessness assessment process has been enhanced by

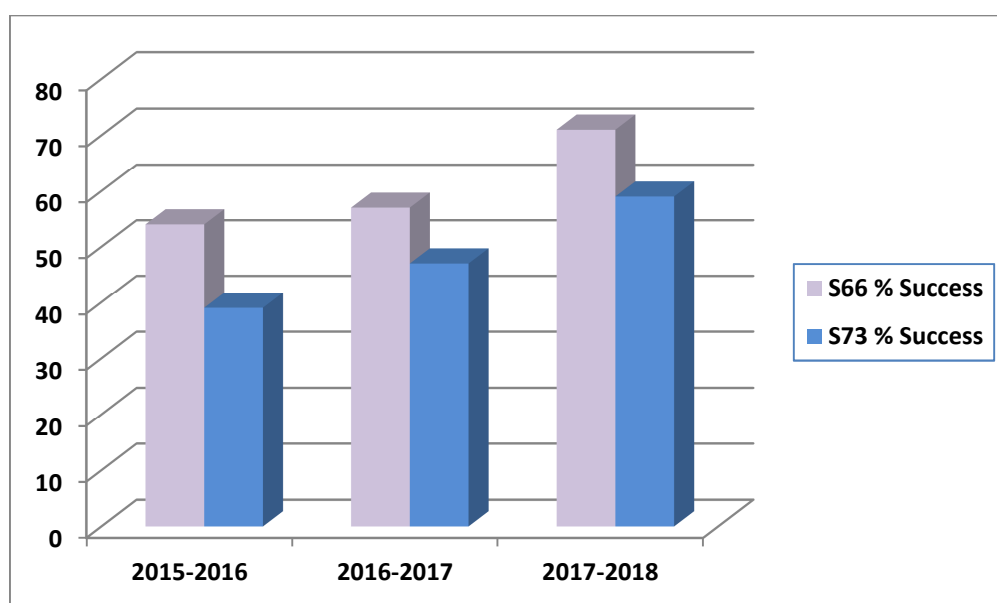


the introduction of support workers onsite from both Gwalia and Gofal. These workers assist clients in crisis, at the time of presentation and have proved an invaluable tool in preventing homelessness and assisting clients to main their accommodation.

All of this work has brought additional confidence to the Team and increased their ability to manage potential legislative changes more effectively and to adapt to the challenges ahead.

The graph below highlights the progression of the service over the past 3 years in its ability to prevent people becoming homeless under a Section 66 duty and to effectively relieve homelessness where a Section 73 duty is owed.

Graph 4 – Percentage of homeless applicants for which homelessness was prevented since the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

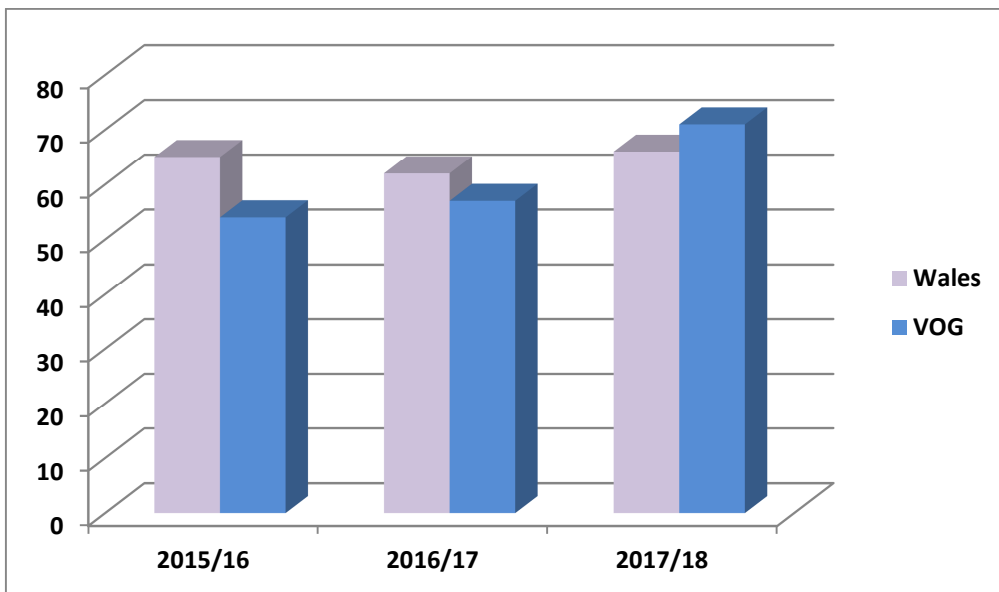


These figures are against a backdrop of rising demand for services across Wales. Over the past 3 years since the introduction of the Act, duties awarded at Section 66 stage (threatened with homelessness within 56 days) have risen nationally by 27% and by 31% in the Vale of Glamorgan. Where service users have presented as homeless and been awarded a Section 73 duty, the rise has been even more dramatic; with an increase of 64% across Wales and 61% in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The next graph shows how the Vale of Glamorgan has performed in comparison to the all Wales national average in its homelessness prevention duties under Section 66 of the Act, which shows a year on year improvement.



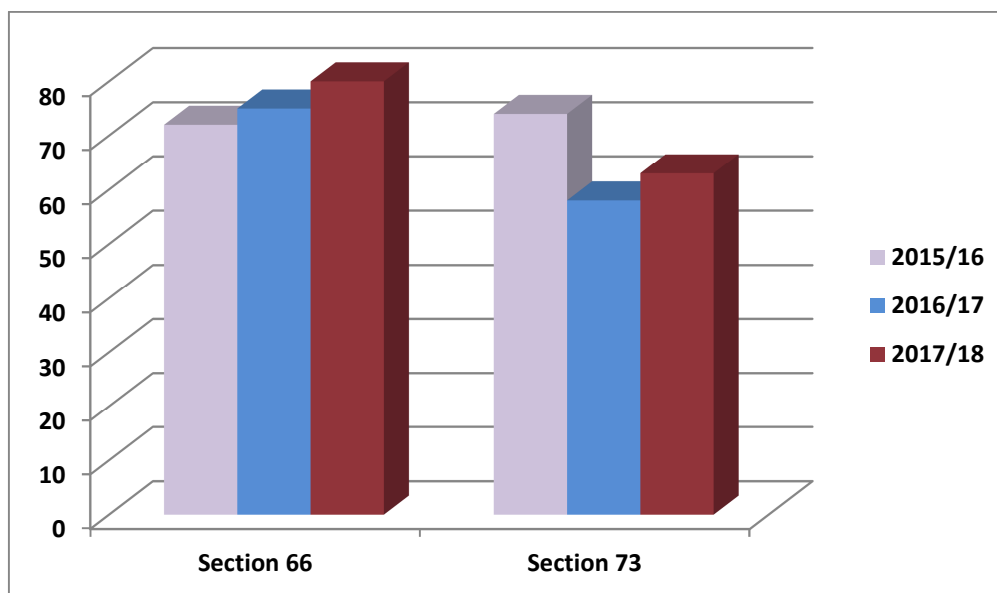
Graph 5 - Percentage of homeless applicants for which homelessness was prevented compared to the all Wales national average



The following graph shows the percentage of cases that the Housing Solutions Team has prevented from becoming homeless following presentations under Section 66 and Section 73 of the Act. The percentage varies from that of the chart above as certain categories have been removed to show only the cases where there was scope to intervene. In order to establish this figure applicants that refused assistance, withdrew their application or refused to engage with the Service have been removed from the number of unsuccessful preventions in order to show a more accurate picture of the prevention work carried out in the Vale of Glamorgan.



Graph 6 – Percentage of homeless applicants for which homelessness was prevented, excluding cases in which the Housing Solutions Team were unable to intervene



For a further breakdown of statistics, both nationally and by Authority, visit <https://statswales.gov.wales>

The achievements and challenges since the implementation of the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* have clearly shown how the service has moved forward and the benefits of adopting an early intervention approach.



5. Consultation & Review Process

The consultation process to inform and develop this Strategy commenced with a service user review survey, followed by a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the current homelessness process. The Council held a consultation event in June 2018, which was attended by over fifty stakeholders and partners; including Members to gather this information. The attendees represented a broad range of service users which included young homeless people, single homeless households and families with young children, ex-offenders, clients with dependency issues, mental health issues and learning difficulties.

Discussions took place on the effectiveness of the Council's existing approaches to homelessness and highlighted gaps in provision and emerging priorities. The feedback received was collated and along with the statistical data evidence and the peer review results which were conducted by an external agency in order to encourage service users to speak freely about their experience of the service was used to determine key priorities for inclusion in the action plan.

The consultation event was held in June 2018 and attended by approximately 50 delegates.

Information on the consultation event, service user survey and statistical evidence can be found in the Consultation and Review of Homelessness Report available on the Council's website at: (link to be added once draft approved)



6. The Priorities

There are considerable challenges for the Council in tackling homelessness. It is recognised that anyone can become homeless at any time and that nationally the groups who are most at risk of homelessness include young people leaving the care of a local authority, those leaving prison, people suffering from domestic abuse, those with mental health problems, clients with substance misuse issues, those from troubled families, people on a low income and those who are in debt. There is a strong correlation between homelessness and social exclusion and there is increasing pressures on household incomes in the current economic climate.

One of the major challenges is the demand for affordable housing in the Vale of Glamorgan which greatly outstrips supply; as well as high housing costs, for rent or purchase. The Council is committed to addressing housing supply issues; including tackling empty homes and encouraging those who are under-occupying their homes to downsize. The Council also recognises the value of the private rented sector in tackling homelessness issues and continues to invest I funding in a Private Rented Procurement Team.

Key priorities include:

- Early intervention/ prevention in order to encourage better, more targeted, prevention work to reduce the number of households experiencing the trauma of homelessness.
- 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.
- Ensuring suitable accommodation and support is available by making more effective use of the private rented sector, and clients are referred to Supporting People Services.
- Ensuring service users are provided with a client centered and holistic service.
- Improving the quality of advice for all households threatened with homelessness along with the required, advice and information.



What have we done to tackle these challenges?

The Vale of Glamorgan Council has recognised that in order to meet the needs of vulnerable households with complex issues, supported housing needs to be utilised in the most effective way for clients experiencing or at risk of homelessness. In order to achieve this, a single point of access has been introduced for all Supporting People funded Services to ensure that the most vulnerable clients are prioritised. Two independent support workers funded by the Supporting People Programme Grant now work within the Housing Solutions Service in order to support clients immediately at the point of presentation. One is a specialist mental health worker who is able to provide specialist advice to the Team and works with the very vulnerable clients who present with mental health issues.



7. Links to other Strategies and related Policies

In addition to the Local Housing Strategy 2015 – 2020, the Homelessness Prevention Plan should be considered in the context of a range of other strategies and policies:

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| Community Strategy 2011 – 2021 | Supporting People Commissioning Plan 2017 - 2020 | Local Market Housing Assessment 2018 – 2023 | Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020 |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|----------------------------------|



8. Resources

Homelessness Grant Funding Streams

In addition to the corporate general fund investment in the Housing Solutions Service, the in-year Homelessness Grant funding for 2017/18 from Welsh Government was £110,000 and the Vale of Glamorgan Council has made a clear commitment to ring fence this funding to spend on preventing homelessness for the life of the grant. In 2017/18, the grant funded a mental health link worker to assist with assessments of homeless clients with mental health issues; a Private Sector Lettings Officer and a young person's early intervention project.

Partners also provide services for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness, which brings additional resources into the Service including housing related support funded by the Supporting People Programme Grant.

With less public resources generally available, we know we need to continue to redesign our services around the needs of our clients and work smarter with partner organisations which is reflected in the action plan which accompanies this Strategy. We will continue to target funding when available to projects that meet our strategic priorities and review the outcomes achieved to ensure on-going provision meets the strategic aims of the Council.



9. Monitoring and Review

This Strategy is for the period 2018 to 2022; but it will be a working document which is responsive to change and therefore monitored and reviewed annually. This will ensure the actions and strategic aims remain relevant and encompass best practice in the homelessness and housing advice sector.

The Council will continue to measure the effectiveness of our homelessness prevention processes through a number of means, including through ongoing consultation with our partners and satisfaction surveys with clients. The Council will also ensure the annual service plan for the housing options/private rented sector team align themselves to the more detailed actions required as a direct result of the consultation, peer review and statistical analysis of the service.



10. Publication

A copy of this Strategy is available on the Council's website and is available on request at the Council's offices. A paper copy can also be provided upon request.

If you would like more information regarding the Homelessness Strategy, contact:

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Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

Service

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|---|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Identify Awareness Raising opportunities | Evaluate current social media exposure and identify future opportunities. Advertise the service in critical areas such as Job Centre, GP surgeries etc. | Housing Solutions Manager | High | Improved quality of information to applicants; reduced pressure on front line Housing Solutions service; |
| Develop Rolling Homes4u advert | Continue process of engagement with IT services to modernise Homes4U advertising process to evolve Homes4U advert to become day to day rolling advert. | Housing Solutions Manager | High | Delays in move on are reduced, freeing up essential temporary accommodation |
| Undertake a feasibility study to determine costs of a Bespoke IT system | Liaise with SP, Rents, Housing management to outline costs/benefits of development of bespoke housing services software to streamline and connect services. | Housing Management | Low | Duplication between services is reduced |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|--|--|---|---------------------------|---|
| Maximise the use of social media | Develop a range of information videos to provide addition housing related advice, address FAQ's and signposting i.e. Using Youtube/Facebook/Twitter Link initiatives with service user involvement groups | Housing Solutions Manager/Supporting People Coordinator | Medium | Improved quality of information to applicants; reduced pressure on front line Housing Solutions service; |
| Ensure service delivery and customer engagement complies with Welsh Language standards. | Improved provision for Welsh language speakers. | Housing & Building Services Operational Manager | High | Services are accessible to Welsh speakers and is compliant with the Welsh Language Act |
| Ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory Homelessness obligations stipulated within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 | <p>Collate the Local and National Performance data for submission to Welsh Government within the required deadlines.</p> <p>Use the monthly PI's to monitor service turnover to ensure targets are being met; put in place any interventions if required; Ensure Shelter Officer carries out quality checks of cases on a monthly basis and provides feedback to individual Officers and Managers.</p> | Housing Solutions Manager | High | People continue to receive a good quality service that meets their needs and is compliant with the legislation. |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|---|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| <p>Improve the quality and range of information provided by the Housing Solutions Service on the Council's website.</p> | <p>Review and update information currently available regarding the Housing Solutions Service and associated advice on website.</p> <p>Create a list of documents and links on the website in conjunction with the Communications Team.</p> | <p>Housing Solution Manager</p> | <p>High</p> | <p>Improved quality of information to applicants; reduced pressure on front line Housing Solutions Service</p> |
| <p>Develop Youth Homelessness & Early Homelessness Prevention/Intervention services</p> | <p>Prevent and tackle youth homelessness.</p> <p>Approach Llamau and discuss initiative and set aims, objectives and monitoring process; submit bid to WG; arrange steering group with Llamau and Social Service to facilitate and manage project if bid successful; produce appraisal report for WG.</p> | <p>Housing Solution Manager</p> | <p>High</p> | <p>Reduction in 16/17 year homeless approaches and improve joint working practices</p> |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|--|---|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Explore the possibility of developing Pilot Tenancy Ready Training opportunities within HMP Cardiff | <p>Improved tenancy sustainment amongst Prison leavers</p> <p>Arrange meeting with St Giles Trust, Probation & HMP Cardiff to discuss pilot; discuss initiative and develop SMART Pilot aims, objectives, monitoring & recording criteria and processes; develop working group to progress Pilot project; produce report to share with WG & WLGA.</p> | Housing Solution Manager | High | Improved tenancy sustainment amongst prison leavers |
| Review & Improve the quality and range of information provided by the Housing Solutions team e.g. web site links, contact details of external organisations. | <p>Applicants able to make informed choices about housing options.</p> <p>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; with the assistance of the Communications Team.</p> | Housing Solution Manager | High | Improved quality of information to applicants; reduced pressure on front line Housing Solutions service; |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|--|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| Develop a standard service 'promise' to demonstrate commitment to the client | <p>Provide high quality service to clients;</p> <p>Hold discussions with Shelter Cymru's Take Notice Team and their service users group to establish a Standard Service Agreement /Promise for Vale Service Users.</p> | Housing Solution Manager | High | A consistent and high quality service is provided. |
| Explore the feasibility of an on-line homelessness application and any other required information sheets e.g. income and expenditure form. | <p>Explore best practice through Welsh Government, Homelessness Forum & Shelter Cymru Take Notice Project;</p> <p>Explore feasibility of developing an on-line service for the Vale of Glamorgan.</p> | Housing Solution Manager | Low | Improved quality of information to applicants; reduced pressure on front line Housing Solutions service |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Update |
|---|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Introduce new procedure for Temporary Accommodation inspections with the intention of reducing the recharge costs | <p>Carry out monthly TA Inspections and issue the list of common recharge costs to licensees;</p> <p>Utilise Photobook App to record condition of properties;</p> <p>Carry out end of tenancy Inspections with members of the maintenance team to highlight likely recharge costs to licensees while they still have time to put issues right;</p> <p>Develop a recharge policy to claim back the costs of damage to TA properties.</p> | Temporary Accommodation Manager | High | Costs of repairs for temporary accommodation are reduced |
| Undertake a Service User Satisfaction Questionnaire | Collate Customer feedback and review responses to ensure good customer service is provided taking forward any actions necessary to improve the service. | Customer Liaison Team Leader | High | To ensure clients' views inform future service delivery |

Homelessness Strategy Action

Training

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|---|---|---|----------------------------------|---|
| Promote housing solutions learning opportunities for key partnering agencies | Provide shadowing opportunities to key partners to ensure the support and advice being provided is consistent. | Housing Solutions Manager/Supporting People Coordinator | Medium | Consistent and partnership approach to preventing homelessness across the County. |
| Develop the awareness for staff and providers of the financial support available for working households | Identify and deliver training to staff and providers to ensure appropriate advice is provided. | Christina Delaney | High | Low income working households are able to sustain tenancies |
| Raise awareness of the Private Rented sector | Develop information to all advice/support and advocacy agencies to raise awareness of the important opportunities the PRS can offer; Attendance at Team Meetings Information documentation Website links | Private Rented Sector Coordinator | Medium | Consistent approach to managing people's expectations of the service |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|--|--|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Formulate a demand led training and induction programme for front line staff. | Assess current training program to identify potential gaps and work closely with front line staff to identify training needs. | Shelter Cymru Homelessness Consultant | High | Staff are able to deliver a high quality service |
| Consider developing a service led standardised training matrix for all Supporting People Grant Funded Services | Standard training modules to include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safeguarding • Benefit/Budgeting awareness • Housing (Wales) Act 2014 Training | Supporting People Coordinator | Medium | Staff are able to deliver a high quality service |
| Promote and provide opportunities for staff to access Welsh language courses. | Staff are aware of the requirements of the Council's scheme and have opportunities to learn Welsh. | Operational Manager, Public Housing Services | Medium | Staff have the opportunity to learn Welsh |

Homelessness Strategy Action

Support

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|--|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Housing Options to explore developing an 'in-house' letting agents service | Liaise with other LA's where best practice exists to fully assess feasibility of providing lettings agents' service in-house. | Private Rented Sector Coordinator/Procurement Officer | Medium | Exploring the viability of designing and delivering a quality lettings service |
| Support victims and their families affected by County Lines victims | Continue partnership working with appropriate agencies to identify and support high risk vulnerable targets. Explore full range of housing options available and signposting processes. | Private Rented Sector Coordinator | High | People feel safe in their communities |
| Review of supported accommodation services | Carry out reviews of each Supported Accommodation project to ensure that it is fit for purpose and strategically relevant. | Supporting People Coordinator | High | Supported accommodation is strategically relevant and meets the needs of the most vulnerable |
| Develop strategy for non-engagement within Supporting People Projects. | Develop a procedure for all organisation funded under the Supporting People Programme Grant to assist engagement with hard to reach groups. | Supporting People Coordinator | High | Support is accessible to the most vulnerable members of society |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|--|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| Analysis of support needs of clients in Temporary Accommodation | Ensure that a needs assessment is carried out for each T/A client to inform future commissioning. | Supporting People Coordinator / Housing Solutions Manager | High | People are equipped with the skills needed to sustain independent living when they move-on. |
| Explore the need for a 24hr supported accommodation service is required for clients with mental health issues. | Review the existing mental health provision and establish whether a 24 hour supported accommodation project is needed from the needs analysis carried out annually. | Supporting People Coordinator | Medium | People with mental health issues have the most appropriate support to achieve independent living |
| Explore the feasibility of dedicated Support workers for all temporary accommodation households | Analyse the need from the data collected to determine if a specialist support service is required for clients in temporary accommodation. | Supporting People Coordinator / Temporary Accommodation Manager | Medium | People are equipped with the skills necessary for independent living |
| Ensure appropriate Implementation of Prisoner Pathway | Support and encourage Probation/Prison services to adhere to the Prisoner Pathway Program to ensure offenders have the required advice and assistance. | Private Rented Sector Coordinator | High | Improved access to accommodation for prison leavers |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/ LOW | Outcome |
|---|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Explore the need for targeted mother & baby support services/accommodation | Review current provision and analyse the demand and need to establish if a specialist service is required for the client group. | Supporting People Coordinator / Operational Manager, Placements & Permanency Team, Social Services | Medium | Vulnerable parents have the support they need to achieve independent living and give children the best start in life |
| Develop and implement a Supporting People Gateway to create a single point of access to all housing related support services. | <p>Develop and adopt a robust Supporting People Gateway policy and process;</p> <p>Develop a new Supporting People referral form for all housing related support services;</p> <p>Develop a unified assessment form for all Supporting People services in the Vale;</p> <p>Procure an approved IT system to process, track and distribute all Supporting People referrals.</p> | Supporting People Coordinator | High | Resources are targeted at the most in need and the process is streamlined, avoiding duplication |

Homelessness Strategy Action

Collaboration & Development

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority : HIGH/ MEDIUM/ LOW | Outcome |
|---|--|--|------------------------------|---|
| Develop a robust hospital discharge process for homelessness clients who do not meet the criteria for the Discharge Solutions Service | Continue to commit to hospital based case conferences to identify housing options for discharged patients at the earliest opportunity. Attend ward staff team meeting to discuss services available for clients being discharged without appropriate accommodation to return to | Housing Solutions Manager | High | Reduction in crisis presentations and increased opportunities for prevention |
| Develop close working relationships with DWP and Vale wide Job Centre's | Continue to strengthen relationship with DWP Partnership Manager to broaden contact network to aid information flow and knowledge base. Develop Job Centre based housing solutions advice surgeries. Develop Shadowing opportunities for both housing solutions and DWP staff. | Senior Housing Solutions Officer / Private Rented Sector Coordinator | High | Reduction in rent arrears caused by issues with benefits and assist homelessness prevention |
| Continue to strengthen relationships with RSL's | Liaise with all Registered Social Landlord Partners to develop a quarterly HOMES4U report to monitor accommodation demands, needs and trends. Structured Quarterly HOMES4U Steering Group Meetings | Housing Solutions Manager | High | Ensure services meet local need and evictions are minimised |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority : HIGH/ MEDIUM/ LOW | Outcome |
|--|--|---|------------------------------|---|
| Maintain close working relationships with all relevant agencies | Ensure that there are opportunities for all stakeholders to engage with the relevant local authority staff through stakeholder events and forums, as well as through less formal methods including shadowing opportunities where appropriate | Housing Solutions Manager | High | Joined up approach to preventing homelessness across the County and ensuring buy-in across all agencies |
| Further develop working relationships and initiatives to expand the opportunities within the PRS | Structure regular landlord forums with a varied and topical agenda that will attract landlords. Produce a quarterly landlord newsletter. | Private Rented Sector Coordinator/Procurement Officer | Medium | Improve communications with landlords and increase the supply of PRS stock available to housing clients |
| Explore alternative usage for larger Local Authority/RSL housing stock | Discuss and identify opportunities to convert larger social housing stock into smaller units that will address the significant shortfall of suitable and affordable single household accommodation. | Housing and Strategic Projects Team Leader / Housing Strategy Coordinator | Low | Accommodation needs of single people are met |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/ LOW | Outcome |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------|--|
| Explore need to develop a direct access hostel | Conduct a needs assessment and feasibility exercise to consider and establish the need for a direct access hostel for rough sleepers | Supporting People Coordinator / Temporary Accommodation Manager | Low | The needs of rough sleepers are met |
| Explore the feasibility of developing Housing First Model | Conduct a needs assessment to establish the need for a Housing First Model in the Vale of Glamorgan | Housing and Strategic Projects Team Leader | Medium | The needs of rough sleepers are met |
| Request that the Regional Collaborative Committee for Supporting People co-opt a representative from each of the homelessness services in the Vale and Cardiff onto the Committee. | To ensure that there is appropriate Homelessness representation on the Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee ensuring that most efficient use is made of the new Housing Related Support Grant | Housing Solutions Manager / Supporting People Coordinator | High | Avoid duplication and best practice shared across the region |

Homelessness Strategy Action

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|---|---|--|---------------|---|
| <p>To adhere to the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (VAWDASV)</p> | <p>Maintain close working relationships with the Safer Vale Team to support and help deliver relevant initiatives within their VAWDASV Strategy</p> | <p>Housing Solutions Manager</p> | <p>Medium</p> | <p>The service continues to be developed to meet the pressures places on it and the needs of vulnerable clients</p> |
| <p>Maximise the use of the new funding arrangements under the Housing Related Support Grant (HRS)</p> | <p>Ensure the homelessness service works collaboratively with the Supporting People Team and Welsh Government to ensure that opportunities for joint initiatives between the two services are developed in line with the new funding criteria</p> | <p>Housing Solutions Manager / Supporting People Coordinator</p> | <p>High</p> | <p>The service continues to be developed to meet the pressures places on it and the needs of vulnerable clients</p> |

Homelessness Strategy Action

Future Proof Services

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW | Outcome |
|--|--|--|----------------------------|---|
| Examine Scottish Legislation to support potential amendments to current Welsh Legislation. | Fully assess impact of legislative changes made in Scotland to identify learning opportunities and potential Welsh Government aspirational targets to remove Priority need and Intentionality when assessing homelessness. | Housing Solutions Manager / Shelter Cymru Liaison Officer | Medium | Understanding the impact of changes that have taken place in Scotland and mitigating any potential negative impacts if these changes are brought into Welsh legislation |
| Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme financial recovery initiatives | Identify possible accounting procedures to facilitate recovery of Bonds/ Rents in advance | Housing Solutions Manager | Medium | The VATS scheme is financially sustainable. People take more responsibility for their VATS property |
| Maintain review of General Fund Housing Account | Continue to meet on a monthly basis with Directorate Accountant to monitor General Fund activity and pressures and pending risks. Continue to identify future funding opportunities through Welsh Government manage service and mitigate effects due to increasing demands/ trends | Operational Manager, Public Housing Services / Housing Solutions Manager | High | Resources are maximised through efficient planning |

Homelessness Strategy Action

| Action | Objective | Officer Responsible | Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/ LOW | Outcome |
|---|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Continue our work with partners to provide appropriate accommodation and support services for particular vulnerable groups. | <p>People maintain their tenancies/homes through appropriate housing related support.</p> <p>Positive health and social care outcomes associated with effective Supporting People support provision.</p> | Supporting People Coordinator | High | The needs of the most vulnerable are met, reducing the no. of homelessness presentations and people entering more costly alternatives |
| Analyse the current equality monitoring data being captured | Information can be used to inform both service delivery and service development. | Supporting People Coordinator | Medium | Accurate and timely data which informs proposals and decisions about service delivery and development. |