

Meeting of:	Cabinet
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 17 June 2019
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Vale of Glamorgan Council Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 - 2022
Purpose of Report:	<p>1. To advise Cabinet of the responses received on the draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 (attached at Appendix 1) during the eight week formal consultation period, including responses from Members of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>2. To request that Cabinet adopt the amended Vale of Glamorgan Council Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan 2018 - 2022 attached at Appendix 1 and 2.</p>
Report Owner:	Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services
Responsible Officer:	Miles Punter, Director of Environment and Housing
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	<p>Carolyn Michael, Operational Manager, Accountancy Committee Reports; Legal Services;</p> <p>Mike Ingram, Head of Housing and Building Services</p> <p>Pam Toms, Operational Manager, Public Housing Services</p>
Policy Framework:	This report is consistent with the Policy Framework and Budget and is a matter for Executive decision by Cabinet.
Executive Summary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 Act placed a statutory duty on local authorities to undertake a review of the Homelessness Service and to produce a Homelessness Strategy setting out how the Council in partnership with other stakeholders will develop and deliver the services required to help and support those in housing need. • The Act took effect on 27th April 2015 and included the biggest change in 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. • In compliance with the Act, the Council has developed a Homelessness Prevention Strategy in consultation with all stakeholders. It is accompanied by an Action Plan which sets out the steps that will be undertaken by the Council and its partners to deliver the required outcomes for

clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- The finalised Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan will cover the next four year period but will remain a working document and kept under constant review. It will be delivered using the existing resources within the Council's Housing Solutions Team and will seek to 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.

Recommendation

1. THAT Cabinet adopts the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 - 2022 and action plan attached at Appendix 1 and 2.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To ensure that the Council meets its statutory duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and that a robust multi-agency homelessness service is available to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our communities.

1. Background

- 1.1 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 provide appropriate help and support to any homeless person to help secure a suitable home.
 - To provide new powers to local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty into the private rented sector.
- 1.2 The Act is the biggest change in tackling homelessness in Wales since the first Homeless Person's Act commenced in 1977. Its aim was to transform homelessness services by creating a modern safety net where no one is turned away without being provided with assistance.
- 1.3 Section 50 of the Act requires local authorities to undertake a Homelessness Review and to produce a Homelessness Strategy which sets out how the 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.
- 1.4 The Homelessness Prevention Strategy at Appendix 1 is accompanied by a draft Action Plan at Appendix 2 which sets out the steps that will be undertaken by the Council and its partners to deliver the required 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.

- 1.5** The draft Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 was developed following a stakeholder's event and consultation with users of the Homelessness Service. It was subsequently referred by Cabinet to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee for comment and underwent a formal eight weeks consultation period which expired on 22nd February 2019.
- 1.6** The Strategy is dated 2018 - 2022 to reflect the date of the commencement of work and to match the Welsh Government timelines for the delivery and duration of such a Strategy.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** Attached at Appendix 3 is a list of the comments received during the eight weeks consultation period and from Members of Scrutiny Committee and the Service responses.
- 2.2** The attached Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan at Appendix 1 and 2 have now been updated where appropriate in light of the feedback received.

3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?

- 3.1** Looking to the long term - the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 will support vulnerable people to attain the life skill required to maintain their home, integrate into the community and to live independently in the long term.
- 3.2** Taking an integrated approach - the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 will be continually reviewed and updated if appropriate. It will also be used by the Supporting People Planning Group and the Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee to inform future commissioning and to ensure that existing support services funded by the Supporting People Programme Grant remain fit for purpose and are achieving the required outcomes.

- 3.3** Involving the population in decisions - data on service users' needs will continue to be collected to ensure that services remain strategically relevant. The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 also places a requirement on households in need to take responsibility for their housing circumstances and to take account of the options available to them. The key message from both the Housing Solutions Service and the Supporting People Programme which provides support for applicants when required is "doing with" rather than "doing for" the service user in order to reduce dependency on services and to enable the service user to live independently in the future.
- 3.4** Working in a collaborative way - the Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 places collaboration and coproduction at the core and its principles are monitored on a local, regional and national level through regular reviews.
- 3.5** Understanding the root causes of issues and preventing them - the Council's Housing Solutions Services is responsible for monitoring the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 and Action Plan and will continue to collect data on clients quarterly in order to inform service delivery and commissioning.

4. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no direct resource implications associated with this report. The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 will be delivered using the existing resources within the Housing Solutions Team and any additional services required will be commissioned through the Housing Support Grant (HSG) paid to the Council by Welsh Government to assist in homelessness prevention.

Employment

- 4.2** There is a requirement on the Supporting People Services commissioned by the Council to provide clients if appropriate with assistance to access training and employment.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 4.3** The development of the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2019-2022 is a statutory requirement under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

5. Background Papers

OT (i) Housing (Wales) Act 2014 & Code of Guidance

VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL



Homelessness Prevention Strategy

2018 - 2022



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1. Forward by Councilor 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 are 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.





Councilor 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 the four 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.
- 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 over 5000 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:

Assessment - Section 62

The Council must carry out an assessment of an applicant and if eligible, must consider the circumstances, housing and support needs of the applicant.

Notice of the outcome of the assessment - Section 63

The Council must inform the applicant what duties, if any, are owed under this Section. The duties that the Council may have are:

- ❖ Section 60 - Duty to provide advice and assistance
- ❖ Section 66 - Duty to help to prevent homelessness
- ❖ Section 68 - Duty to provide temporary accommodation*
- ❖ Section 73 – Duty to help to secure suitable accommodation
- ❖ Section 75 – Duty to provide settled accommodation

Notification that duties have ended - Section 84

Where the Council decides that its duty to an applicant under sections 66, 68, 73 or 75 has come to an end it must notify the applicant:

- (a) that it no longer regards itself as being subject to the relevant duty,
- (b) of the reasons why it considers that the duty has come to an end,
- (c) of the right to request a review, and
- (d) of the time within which such a request must be made.



Notice must be given in writing. If the application does not have a postal address we will ensure that the notice is available at our offices for collection by the applicant or somebody on their behalf.

Ways in which legal duties can end

When the Council has accepted a duty it can only end in specific circumstances:

Help to Prevent Duty - Section 66, this duty can be ended if:

- ❖ The applicant is no longer threatened with homelessness.
- ❖ The applicant refuses an offer of accommodation.
- ❖ The applicant is no longer eligible for housing assistance.
- ❖ The applicant has withdrawn their housing application.
- ❖ The applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate.
- ❖ The applicant has become homeless.
- ❖ A mistake of fact.

Help to Secure Duty - Section 73, this duty can be ended if:

- ❖ The period of 56 days has expired (the Council will consider whether a final housing duty is owed to the applicant).
- ❖ The Council is satisfied that all reasonable steps have been taken (the Council will consider whether a final housing duty is owed to applicants).
- ❖ The Council is satisfied that the applicant has suitable accommodation.
- ❖ The applicant refuses an offer of accommodation.
- ❖ The applicant is no longer eligible for housing assistance.
- ❖ The applicant has withdrawn their housing application.
- ❖ The applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate.
- ❖ A decision was made due to a mistake of fact.
- ❖ We will tell you of the reasonable steps we have taken under this duty



Final Duty to Secure - Section 75, this duty can be ended if:

- ❖ The applicant accepts an offer from the Common Waiting List or a private rented sector tenancy.
- ❖ The applicant refuses an offer of suitable accommodation, including from the Common Waiting List, a private rented sector offer or an offer of temporary accommodation.
- ❖ The applicant has become homeless intentionally from temporary accommodation.
- ❖ The applicant voluntarily ceases to occupy temporary accommodation.
- ❖ The applicant is no longer eligible for housing assistance.
- ❖ The applicant has withdrawn their housing application.
- ❖ The applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate.
- ❖ A decision was made due to a mistake of fact.

Interim Accommodation Duty - Section 68, this duty can be ended if:

- ❖ The applicant refuses an offer of temporary accommodation.
- ❖ The applicant voluntarily or intentionally leaves temporary accommodation.
- ❖ The duty under S73 has ended
- ❖ The applicant is no longer eligible for housing assistance.
- ❖ The applicant has withdrawn their housing application.
- ❖ The applicant is unreasonably failing to co-operate.
- ❖ A decision was made due to a mistake of fact.

Local Connection Referrals to Other Boroughs - Section 80

Applicants will be referred to a more appropriate Borough if the Council believe that the conditions for referral are met. These are that:

- ❖ Neither the applicant, nor any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them, has a local connection where the application was made.



- ❖ The applicant, or a person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them has a local connection with the area of the other authority, and
- ❖ Neither the applicant, nor any person who might reasonably be expected to reside with them, will run the risk of domestic abuse in that other area.
- ❖ The applicant is in priority need
- ❖ The applicant is not intentionally homeless

Priority Need for Accommodation - Section 75

The duty to secure accommodation (final and interim housing duty) will only be owed to applicants who have a priority need for accommodation.

Temporary/Interim/ Accommodation

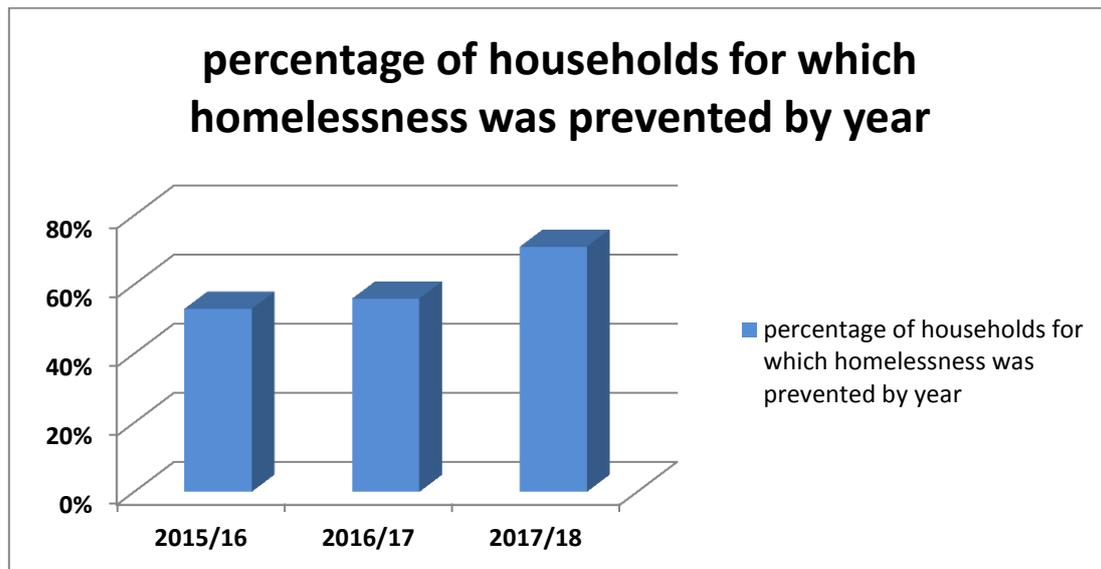
The following is a list of the types of accommodation that could be utilised to satisfy the council's duty under Section 68:

- Hostel
- Refuge
- Shared House
- Bed & Breakfast
- Self contained accommodation
- Supported Accommodation

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 following graph:



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 have been no rough sleepers recorded during the annual rough sleeper counts since the introduction of the Act in April 2015.
- The average stay in temporary accommodation has increased to 25 weeks over the past 12 months and is continuing to increase. This figure is exacerbated 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.

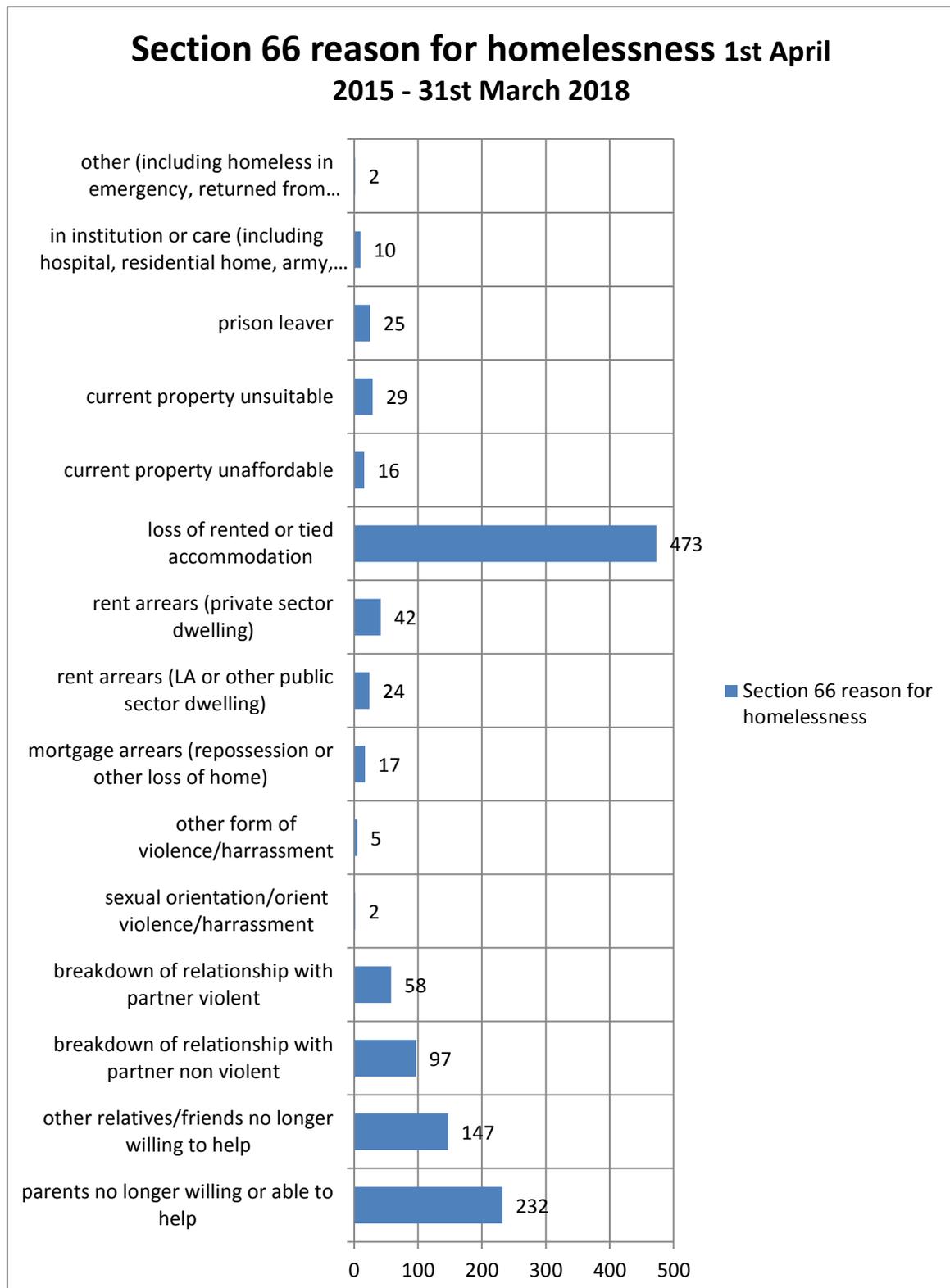
The main reason for homelessness presentations under Section 66 of the Act and Section 73 of the Act vary considerably. Under Section 66 the main reason for homeless presentations in the Vale of Glamorgan is “loss of rented or tied accommodation”, with 40% of applicants presenting under Section 66 falling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

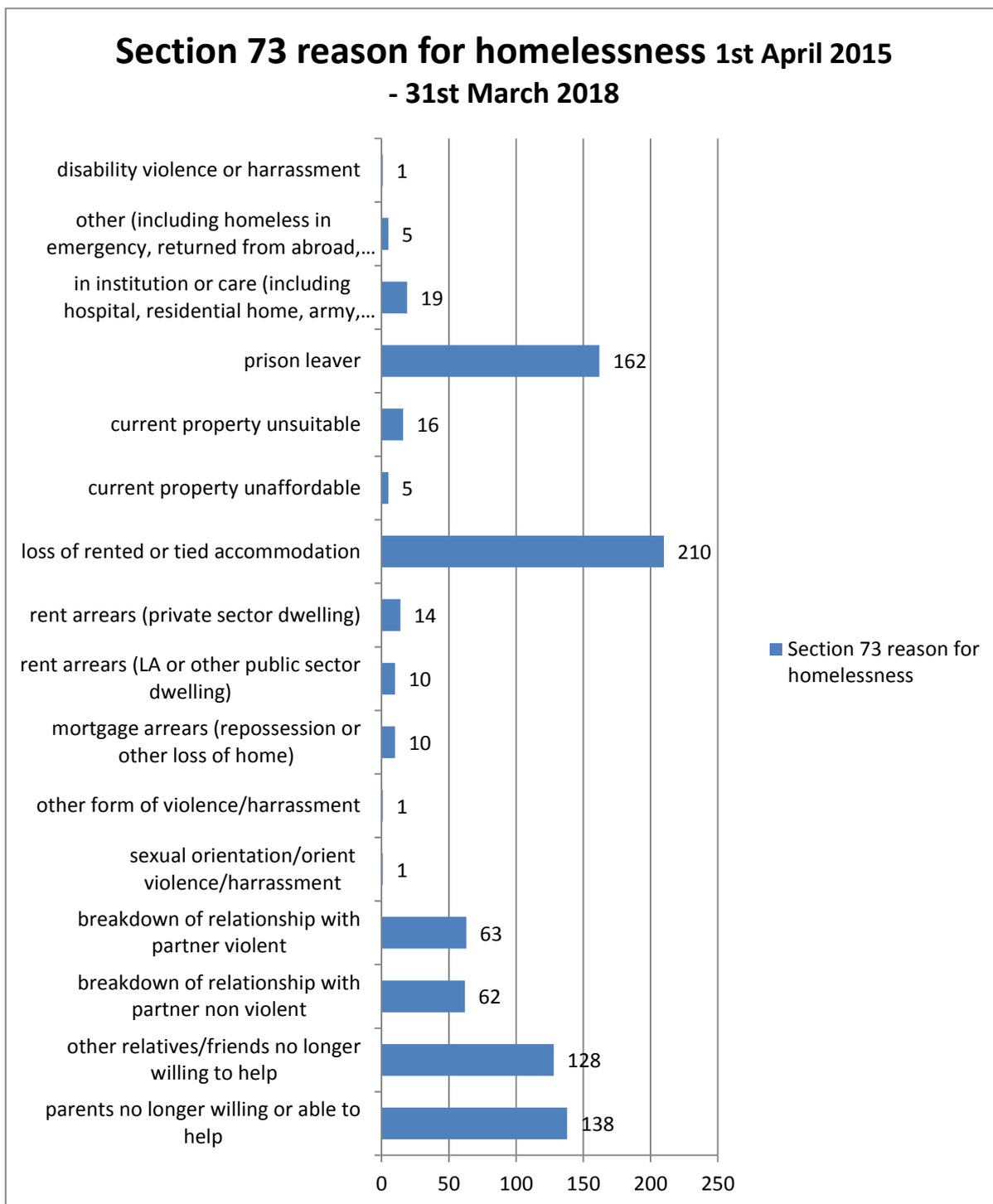
For all other categories the numbers presenting under Section 66 and Section 73 of the Act remain reasonably consistent. However, it should be noted that the total number of presentations under Section 73 is considerably lower than those under Section 66, with 1179 households presenting under Section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

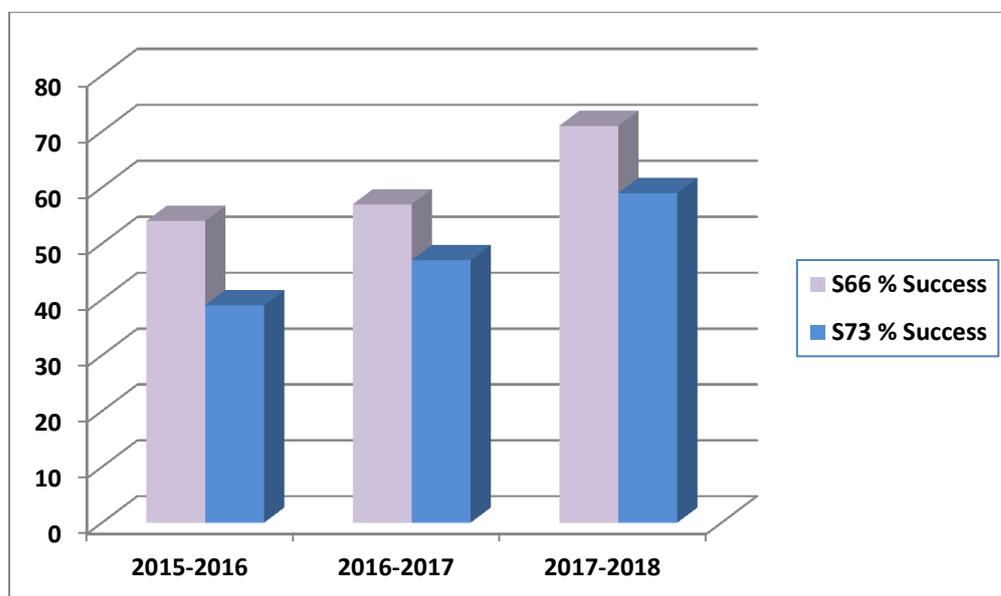


closely with the Supporting People Team to identify and develop complementary services to assist clients more effectively. The homelessness assessment process has been enhanced by the introduction of support workers onsite from both Gwalia and Gofal. These workers assist clients in crisis, at the time 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

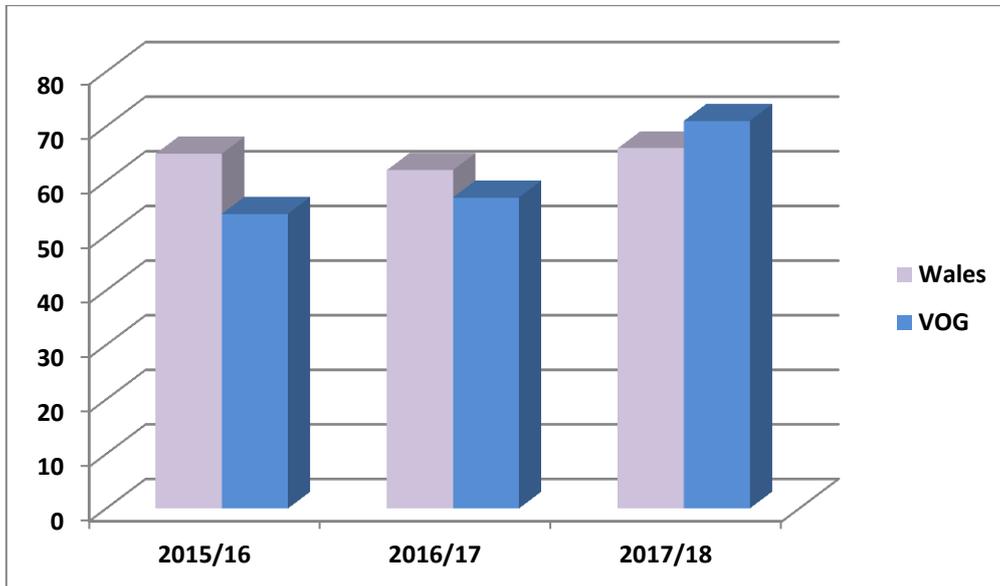


These figures are against a backdrop of rising demand for services across Wales. Over the past 3 years since the introduction of the Act, duties awarded at Section 66 stage (threatened with homelessness within 56 days) have risen nationally by 27% and by 31% in the Vale of Glamorgan. Where service users 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.



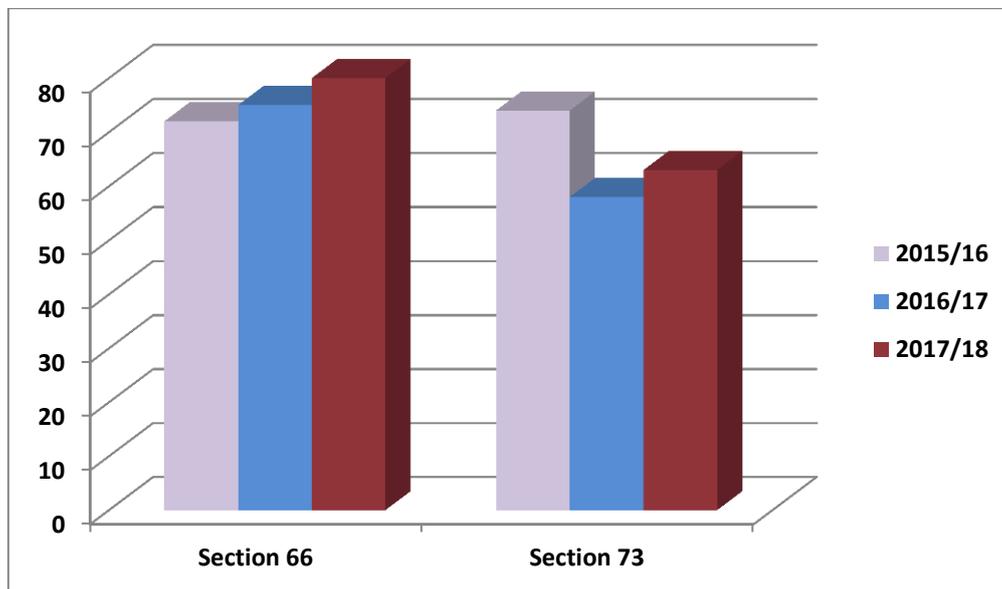
Graph 5 - Percentage of homeless applicants for which homelessness was prevented compared to the all Wales national average



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.

The progression of the Housing Solutions Team has been consistent over the past 3 years, since the introduction of the *Housing (Wales) Act 2014* and can be clearly evidenced.

The renewed focus on homelessness prevention has borne improving results in the success rate of the department. *Stats Wales* offers an expansive breakdown of the figures and illustrate the significant improvements made.

Although these figures highlight, in more detail, strengths and weaknesses, they also represent a measurement of performance against the other 21 local authorities throughout Wales.

These comparisons afford the council an opportunity for sharing good practice with authorities that demonstrate consistently high success rates.

The Vale of Glamorgan has seen its percentage success rate improve from 17th to 16th and up to 6th in these measurements over the past 3 full years where a Section 66 duty has been awarded.



In respect of Section 73 duties awarded, the climb has been even more distinct, from 18th place to joint 10th in 2016/17 to second best performing council in 2017/18.

Mark Lawrence- Shelter Cymru Embedded Worker

The past 3 years have proven a challenge here at the Vale, staffing issues have impacted on stability and consistency within the team. Despite these difficulties, the results illustrate the progress made in adapting to new procedures and a preventative focus within the new legislative framework.

Moving forward, the challenges remain; the Autumn/Winter of 2018 have seen a marked rise in homelessness presentations with a steady rise in landlord served notices reflecting the stronger property market. This trend is particularly worrying as The Vale of Glamorgan has seen a fall of 37% in the Private rented Housing stock from the high of 8417 properties in 2013/14. These figures far outstrip the Welsh National fall of 2% since the peak of 2014/15. Against this backdrop, sourcing new private rented accommodation, in an attempt to resolve homelessness, is becoming ever more difficult.

The pressures on social housing are also ongoing, demand continues to rise, Homes4U receives over 30 new applications per week, with around 20% coming from outside the Vale of Glamorgan.

The changes to Welfare Benefits currently being rolled out throughout the UK are beginning to cause concern, as with other Authorities, within the Vale of Glamorgan. Universal credit issues are increasing rent arrears across both social and private rented accommodation alike, with delays in payments being of particular concern to private landlords.

Tackling Homelessness requires a multi-faceted approach, however, the core tools in this battle must be considered as the effective prevention of homelessness, in the first instance, coupled with the supply of affordable housing for instances when prevention has failed. In both these aspects in the fight against homelessness, the future, In the Vale of Glamorgan, looks particularly ominous.



The following case studies give a flavour of the options available to the housing solutions team and illustrate the crucial impact of a client centred approach. (Names have been changed)

Case Study 1

Mrs Jones was threatened with homelessness following a relationship breakdown. Her husband was working and had always been in charge of the finances and paid the rent on their 3 bedroom private rented accommodation at the end of each month. They had been at their home, with their 2 young boys, for over 6 years.

Following the breakdown of their marriage, Mrs Jones had suffered with her mental health and had been unable to address some of the financial issues that had arose from losing her husband's income, her sister had become concerned for her wellbeing and found the Section 21 notice served by her landlord 2 weeks prior to its expiry. She made an appointment for Mrs Jones with the Housing Solutions Team and attended, with her, as support.

The case officer quickly ascertained that a range of issues had overwhelmed Mrs Jones at a difficult time in her life. Mrs Jones was, initially, reluctant to accept support but was encouraged to engage by her sister. An initial assessment of her support needs resulted in referrals to a mental health support worker, along with a benefits and debt advice service and as there clearly was an element of control within the relationship by Mr Jones a referral was made to Atal y Fro the Vale's specialist Violence against Women; Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence service (VAWDASV) to ensure Mrs Jones was aware of the full range of support options that were available to her and family.

Mediation with the landlord was necessary to avoid further action. He had indicated that he was happy to allow Mrs Jones to remain in the property if the issue of the rent and the arrears could be resolved. An initial payment via the Vicars Relief Fund allowed some time to allow the support worker to complete and fast track Mrs Jones's housing benefit claim, along with a further claim for discretionary housing payment to cover the slight shortfall in the rent payments. The case officer negotiated an affordable payment plan between Mrs Jones and her landlord and her sister was able to help with making the weekly arrears payment of £10.

Over the past 2 months, Mrs Jones has made huge strides forward; she has recovered from the worst of her mental health crisis and is reducing her arrears slowly. She is better placed to focus on raising her boys and is more secure in her home.



Case Study 2

Mr Roberts is a single male aged 47; he lived alone in a 1 bedroom, private rented, flat and had been there for almost 2 years. He knew his landlord and had not paid a bond for his flat.

Around 4 months prior to attending the appointment, Mr Roberts had a new neighbour move into the flat opposite him. Some initial arguments had arisen between Mr Roberts and his neighbour, mostly around noise and visitors to the neighbour's flat. The arguments had escalated and Mr Roberts was feeling vulnerable in his home and was reluctant to leave his flat for fear of bumping into his neighbour. The stress was affecting Mr Roberts's mental health and was beginning to feel extremely isolated in his home; he had no family to call on for support.

The case officer spoke with the landlord who was clearly unwilling to get involved in the arguments and stated that the neighbour was paying his rent and that they should resolve the issues themselves. Mr Roberts was clearly unable to mediate this situation himself and was looking to move home. Although Mr Roberts was not threatened with immediate homelessness, it became clear that it was unreasonable for Mr Roberts to remain at his home in the long term and a move was the most desirable outcome, if his mental health was to improve.

The significant impact on Mr Robert's mental health led to a referral to the specialist mental health support worker. This worker continues to work with Mr Roberts.

Mr Roberts had been a model tenant and his age did not limit him to a single room allowance on housing benefit, this made relocation a more likely outcome. Mr Roberts was referred to the private rented officer who completed the financial assessment and verified Mr Roberts's eligibility for the Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme (V.A.T.S). The officer was able to utilise the V.A.T.S. funding to finance the first month's rent in advance and to guarantee a bond of an equal amount to another private landlord. Using his extensive network of landlords, the private rented officer was able to source a 1 bedroom flat for Mr Roberts within 10 days of the initial appointment and Mr Roberts moved into his new home within 3 weeks of attending the Civic Offices.

Mr Roberts has settled into his new home and his mental health has improved significantly over the past 3 months. The support he is receiving around his mental health has allowed him to re-assess his coping mechanisms for stressful situations and he is much more confident in himself. He has indicated a desire to return to work in the near future after a break of 11 years.



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 fleeing 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 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.

7. Delivering the Strategy

In order to improve existing services and address any gaps in provision, the strategy has identified and set out below its 4 high level aims that are to be achieved throughout the duration of this 4 year strategy with the support and collaboration of the Vale of Glamorgan Council's key partners;

- To provide a robust and targeted **homelessness prevention** service
- To continue to develop and extend the availability of early housing **advice and assistance**
- To ensure the most vulnerable are provided with **support** to maintain a home and to integrate into the community
- To improve the support offered to **private landlords** to improve tenancy sustainability

8. 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.



9. 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:

Community Strategy 2011 – 2021	Supporting People Commissioning Plan 2017 - 2020	Local Market Housing Assessment 2018 – 2023	Corporate Plan 2016 – 2020
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10. 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 Private Sector Lettings Officer; a young person's early intervention project; and a mental health link worker, embedded within the Housing Solutions Team to assist with assessments of homeless clients with mental health issues.

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.

11. 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 without 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.

12. 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:

The Housing Solutions Team

Vale of Glamorgan Council

Civic Offices

Holton Road

Barry,

CF63 4RU

Telephone: **01446 709567**

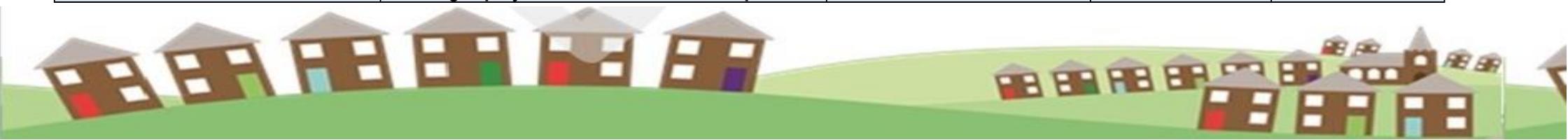
Email: HomelessAdviceAssitance@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk



Appendix 2

To provide a robust and targeted homelessness prevention service

Action	Objective	Officer Responsible	Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW	Progress
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	
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	
Develop Youth Homelessness & Early Homelessness Prevention/Intervention services	<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</p>	Housing Solution Manager	High	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

	appraisal report for WG.			
Develop a standard service 'promise' to demonstrate commitment to the client	Provide high quality service to clients; 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.	Housing Solution Manager	High	
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	
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	
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	



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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	
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	
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	
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	
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	
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	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

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	
Analyse the current equality monitoring data being captured	Information can be used to inform both service delivery and service development.	Supporting People Coordinator	Medium	
Housing Support Grant (HSG) to continue to fund Homeless Prevention Services	Ensure the HSG is allocated on receipt to Supporting People and Housing Solutions.	Housing Solutions Manager / Supporting People Coordinator	High	
Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme financial recovery initiatives	Identify possible accounting procedures to facilitate recovery of Bonds/ Rents in advance	Housing Solutions Manager	Medium	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

To continue to develop and extend the availability of early housing advice and assistance.

Action	Objective	Officer Responsible	Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW	Progress
Ensure service delivery and customer engagement complies with Welsh Language standards.	Improved provision for Welsh language speakers.	Housing & Building Services Manager Operational	High	
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 Manager Solutions	High	
Explore the possibility of developing Pilot Tenancy Ready Training opportunities within HMP Cardiff	Improved tenancy sustainment amongst Prison leavers	Housing Manager Solutions	High	
Promote housing solutions learning opportunities for key partnering agencies	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. Provide shadowing opportunities to key partners to ensure the support and advice being provided is consistent.	Housing Solutions Manager/Supporting People Coordinator	Medium	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

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.	Supporting People Coordinator	High	
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	
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	
Review & Improve the quality and range of information provided by the Housing Solutions team e.g. web site links, contact details of external organisations.	Applicants able to make informed choices about housing options. 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.	Housing Solution Manager	High	
Improve the quality and range of information provided by the Housing Solutions Service on the Council's website.	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	Housing Solution Manager	High	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

	in conjunction with the Communications Team.			
Residents are aware of the drop in support services that are available throughout the Vale.	<p>Residents across the Vale have access to additional advice and support services to help resolve housing related issues.</p> <p>To alleviate the pressures on statutory homelessness prevention services.</p>	Supporting People Coordinator	High	
Maximise the use of social media	<p>Develop a range of information videos to provide addition housing related advice, address FAQ's and signposting i.e. Using Youtube/Facebook/Twitter</p> <p>Link initiatives with service user involvement groups</p>	Housing Solutions Manager/Supporting People Coordinator	Medium	
Identify Awareness Raising opportunities	<p>Evaluate current social media exposure and identify future opportunities.</p> <p>Advertise the service in critical areas such as Job Centre, GP surgeries etc.</p>	Housing Solutions Manager	High	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

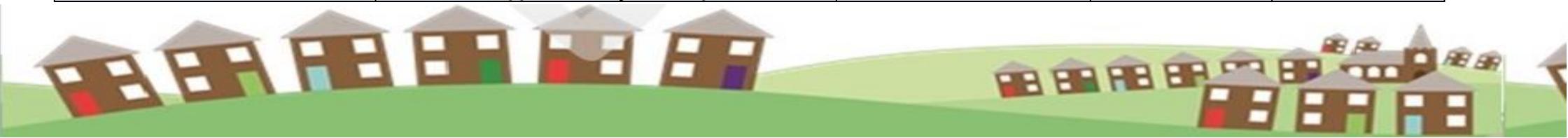
To ensure the most vulnerable are provided with support to maintain a home and to integrate into the community

Action	Objective	Officer Responsible	Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW	Progress
To adhere to the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (VAWDASV)	Maintain close working relationships with the Safer Vale Team and Atal y Fro, the Vale's specialist VAWDASV provider, to support and help deliver relevant initiatives within their VAWDASV Strategy	Housing Solutions Manager	High	
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	
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	
Develop strategy for non-engagement within Supporting People Projects.	Develop a procedure for all organisations funded under the Supporting People Programme Grant to assist engagement with the seldom heard groups..	Supporting People Coordinator	High	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

Analyse the 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	
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	
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	
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 Placements & Permanency Team, Social Services	Medium	
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</p>	Supporting People Coordinator	High	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

	and distribute all Supporting People referrals.			
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	Low	
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	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

To improve the support offered to private landlords to improve tenancy sustainability.

Action	Objective	Officer Responsible	Priority: HIGH/ MEDIUM/LOW	Progress
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 and support landlords.	Housing Solutions Manager	High	
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	
Develop a dedicated Support service for the private rented sector	Commission a specialist service to provide support for both tenants and landlords within the private rented sector	Supporting People Coordinator	High	



Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan

High priority actions - YR 1 & 2 of Strategy

Medium priority actions - YR 2 & 3 of Strategy

Low priority actions - YR 3 & 4 of Strategy



Appendix 3:

Comments and responses following the eight week formal consultation on the Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022

Comments:	Response:
<p>1. The lack of recognition of Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) is extremely concerning and we believe needs immediate address. Had an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) been developed and issued alongside the strategy, then this may have been picked up in the preparation of the EIA, as gender is a protected characteristic.</p>	<p>An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken at the same time as the Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 to ensure that it does not have an adverse impact on any members of society.</p> <p>The requirement to comply with the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 is within the action plan along with a requirement to assist in the delivery of the Regional Strategy.,.</p>
<p>2. The action plan refers to lots of things not mentioned in the strategy itself. The strategy gives no sense of direction of travel, just on where Homelessness services have been.</p>	<p>The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018—2022 is an overarching strategic document which sets out details of the review of the service and how it is going to respond to the challenges going forward. The Strategy and Action Plan have been developed through extensive stakeholder consultation.</p> <p>The Strategy and Action have been amended to indicate direction of travel through the identified high level aims</p> <p>The Action Plan will be monitored and reported regularly to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee and show the direction of travel of the Service going forward.</p>
<p>3. The strategy states there are no rough sleepers in the Vale yet the action plan states the Council will consider the need to develop a direct access hostel for rough sleepers.</p>	<p>Since prior to the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 the Vale has undertaken an annual rough sleeper count in compliance with Welsh Government requirements and in consultation with all partners, both statutory and third sector.</p> <p>Whilst to date, no rough sleepers have been identified during each count, given the national increase in rough sleepers, the Council will keep under review the need to develop a direct access hostel, if required.</p>

<p>4. The strategy mentions rural areas but not the additional challenges that can cause, e.g. recently Cardiff Bus announced they will be stopping the X91 service.</p>	<p>Accessibility to services is paramount. Section 60 of the Housing Act places a duty on the local authority to provide advice and assistance to access help. Services across the Vale have been developed and commissioned to ensure even the most vulnerable households in the rural areas are able to access them.</p>
<p>5. There appears to be a lack of analysis of housing need, service gaps and therefore the issues in the Vale which the strategy should be addressing are unclear.</p>	<p>The Strategy has been informed by the Local Housing Strategy 2015-20, the Local Housing Market Assessment 2017 and the data collected on support needs through the Supporting People Planning process. In addition, the consultation events held sought to identify where gaps in service were and looked to identify solutions for these gaps. The action plan was therefore developed collaboratively to establish need.</p>
<p>6. We are concerned by the use of classing 'breakdown in relationships' as a reason for homelessness, this is likely to mask domestic abuse and violence against women as many women won't admit to experiencing domestic abuse.</p>	<p>The categories are specified within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and are required to be reported quarterly to Welsh Government..</p> <p>Breakdown in relationship is broken down further into violent and non-violent categories for these statutory reporting requirements. Unfortunately the issue of domestic abuse against any gender if undisclosed is often a hidden challenge.</p>
<p>7. The charts on pages 11 and 12 of the strategy are almost impossible to follow, and should be supported with the figures linked to them. Pleased to see that it does include 'breakdown of relationship with partner violent', but concerned that there may be non-violent domestic abuse hidden in 'breakdown of relationship with partner non-violent', therefore hiding the true figures for VAWDASV.</p>	<p>The charts have been amended in order that they are easy to read.</p> <p>Please see answer to question 6 in respect of the statutory reporting mechanism,</p>

<p>8. Page 15 of the strategy says about the people not counted, if a service does not meet the needs of people then they are likely to not engage with it. Excluding these people and not hearing their voice means that any possible improvements to the service are not being heard and counted. This could be affecting one group more than others, e.g. women due to the way services are set up. Without this information it would appear that only those already engaged are consulted.</p>	<p>Clients not counted within the graph were those who had been provided with an appropriate housing solution, but chose not to take it or failed to continue to engage with the Housing Solutions Service.</p> <p>Lack of engagement is always kept under review to ensure that no groups are excluded and reasons are sought for non engagement.</p>
<p>9. There's a lack of understanding of the support needs of any vulnerable group within the documents, including women affected by domestic or sexual violence, and how these support needs affect the type of integrated services that vulnerable groups need.</p>	<p>The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 is an overarching strategy representing all vulnerable groups. Homelessness services across the Vale of Glamorgan are developed in line with the needs of all these groups in consultation with stakeholders..</p>
<p>10. Disappointed, that in the consultation and review section of the strategy (page 17) that attendees for consultation listed does not include any representation from Domestic Abuse services.</p>	<p>The list of service areas in this section of the documentation is not exclusive and the Strategy makes this clear, This list seeks to give an indication of the broad range of service areas that took part in the consultation.</p>
<p>11. The priorities on page 18 of the strategy do refer to 'people suffering from domestic abuse', this is the only mention of domestic abuse in the strategy and the language used we do not think is appropriate. If they are accessing homelessness services then they are – fleeing domestic abuse.</p>	<p>Wording amended</p>
<p>12. There is nothing in the strategy or the action plan which refers to Target Hardening of properties, a way of keeping people safe in their homes, and reducing the need for them to move and access other homelessness services.</p>	<p>The requirement to comply with the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015 is within the action plan along with a requirement to assist in the delivery of the Regional Strategy. This includes the requirement to undertake target hardening work, where appropriate.</p>

<p>13. The action plan mentions improving IT systems, but there is no mention of this in the main strategy document and nothing about what benefits this would give to citizens.</p>	<p>This is a Housing and Building Services initiative to identify a suitable ICT system which will link all parts of the Service and bring benefits to service users by integrating all of their information into one place to ensure they are provided with a high level and consistent service.</p>
<p>14. Neither the strategy or action plan has proper outcomes and it is difficult to understand what the Council are trying to achieve or what difference it will make to anyone with housing need.</p>	<p>The Action Plan includes details of the objective to be achieved and the priority for each one.</p>
<p>15. There are no measures of what constitutes success within either document.</p>	<p>Please see answer to question 14.</p>
<p>16. In the action plan the heading "action" is mostly about changing processes or continued / improved partnership working. It is not clear how this will improve access to housing or increase housing supply for the citizens of the Vale of Glamorgan.</p>	<p>The objectives within the Action Plan were determined by stakeholders and will be monitored by the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Members. Additional affordable housing supply is monitored through the Local Housing Strategy 2015-2020.</p>
<p>17. The action plan says the Vale of Glamorgan Council will 'undertake a Service User Satisfaction Questionnaire'; we are concerned that this was not done as part of the development of the strategy. It seems to be finding out what people think, after decisions have already been made.</p>	<p>A survey was carried out before the Strategy was developed with 50 service users to ensure their views were taken into account.</p> <p>The Service User Satisfaction Questionnaire will be undertaken to ensure emerging themes are identified and services adapted accordingly during the lifetime of the Homelessness prevention Strategy 2018-2022.</p>
<p>18. The action plan includes considering developing a service led standardised training matrix, it includes Safeguarding but no mention of VAWDASV, which would appear to be an oversight with the new legislation coming in.</p>	<p>Please see answer to question 1.</p>
<p>19. The strategy does not mention County Lines but the action plan does. County Lines can include cuckooing and coercion of both family and vulnerable people and therefore does fall within VAWDASV but is often overlooked as such other than by specialist services. The news stories</p>	<p>Please see answer to question 1.</p> <p>The Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2022 is an overarching document underpinned by the Action Plan which includes reference to</p>

<p>focus on links to substance abuse, but there is also sexual exploitation and violence as well.</p>	<p>County Lines.</p>
<p>20. The action plan uses the outdated phrase 'hard to reach groups', they are often easy to reach and find, but their voices are 'seldom heard', in this group are often abused women.</p>	<p>Whilst this is the terminology used by stakeholders during the consultation period, it will be amended to 'seldom heard groups.'</p>
<p>21. The development of a Supporting People Gateway (page 11) is included in the action plan, how will this link in with the crisis route that has to be taken for those fleeing domestic violence? We are keen to ensure that they remain outside the Gateway to ensure they continue to have direct and immediate access. Currently, it is only the Atal Y Fro, dispersed project which comes under the Gateway. Recently the Supporting People team have developed additional drop ins for people and the numbers of drop ins to Atal Y Fro have decreased, this is a concern as women fleeing domestic abuse and violence need to be able to access the correct service first time and not be signposted to several different agencies before they receive the correct service. We are keen to see how we can support the drop in's to ensure the best outcomes for citizens across the Vale of Glamorgan.</p>	<p>As previously made clear to Atal y fro, there are no plans to include the Refuge in the Supporting People Gateway.</p> <p>There is a procedure in place to ensure that any client known to the Housing and Building Services Team who divulges that they have experienced or are in danger of experiencing domestic abuse are referred to Atal y fro for specialist advice.</p> <p>Each drop in service is also aware of this requirement, but it is the client's decision whether or not to contact Atal y fro. The Council is also very mindful of its safeguarding duties and will ensure that the relevant referrals are made to statutory services.</p>
<p>22. The only reference in the action plan to VAWDASV is in relation to compliance with the Act through the Safer Vale Team, despite some services being directly commissioned from Supporting People Funding to Atal Y Fro.</p>	<p>This is an overarching Homelessness Prevention Strategy and whilst the services are totally aligned with the Supporting People Programme Grant, it is not appropriate to list all support services and providers within the Strategy as these are listed within the annual Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan which links to it.</p>
<p>23. Concerned with all the information missing, that there will be no second draft for consultation and it will go direct to Cabinet for approval.</p>	<p>This Strategy has been developed in consultation with all stakeholders, including service users. All comments received during the consultation process will also be taken into account prior to the Strategy being submitted to Cabinet for adoption..</p>
<p>24. The action plan includes specific reference to working with Llamau in regards to young people's accommodation, but no mention of the specialist Domestic Abuse / VAWDASV</p>	<p>The inclusion of Llamau's 'One Stop Shop' within the strategy reflects a Corporate initiative which the Council has commissioned in meeting its statutory obligations to 16/17 year olds.</p>

<p>delivered by Atal Y Fro across the Vale. This is both surprising and disappointing, and as a Board we would like to know if this is an oversight or if there is a breakdown in relations between the Council and Atal Y Fro which we have not been made aware of.</p>	<p>Please see answer to question 22 regarding support services funded through the Supporting People Programme Grant which are included in the annual Local Commissioning Plan.</p>
<p>25. The Member congratulated officer on a very well written summary and noted that there were 3,882 housing applicants on the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Register seeking affordable rented accommodation and of those, approximately 70% of the households had no earned income. The Member stated that this was evidence of severe issues for the Council and that there was also a significant amount of hidden homelessness that the local authority was not yet able to measure and therefore the strategy seemed to lack a definition on what homelessness was.</p>	<p>Section 55 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 outlines when a person is homeless or threatened with homelessness. A person is homeless if they, together with anyone who normally resides with them, have no accommodation in the United Kingdom or elsewhere which they have a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if he or she has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel adapted for human habitation (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation.</p> <p>Hidden homelessness does exist and the Council and its stakeholders endeavour to support households in housing need through the promotion and development of homelessness services across the Vale of Glamorgan.</p>
<p>26. The Member highlighted a grammatical error on the second bullet point at the bottom of page 9.</p>	<p>Error corrected within strategy</p>
<p>27. The Member stated that within the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan, the action to 'explore needs to develop a direct access hostel' was currently rated as low priority, however, following discussions during the meeting this was obviously a high priority and should reflect this.</p>	<p>The current priority to explore a direct access hostel is low because the Vale of Glamorgan historically and currently does not have a rough sleeping community (as evidenced by the annual rough sleeper counts) which a direct access hostel would address/</p> <p>However as homelessness is increasing in the United Kingdom, the Council will continue to monitor the situation and explore the need to develop a direct access hostel if required.</p>
<p>28. Page 21 of the draft Strategy referred to a mental Health Link Worker, the Member queries whether that individual would be placed in the Homelessness Prevention Team or at Barry Hospital.</p>	<p>The Mental Health Link Worker is based in the Housing Solutions Team at the Civic Office. However, the worker undertakes mobile working, visiting clients at home and also attends multi-agency meetings in the hospital environment to ensure the correct move-on options are agreed for individuals with mental health issues.</p>

<p>29. There are several references to legislative section within the document, however, there are concerns that this terminology would not be easily understandable and therefore needed to be set out more clearly within the document especially an explanation of S73.</p>	<p>Section 4 of the Strategy (pages 8 to 11) has been updated to include a list of the homelessness duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.</p>
<p>30. The pie charts within the document were not clear to the reader as some colours were very similar and therefore the reader could not be certain which statistic was relevant to which category. Therefore, the Member suggested that a different type of chart be used and that the total statistics could also be added to the chart for the readers benefit.</p>	<p>Pie charts have been removed and replaced by graphs.</p>
<p>31. The challenge facing the local authority was enormous and therefore a stronger point needed to be made within the background information of the Strategy.</p>	<p>Please see Page 21 of the Strategy.</p>
<p>32. A Member referred to the statement on page 3 of the Strategy which stated that the aim of the current legislation was to focus more intensively on prevention rather than a cure and therefore the Member suggested that the emphasis be put into the document with regards prevention methods.</p>	<p>The Strategy has been updated to include case studies, which demonstrate some of the prevention tools available to the Housing Solutions Team.</p>
<p>33. The Strategy notes that the monitoring and recording of prevention work is important to ensure that effective interventions are identified and actioned. We would suggest that this prevention work monitoring be included in monitoring and reviewing the Strategy, to support the statistical data proposed, and to develop measures that are meaningful and contribute to the development of achievable and tangible outcomes.</p>	<p>The Council is required to provide homelessness prevention data to Welsh Government on a quarterly basis. Some homelessness cases cannot be prevented as they are outside the control of the Council e.g. landlord wants to sell a property or there is a relationship breakdown. However, all cases where homelessness has not been prevented each quarter are analysed to inform service improvement if appropriate.</p>
<p>34. We would suggest that the Strategy includes a list of named partners, to include Cardiff and Vale University Health Board, to emphasise the partnership approach that is essential to addressing the health and wellbeing of persons facing homelessness</p>	<p>Reference has been made in the Strategy to the contribution from partners in the statutory and voluntary sector, including Cardiff and Vale Local Health Board.</p>

issues in the area.	
35.No reference to how they might work with landlords to assist them in keeping people in their tenancies to prevent homelessness	Part of homelessness prevention includes negotiating with every private landlord to try to save tenancies. The use of Discretionary Housing benefit as a preventative tool is included within a case study and included as an additional action within the Action Plan.