

THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

CABINET: 1ST DECEMBER, 2022

REFERENCE FROM HOMES AND SAFE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE: 7TH NOVEMBER, 2022

“416 HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMME STRATEGY (DEH) –

The Head of Housing and Building Services presented the report to the Committee, the purpose of which was to inform Members of the new Housing Support Programme Strategy (HSP) for the period 2022-2026. This would subsequently be referred to Cabinet for their review and approval following its endorsement by the Committee.

Welsh Government (WG) required all Local Authorities to develop a Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy every four years. The document outlined the strategic direction of the Local Authority for housing related support services and provided a single strategic approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services. The main areas of the strategy were based on a template provided by WG, which also satisfied existing statutory requirements under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

The Strategy took into account how delivery of support was in line with WG's vision and aims for the prevention of homelessness and the move to a rapid re-housing approach (a separate report on which would be presented to the Committee at a later date). The Strategy aimed to ensure that homelessness was experienced by people for as short a time as possible and they had the support necessary in order to sustain their tenancies long term, thereby preventing the risk of future homelessness.

In order to achieve this Strategy, there had been a significant degree of stakeholder involvement not only with professional partners both internally and externally to the Council, but also with significant numbers of landlords, providers and the individuals who used or wished to use such services. The Council also took, a holistic, 'corporate' approach in order to address the whole and wide range of issues that people may have had that had led them to seek help from the Council concerning housing and homelessness, and to provide them with an effective and 'seamless' service, through effective partnership, working and communication, as well as building an evidence base through needs assessments and service user feedback.

The Strategy consisted of 8 priorities, with a number of actions against these to maximise funding and support on homelessness prevention, minimise evictions, limit homelessness and prevent it being repeated.

Also highlighted were the challenges that the Strategy would need to help address, such as:

- The imbalance between the numbers of single people who presented as homeless at the moment and the amount of accommodation that the Council had to house them (including 90 single people currently in 3 local hotels).
- Pressures on housing within the private rented sector with an increase in Section 21 eviction notices and some anecdotal evidence on the impact of the new Renting Homes legislation on private landlords.
- A mismatch between the number of supported units and the number of clients who highlighted domestic abuse as a key factor in terms of their support.
- There was also an emerging theme of over 55s presenting as homeless with support needs relating to their tenancies.

Overall, this meant that the Council faced challenges with the threshold for statutory service intervention and in terms of resources and accommodation for the rapid rehousing of service users. To address these, the Strategy would look at alternatives to bed and breakfast / hotel accommodation, the ongoing importance of implementing the house building programme, and the potential to develop additional move on accommodation, i.e. the conversion of hotels and guest houses, but also in terms of modular accommodation on various local sites.

Following on from the presentation of the report, the Committee raised the following comments and questions:

- Councillor Carroll queried the Strategy's objective on the purchase of commercial properties to use for temporary accommodation and if this could also be used as a solution for more permanent accommodation for service users. He stated that there were considerable benefits in using converted commercial premises for permanent accommodation in town centres, i.e. accessibility to nearby amenities, access to public transport and other services. The Head of Service agreed this was another option that could be used, with clear benefits (i.e. around the cost of living crisis and carbon neutral / zero policies) and that colleagues were looking to convert commercial premises into more permanent accommodation as part of the review of the Local Development Plan (LDP). This would follow a model similar to that undertaken by other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and other Local Authorities, i.e. Cardiff Council. However, the remodelling of town centres, which included increasing accommodation use, had to be balanced with the need to maintain a strong, vibrant commercial element to these which also clearly benefited the Vale, its residents and businesses.
- On Councillor Hanks' query on the relatively high percentage rate of respondents (62%) detailed in the Needs Assessment of the Strategy who said it was difficult to get in touch with the right person on housing / homelessness services and support, it was explained that the assessment was undertaken prior to the opening of the 'One Stop Shop' in Holton Road, which was now helping to raise awareness among residents of these services, coupled with the action detailed in the Strategy to establish and

promote dedicated means of contact for service users at risk of homelessness or requiring housing support.

- On the Councillor's other query on the availability of WG funding for this Strategy, it was explained that the Council, as with other Welsh Local Authorities, were lobbying WG for additional funding for such initiatives, particularly post March 2023 when WG funding streams could potentially end and therefore have a significant impact on Council expenditure and temporary accommodation provision. The costs for Bed and Breakfast accommodation currently stood at £2.3m for the Vale, and the Council had used some of its homelessness reserve funding to continue to pay for such accommodation since the WG funding had been reduced in September, as well as the additional requirements and pressures on housing provision for Ukrainian refugees and others. Funding from WG would also be potentially impacted by funding decisions from the UK Government. In the meantime, the Council was looking to move as many people into alternative forms of accommodation from hotels (helped by WG's relaxing of the standards for move on / temporary accommodation), and under the new Renting Homes Act, the possible use of 3 bedroom and larger Council housing to convert that into some form of shared accommodation with shared services and facilities. Also, the Council had been successful in bidding for funding on the building of modular accommodation on selected sites in the county.
- On Councillor Buckley's query on the nature of the modular accommodation to be used by the Council, i.e. whether this would be 'shipping container' style accommodation, it was explained that this was not the case and the modular accommodation the Council would be adopting was in fact purpose built and could be moved onto the site ready built 'offsite' without the need for any major assembly at the housing site itself. This would be done in collaboration with Cardiff Council and Wates, a private company. There were a number of sites under consideration for modular accommodation in the Vale, with up to 100 units to be constructed. However, these would probably not be delivered until the start of the next financial year due to leading times for the placement of orders and site appraisals. This could possibly be addressed by the use of COVID-19 era legislation in order to attempt to accelerate this process, in terms of planning and procurement.
- The Vice-Chair (in the Chair) referred to the four-year planning / review cycle for the Strategy and asked what provision the Council had in place in terms of stakeholders' input as part of that review cycle. The Strategy required the Council to provide mid term reports and to review it every two years, and report through to WG in terms of the stakeholder work. It was one of the priority actions in the report around refining that stakeholder analysis and continuing to use mini questionnaires or mini contacts during the four year period to ensure that stakeholder feedback remained relevant as well as the two-year midpoint review. There was also an overarching Housing Forum that reviewed the operational elements of the Strategy and Scrutiny would also have a potential role in providing strategic oversight, with the Head of Housing and Building Services suggesting that the Committee could receive an update on a six-monthly basis during the lifetime of the Strategy.

Scrutiny Committee, having considered the report, subsequently

RECOMMENDED –

(1) T H A T the priority themes and objectives to be included in the Housing Support Programme Strategy be noted.

(2) T H A T the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy be endorsed for referral to Cabinet for approval and adoption.

(3) T H A T a report be provided to the Scrutiny Committee on a six-monthly basis in order to be kept updated on the progress of the Housing Support Programme Strategy and its Action Plan.

Reasons for recommendations

(1) Having regard to the contents of the report and discussions at the meeting.

(2) In order for Cabinet to consider the Housing Support Programme Strategy for approval and adoption.

(3) To ensure that the Scrutiny Committee is kept updated on the progress of the Housing Support Programme Strategy and its Action Plan.”

Attached as Appendix: Report to Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee:
7th November, 2022

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 07 November 2022
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Housing Support Programme Strategy
Purpose of Report:	To inform Members of the current Housing Support Programme Strategy (HSP) for the period 2022-2026 (Appendix 1)
Report Owner:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing.
Responsible Officer:	Nick Jones - Operational Manager, Public Sector Housing
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Margaret Wilkinson, Cabinet Member for Public Sector Housing and Tenant Engagement Gemma Jones, Operational Manager, Accountancy Committee Reports, Legal Services Mike Ingram, Head of Housing & Building Services
Policy Framework:	This report is consistent with the Policy Framework and Budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government require all Local Authorities to develop a Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy every four years. The document is to outline the strategic direction of the local authority for housing related support services. It also provides our single strategic approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services. • The report outlines the main areas of the strategy based on a template provided by Welsh Government. A draft strategy has already been submitted to Welsh Government for verification and feedback has been incorporated into this document. • The strategy also satisfied existing statutory requirements under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. • The strategy takes into account how delivery of support is in line with Welsh Government's vision and aims for the prevention of homelessness and the transformational shift required to move to a rapid re-housing approach. • The strategy sets out the key priorities for the Local Authority and its partners based on findings from a comprehensive needs assessment and stakeholder engagement. 	

Recommendations

1. That Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee consider the priority themes and objectives to be included in the Housing Support Programme Strategy.
2. That Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee endorses the draft Housing Support Programme Strategy for referral to Cabinet for approval and adoption.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure the actions in the Housing Support Programme Strategy address the key challenges faced locally in the Vale of Glamorgan
2. To ensure the Council has a Strategy to deliver appropriate and integrated housing support and homelessness solutions, in line with Welsh Government requirements.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's duties in respect of homelessness services are set out in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. This places a number of duties on local authorities in respect of homelessness, which included the following:
 - To provide assistance to anyone threatened with homelessness irrespective of priority need or local connection.
 - To provide appropriate help and support to any homeless person to help secure a suitable home.
 - To provide assistance at an earlier stage.
 - To provide new powers to local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty into the private rented sector.
- 1.2 The Housing Support Programme Strategy provides an outline of the single strategic direction for the Council's approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services for the next four years.
- 1.3 The strategy is written in line with the Welsh Government template and feedback from the team has been incorporated into this version.
- 1.4 A wide range of stakeholders were included in the development of the draft Strategy, including Support Partners, Health, Probation, Internal Services across children and adults, landlords, providers and those individuals who use the service as well as their carers and families.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The vision of the Housing Support Programme Strategy is:

"To end homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan and provide person centred housing support to enable individuals and families to overcome housing problems"

- 2.2** A number of core principles are also highlighted to support the vision. These include:
- recognition that homelessness is a corporate responsibility
 - the provision of adequate resources is required to reflect the level and importance of homelessness
 - the provision of high-quality services that appear seamless to homeless and potentially homeless people
 - effective partnership working and communication (both within the council and beyond)
 - supporting informed decisions and actions by service users and providers
 - developing an evidence-based approach to inform continuous improvement in services

- 2.3** A number of key issues in the Vale were identified by the consultations, assessment of needs and review of performance. These include:

- There is an imbalance between single person accommodation and the numbers of single people presenting as homeless and staying in temporary accommodation for significant periods of time.
- There are challenges which affect access to private rented sector (PRS) accommodation including increasing rents and anecdotal evidence of an increase in the number of section 21 notices issued by private landlords (resulting in more households approaching the Council for assistance).
- Mental Health and support needs are increasing; anxiety and depression is increasingly a concern, specifically amongst clients presenting as homeless.
- High risk offenders and repeat offenders, there is a gap for repeat offenders who need ongoing support and high-risk cases where accommodation is incredibly challenging to source.
- Women fleeing domestic abuse. Support needs can be more complex, often with multiple support needs like mental health and addictions as well as domestic abuse
- Older people (over 55) with support needs. There is an emerging theme of over 55s presenting as homeless with support needs relating to their tenancies
- People with low level learning disabilities. There is a need for supported accommodation that is tailored to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities who do not meet the threshold for statutory services

- 2.4** Based on the key issues, the following key priority actions have been identified:

- Provide a robust, targeted prevention service to prevent homelessness and tackle the main causes of homelessness.
- Raise awareness of the Housing Solutions service and ensure it is accessible to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

- Provide high quality advice and assistance so service users feel supported and empowered to take steps to resolve their homelessness.
 - Facilitate a rapid rehousing approach to ensure that homelessness is brief, and households move onto more permanent accommodation as quickly as possible.
 - Strengthen and expand access to mental health support services.
 - Maximise access to homes in the private rented sector.
 - Support the most vulnerable to sustain their tenancy and integrate into the community.
 - Increase the supply of permanent and temporary accommodation.
- 2.5** An action plan is included in the draft Strategy which sets out the range of actions which will be undertaken in order to meet the key aims. The delivery will be monitored by the Overarching Housing Forum and will be overseen by Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee.

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 Housing Support Programme Strategy will support vulnerable people to attain the life skills required to maintain their home, integrate into the community and to live independently in the long term.
- 3.2** Taking an integrated approach - the Housing Support Programme Strategy will be continually reviewed including by the Supporting People Local Planning Group and the Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group. These are made up of Members and senior officers from both the statutory and voluntary sectors, including Housing, Social Services, Health and the Probation Service to ensure homelessness support services remain strategically relevant and enable the development of new services where required with partners, to support any emerging themes.
- 3.3** Involving the population in decisions - the needs of service users are monitored to ensure that the correct services are delivered to meet their individual requirements. In addition, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has been designed to help encourage households in need to take responsibility for their housing circumstances and to manage the options and solutions available to them. Support and assistance are provided by the services involved to enable them to learn to solve problems themselves in the future. The key message delivered by the Homelessness Service and the Housing Support Grant Programme 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 Housing Support Programme Strategy places collaboration and coproduction at its core through the consultation process undertaken to develop it and the ongoing integration with

the Housing Support Grant Programme where these 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 Service is responsible for delivering the Housing Support Programme Strategy and along with the Supporting People Team is required to collect needs data on clients quarterly and annually in order to inform service delivery and commissioning.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1 The Council understands the importance of decarbonisation to help protect and sustain the environment over the long term and in line with its Climate emergency declaration is working and investing in measures to reduce its CO2 emissions. The Housing Support Programme Strategy puts the emphasis on preventing homelessness and supporting people to remain in their own homes wherever possible, however the new housing developments required will be completed in accordance with the commitments in the Council's Climate Challenge Plan.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1 The Strategy is being delivered within existing departmental resources which includes the Housing Support Grant (HSG) and Homelessness Prevention Grant received from Welsh Government.

Employment

- 5.2 There is a statutory requirement on the Vale of Glamorgan Council to ensure appropriately experienced staff are in place to manage the statutory duties within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. There is provision within this year's Homeless Prevention Grant allocation to employ a Strategic Lead to deliver the transformation towards a rapid rehousing approach. This post is currently being recruited and will last for up to three years.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3 The development and adoption of a reviewable four-year Homelessness Prevention Strategy is a statutory requirement of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

6. Background Papers

Draft Housing Support Programme Strategy.



**STRATEGAETH RHAGLEN CYMORTH
TAI CYNGOR BRO MORGANNWG 2022-
2026**

**VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL
HOUSING SUPPORT PROGRAMME
STRATEGY 2022-2026**

Foreword by Councilor Margaret Wilkinson – Cabinet Member for Housing and Building Services

Tackling homelessness and delivering effective housing support, remain key priorities for the Council and we are committed to early intervention and the prevention of homelessness wherever possible, in partnership with our statutory and non-statutory partners. This strategy sets out the Council's vision to deliver effective housing support and minimize homelessness; ensuring when it does occur, periods of homelessness are brief and not repeated. The Strategy also sets out practical ways the Council will achieve this, including targeted prevention measures to stop homelessness occurring, publicising the range of services and advice available and also, adopting a rapid rehousing approach, which removes barriers to more permanent accommodation, so the time spent in temporary accommodation is minimised.

The Vale of Glamorgan is a wonderful place to live and we can boast to have a mixture of attractive towns, dramatic coastlines and charming rural landscapes. We also have a very diverse population. However, rising house prices, increasing private rents and growing demand for accommodation have created difficulties for people accessing affordable accommodation. This situation has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has seen a sharp increase in the number of homelessness acceptances and a growing use of temporary accommodation.

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 a range of housing options are needed, including housing related support, to prevent homelessness and to maintain a home and is therefore committed to working closely with a wide range of partner agencies to deliver the much-needed services.

Finally, this Strategy is complimentary to the work completed recently by a Task and Finish Group of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee which considered the growing use of temporary accommodation and put forward a comprehensive range of recommendations designed to increase the supply of accommodation in the Vale and ensure that homeless people continue to be prioritised via the housing waiting list. There is a lot to do, and the scale of the challenges faced are significant, however the Council is committed to ending homelessness and ensuring people receive a comprehensive package of support to assist them to overcome housing problems they may face.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

The Welsh Government require Local Authorities to develop a Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy every four years, with a mid-point review every two years. The HSP Strategy should outline the strategic direction of the local authority for housing related support services. This should provide a single strategic view of the local authority's approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services. Including both statutory homelessness functions funded through the revenue settlement and non-statutory preventative services funded through the Housing Support Grant (HSG).

Local authorities must ensure the Strategy, as the single strategic document on housing support and homelessness prevention, also satisfies the existing statutory requirements for a homelessness strategy under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. There is no requirement to produce a separate strategy. Effectively the current Vale Homelessness Prevention Strategy comes to an end and will be replaced by the new HSP Strategy which will run April 2022 – March 2026.

The HSP Strategy considers how the Council can support delivery of the Welsh Government's vision and aims for the prevention of homelessness and the transformational shift required to move to a rapid re-housing approach. Welsh Government guidance on the development of the HSP Strategy has been issued through several national briefings and workshops and detailed guidance is available.

1.2 Background

This strategy sets out the Vale of Glamorgan Council's approach to delivering person centred housing support and preventing homelessness as well as swiftly resolving homelessness when it occurs. It has been shaped by the findings of a review of homelessness in the Vale and has been developed within the national legislative and policy context.

The definition of homelessness used in this strategy is that set out by the Welsh Government in the *Ending Homelessness in Wales High Level Action Plan 2021-2026* as:

"Homelessness is where a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure. Rough sleeping is the most visible and acute end of the homelessness spectrum, but homelessness includes anyone who has no accommodation, cannot gain access to their accommodation or where it is not reasonable for them to continue to occupy accommodation. This would include overcrowding, 'sofa surfing,' victims of abuse and many more scenarios. A person is also homeless if their accommodation is a moveable structure and there is no place where it can be placed".

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Part 2 requires all local authorities to have a Homelessness Strategy in place. The new single Housing and Support Programme (HSP) Strategy is a new requirement by Welsh Government and incorporates the strategy required under the Act. Although this strategy covers a four-year period, it will be reviewed after the first two years to outline the Vale's strategic direction regarding the Housing Support Grant (HSG). It builds on the previous Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 – 2022 and the Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan 2021 – 2022 and therefore incorporates both the statutory homelessness functions and the non-statutory preventative services delivered by the HSG. The Strategy sets out how the Vale will support the delivery of the Welsh Government's

vision and aims for the prevention of homelessness and the changes required to move to a rapid re-housing approach. This will be built on in the Vale's Rapid Rehousing Strategy which will be published later in the year.

1.3 Legislative and policy context

Policy context

At an all-Wales level, preventing and tackling homelessness is a key priority. A Homelessness Action Group was formed in 2019 and made recommendations designed to ensure every person has their basic need for a home and support met. The group's recommendations are also designed to make homelessness rare by preventing it and, when people do lose their homes, for any experience of homelessness to be brief and non-repeated.

The focus of the ending homelessness framework in the main report included:

- Maximising homelessness prevention by taking universal action to tackle the root causes of homelessness, such as poverty; reducing and ending youth homelessness; and taking targeted, earlier action across all public services. As well as having an effective crisis response for people at more immediate risk.
- Establishing 'rapid rehousing' as the default approach to quickly help people experiencing homelessness to be rehoused with all the support they need.
- Investing in people who help end homelessness by funding and supporting workforces, involving people with lived experience of homelessness and people in front-facing support services, and enabling charities and volunteers to play a part in the preventative approach and in rapid rehousing.
- The report acknowledged the progress made during the coronavirus outbreak and the way that people, services, and organisations have worked together. It was also recognised, however, that homelessness has not yet ended for many people. As attention turns to making sure all people who were re-accommodated (during the pandemic) are helped into safe and secure homes.

The conclusions and recommendations from the Group have been supported in principle and endorsed by Welsh Government and a high-level action plan drafted to take these forwards.

The law

The Housing Wales Act 2014 is the main legislation covering Homelessness in Wales. The main aim of the Act is to ensure homeless people and those threatened with homelessness, receive help at an early stage. The Act was also designed to ensure that everyone receives help, not just people within the priority need groups. Other notable parts of the Act include a strengthening of the prevention duties on Local Authorities and the ability for Councils to use suitable accommodation in the private rented sector.

Other relevant legislation includes the Children Act 1989, the Children Leaving Care Act 2000, the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act

2002 and the Data Protection Act 1998, the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

The Welsh Government introduced guidance in conjunction with Public Health Wales as part of the Covid-19 response to ensure everyone had somewhere to stay regardless of their eligibility to receive assistance and whether they would fall into one of the 'priority need' groups. This has led to Councils across Wales accommodating large numbers of people in various forms of temporary accommodation, including bed and breakfast hotels. Councils have been advised to plan for the future on the basis that there will be no return to the priority need or vulnerability assessment, meaning that all persons eligible for assistance, should be helped with temporary accommodation and accepted as having a full homeless duty.

1.4 Local and Regional context

There are currently several structures that fulfil different strategic objectives linked to housing support and homelessness. For example, the following groups operate across the Vale of Glamorgan:

- Public Service Board (PSB) corresponding with local authority boundaries, established by the Future Generations Act.
- Central Coordination Cell to oversee the delivery of homelessness services during the Covid-19 Pandemic
- Area Planning Board in the Cardiff and Vale Local Health Board for substance use services.
- Regional Partnership Board (RPB), primarily to bring together health and social care (and more recently housing and education). This includes local authority and Registered Social Landlord housing representatives as a minimum. The RPB also accesses various funding streams, e.g. Integrated Care Fund (revenue and capital), winter pressures funding, and transformation programme funding.
- Regional Collaborative Housing Support Group, specified in the Housing Support Grant guidance, and with a Regional Development Coordinator role to facilitate the group.

1.5 Links with other strategies and planning mechanisms

There is a wide range of strategies and plans produced by the Vale of Glamorgan and partner agencies to which the Housing Support Programme Strategy needs to link. These include the:

- Vale of Glamorgan Corporate Plan
- Local Housing Strategy- reviewed in 2021 and considers the current issues facing the Vale of Glamorgan around the provision of housing, which includes housing homeless people and ensuring support is in place to ensure tenancies are sustainable.

- Private Sector Renewal Strategy (including area-based renewal and houses in multiple occupation)
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Supporting People Commissioning Plan
- Community Safety Strategy

1.6 Vision and principles

The Council's vision for Housing Support and Homelessness is:

“To end homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan and provide person centred housing support to enable individuals and families to overcome housing problems”

The strategy is supported by a number of core principles which apply to the Vale of Glamorgan Council and its partners. These principles are:

- recognition that homelessness is a corporate responsibility
- the provision of adequate resources is required to reflect the level and importance of homelessness
- the provision of high-quality services that appear seamless to homeless and potentially homeless people
- effective partnership working and communication (both within the council and beyond)
- supporting informed decisions and actions by service users and providers
- developing an evidence-based approach to inform continuous improvement in services

2. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Welsh Government's Housing Support Programme requires all local authorities in Wales to carry out a full assessment of needs in the local area every year. The 2021 Needs Assessment has been used to inform and shape the services we will provide and how we will deliver them.

A range of engagement techniques and research were used to gather and analyse data to determine the Vale of Glamorgan Needs Assessment. The process included extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including citizens who use / or have used homelessness services, Housing Support Grant delivery partners including Third Sector Organisations and Registered Social Landlords as well as Public Sector Bodies such as Probation Service, Police and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. This was also supported by statistics and data from the Council's Statutory Homelessness Service and the Housing Support Grant gateway.

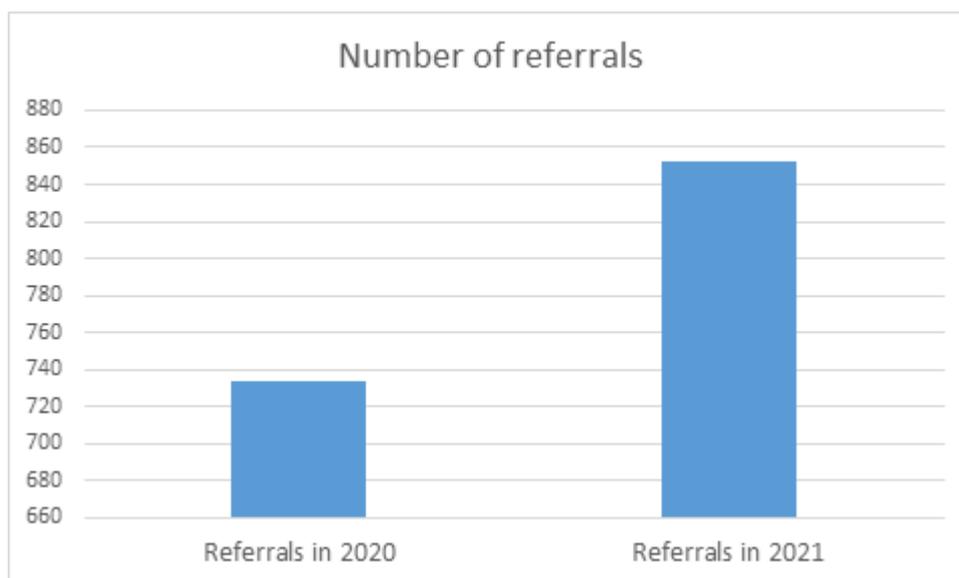
Key sources of information used to inform the Needs Assessment are listed below:

- Population Needs Assessment

- Vale of Glamorgan Prospectus 2021
- Local Authority Local Housing Market Assessment 2022
- Homelessness statistics and other housing data such as waiting lists
- Welsh index of multiple deprivation
- Feedback from service users
- Regional VAWDASV needs assessments
- Housing Support Grant Outcomes data
- Needs Data from Housing Support Gateway
- Local Housing Strategy

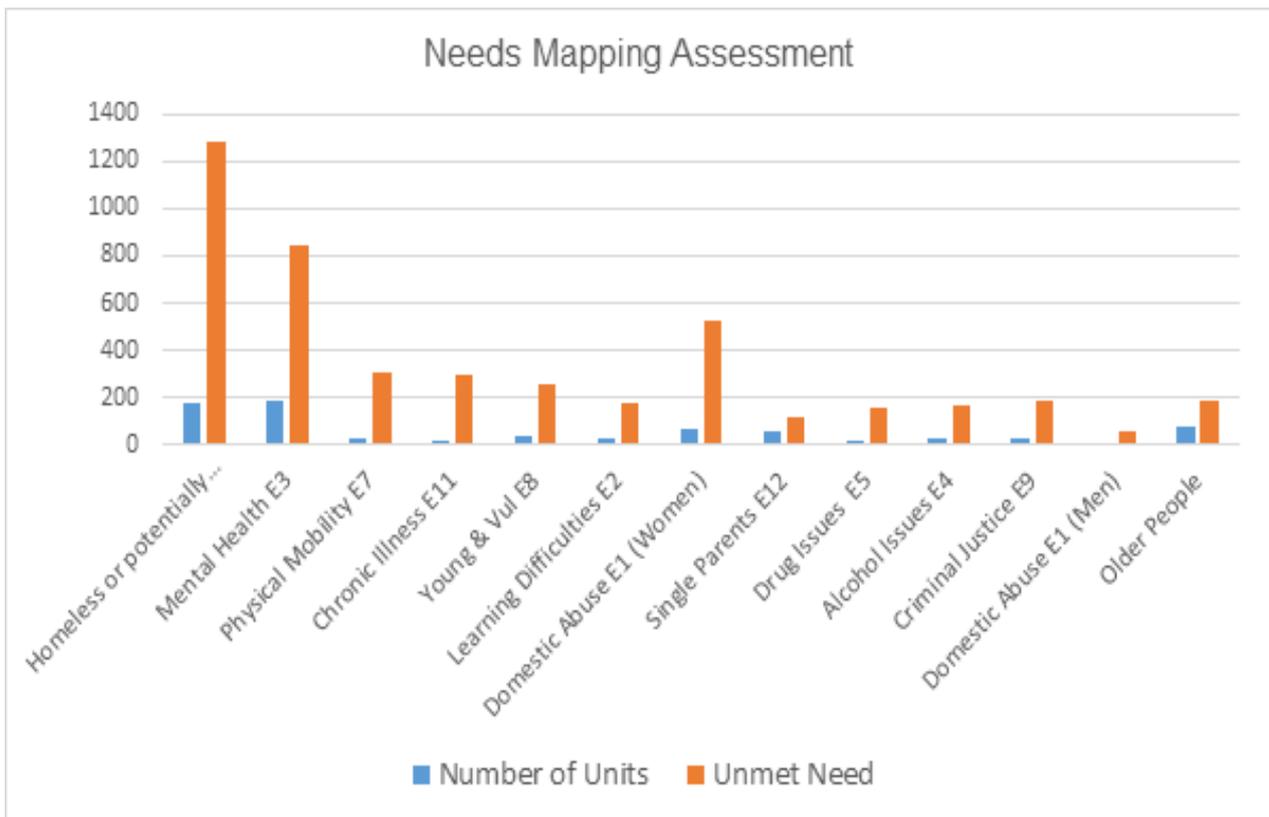
Needs assessment information

There has been a significant increase in demand for support between 2020 and 2021 as the chart below illustrates:



The total numbers of referrals made to the Housing Support Grant in 2021 increased by 16% over the previous year. This reflects the experiences of frontline support staff at the Drop-in service where demand for support was higher than originally anticipated. Consequently, this has generated more referrals to the Housing Support Grant Team than in previous years.

The needs mapping process broken down into client groups indicated the current unmet need based on comparing demand with the number of units is displayed in the chart below:

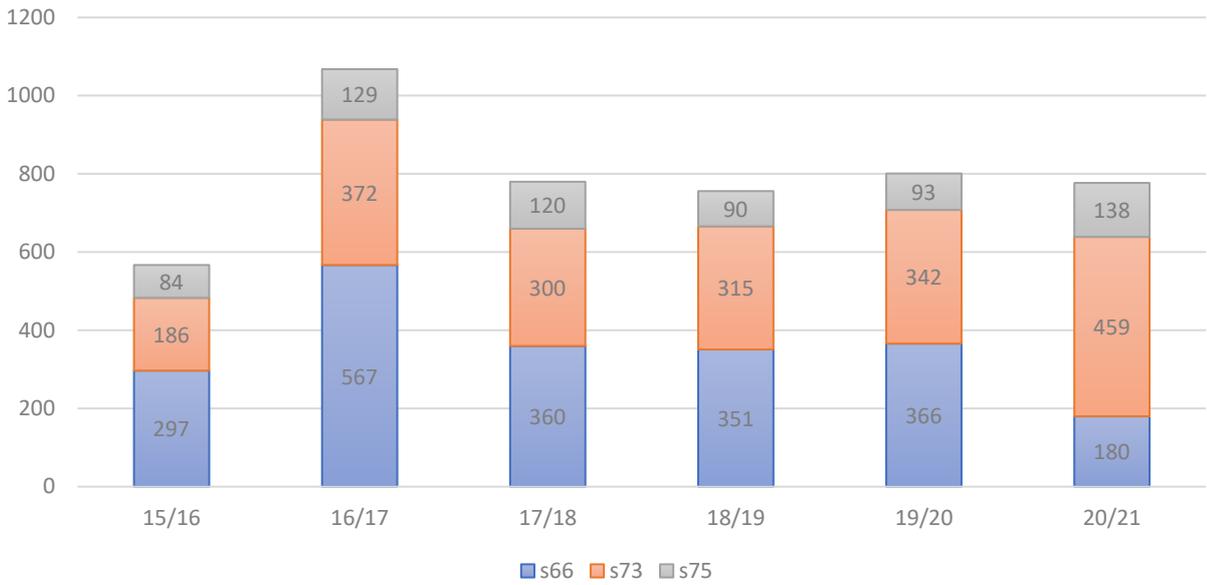


The three highest areas of unmet identified in the are:

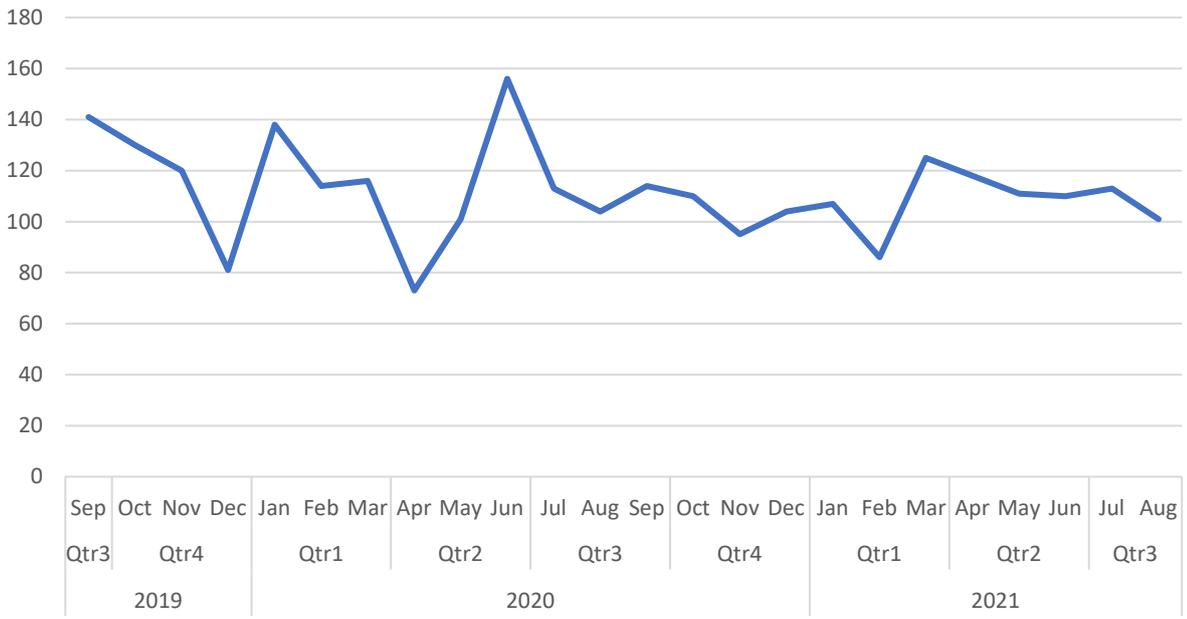
- Homeless or Potentially Homeless
- Mental Health
- Domestic Abuse

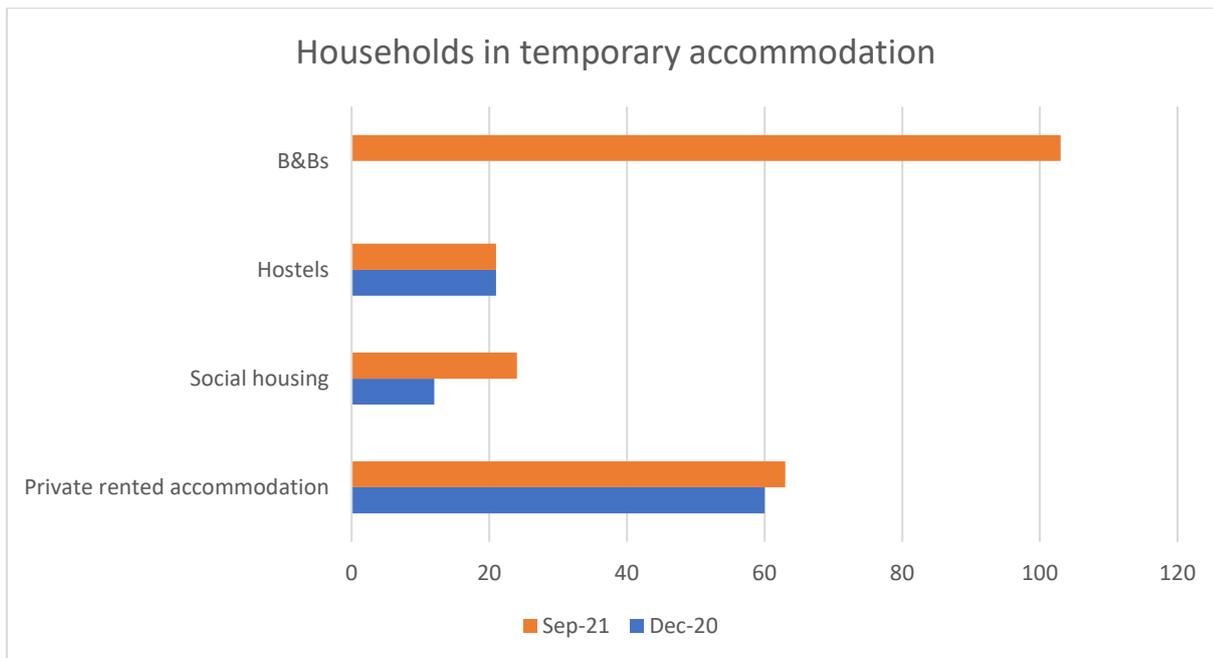
The high demand for support from people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness reflects the significant increase in the numbers who presented to the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Solutions team. The following graphs show the levels of homelessness as well as the sharp spike in households living in temporary accommodation.

Homeless presentations and outcomes



Homeless cases since 2019





The increased demand from people presenting with mental health reflects a trend observed since the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic where increased numbers of people have reported experiencing mental health issues during their needs assessments. This corresponds with research by Mind Cymru published in 2021 which indicates that the number of people experiencing mental health issues in Wales has risen and the numbers reporting increased anxiety have both increased since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The needs data indicates that the numbers presenting with Domestic Abuse issues have increased since the Covid-19 pandemic which corresponds with the increased number of people presenting to the Domestic abuse drop-in service in the Vale. This reflects a national trend across the UK where an increase in victims reporting domestic abuse in 2021 was recorded by Refuge UK.

3. KEY FINDINGS

This section of the strategy sets out the key findings of homelessness in the Vale of Glamorgan. It looks at current levels of homelessness and services, and takes account of changing trends and themes, in particular those arising from the Covid-19 pandemic

There is an imbalance between single person accommodation and the numbers of single people presenting as homeless and staying in temporary accommodation for significant periods of time. To address the issue the Council has begun working to the Rapid Rehousing Model which will offer varied support levels to ensure households presenting get the correct support when it is needed. Single homeless people under 35, people with mental health support needs and people with criminal offending issues represent a high proportion of presentations to the homelessness team. Support needs are more complex with mental health, criminal offending and domestic abuse increasing. Homelessness is not just about housing and many of the people who experience housing issues and homelessness often have complex support needs. Improved pathways for support and ensuring there is a multi-agency working approach to dealing with complex needs. This will also ensure people can access all services in a timely manner.

There are challenges which affect Access to Private rented Sector (PRS) accommodation. Limited social housing, increasing demand, and lengthier waiting times, mean that supporting people to access the private rental sector is more important than ever. Having dedicated officers working with landlords, letting agencies and prospective private renters to remove barriers to securing a privately rented home in the Vale remains a priority.

There are recruitment issues in the sector due to short term contracts, pay scales and the challenging nature of the roles. Staff wellbeing and to be able to retain staff with good terms and conditions across all commissioned projects is key. As well as ensuring training is provided in all areas and staff are supporting individuals using a Trauma informed/multi-agency approach.

In terms of key issues:

- Single homeless people aged under 35. Post covid, there has been an alarming increase in the number of younger, single people accommodated in temporary bed and breakfast provision.
- Mental Health and support needs are increasing; anxiety and depression is increasingly a concern, specifically amongst clients presenting as homeless. To address this the Council have created specialist mental health links worker roles who operate within the Housing Solutions team, to provide front line advice and assistance to clients, however on-going service reviews are Mental Health and support needs are increasing; anxiety and depression is increasingly a concern, specifically amongst clients presenting as homeless required to fulfil the increasing complex needs and shifts in demographics.
- High risk offenders and repeat offenders. There is a gap for repeat offenders who need ongoing support and high-risk cases where accommodation is incredibly challenging to source.
- Women fleeing domestic abuse. Support needs can be more complex, often with multiple support needs like mental health and addictions as well as domestic abuse.
- Older people (over 55) with support needs. There is an emerging theme of over 55s presenting as homeless with support needs relating to their tenancies.
- People with low level learning disabilities. There is a need for supported accommodation that is tailored to meet the needs of people with learning disabilities who do not meet the threshold for statutory services.

4. PRIORITIES

Based on the needs analysis and review of homelessness in the Vale, the following key priorities have been identified:

- Provide a robust, targeted prevention service to prevent homelessness and tackle the main causes of homelessness.

- Raise awareness of the Housing Solutions service and ensure it is accessible to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- Provide high quality advice and assistance so service users feel supported and empowered to take steps to resolve their homelessness.
- Facilitate a rapid rehousing approach to ensure that homelessness is brief, and households move onto more permanent accommodation as quickly as possible.
- Strengthen and expand access to mental health support services.
- Maximise access to homes in the private rented sector.
- Support the most vulnerable to sustain their tenancy and integrate into the community.
- Increase the supply of permanent and temporary accommodation.

4.1 Stakeholder engagement

A range of engagement techniques were used to gather feedback to inform the HSP. This included consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including people who use / or have used homelessness services and delivery partners, including third sector organisations. This was also supported by statistics and data from the Housing Solutions Service and the Housing Support Grant Gateway.

Consultations have taken place with key stakeholders, including 157 people who had lived experience of homelessness, applicants on the housing register and a range of partners including Registered Social Landlords, Statutory Partners and Support Providers.

Key findings included:

- 58% of people requiring homelessness services knew who to contact when they first became homeless or were threatened with homelessness.
- 62% of respondents said it was difficult to get in touch with the right person.
- 39% of people said the right information was made available to them.
- Most people found out about the homeless services available via their support worker/ other professional, by contacting the Council directly or via friends and family.
- Overall satisfaction with the homeless services provided by the Council was 2.8 out of 5.
- 31% of people who approached the Council for help went into temporary accommodation provided by the Council.

- Most respondents described their experience of staying in temporary accommodation in a positive way.
- 65% of people in temporary accommodation said they received the right advice and support to move on to more permanent accommodation.
- Partner organisations agreed with the key aim and priorities set out within this Strategy.
- Mental health and trauma were issues for many people accessing homelessness and housing support services and there was a need for joined up services which were accessible.
- There were concerns about the quality and standard of some homes available in the private rented sector.
- It was acknowledged that there is an under supply of social housing in the Vale of Glamorgan and this impacts on the ability to find suitable accommodation for homeless households.

5 THE HSP ACTION PLAN

Priority One: Provide a robust, targeted prevention service to prevent homelessness and tackle the main causes of homelessness

Action	Outputs/ Outcomes
Evaluate effectiveness of existing prevention measures/ funding	Impact of prevention funding and measures is maximised.
Establish pre-eviction protocols with providers	Evictions are minimised
Analysis of root causes of homelessness to identify main factors	Homelessness is rare and not repeated
Targeted prevention measures designed to tackle main causes of homelessness	Homelessness is rare and is not repeated
Raise the profile and importance of Homelessness prevention services, within the strategic decision-making processes, including Corporate Planning, RPB, PSB etc	Homeless prevention is a corporate priority

Priority Two: Raise awareness of the Housing Solutions service and ensure it is accessible to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness

Action	Outputs/ Outcomes
Establish and promote dedicated means of contact.	Households at risk of homelessness or requiring housing support, can access services
Use social media channels to raise awareness of Housing Solutions team	Households at risk of homelessness or requiring housing support, can access services
Run PR campaign across Vale to raise awareness	Households at risk of homelessness or requiring housing support can access services

Work with partners to increase knowledge and awareness of Housing Solutions service and establish referral mechanisms and signposting	Partners and external agencies refer people in need of services
---	---

Priority Three: *Provide high quality advice and assistance so service users feel supported and empowered to take steps to resolve their homelessness*

Action	Outputs/ Outcomes
Establish mechanism for audit/ quality control of current cases	Service users receive high quality, personalised advice
Work with Shelter Cymru to deliver training and best practise updates to staff	Well trained staff are able to deliver high quality advice
Improve mechanisms for capturing feedback from service users	Advice and support services are customer focussed
Review package of training and support provided to staff	Service users receive high quality, personalised advice Well trained staff are able to deliver high quality advice

Priority Four: *Facilitate a rapid rehousing approach to ensure that homelessness is brief and households move onto more permanent accommodation as quickly as possible*

Action	Outputs/ Outcomes
Establish 'move on' protocol	Homelessness is brief and stays in temporary accommodation are minimised
Recruit Rapid Rehousing Officers to work intensively with clients in temporary accommodation to maximise move on opportunities	Homelessness is brief and stays in temporary accommodation are minimised
Develop transition plan to reduce use of temporary accommodation	Use of temporary accommodation is minimised

Tailor support plans around individuals with input from range of agencies including health, substance misuse organisations, probation etc	Households receive tailored wrap around support
Reinforce Housing First principles and aim to rehouse directly into more secure forms of accommodation (avoidance of stepped approach)	Homelessness is brief and stays in temporary accommodation are minimised
Review Social Housing Allocations Policy to ensure homeless households receive sufficient priority to move on to permanent housing	Homelessness is brief and stays in temporary accommodation are minimised

Priority Five: Strengthen and expand access to mental health support services

Action	Outputs/ Outcomes
Explore potential to establish new pathway into mental health services	Households have appropriate support which tailored to their needs
Employ mental health workers via Housing Support Grant programme	Specialist mental health support is available and accessible when needed
Commission specialist mental health supported housing provision via PDP/ HSG Commissioning Plan	Specialist mental health support is available and accessible when needed

Priority Six: Increase access to the private rented sector

Action	Outputs/ Outcomes
Review the effectiveness of the Vale Assisted Tenancy Scheme (VATS)	Households have access to homes in the private rented sector
Consider use of incentives to increase supply of accommodation from private rented sector landlords	The supply of private sector homes is maximised

Consider scope to establish social lettings agency (to take direct leases and lets of private properties)	Supply of private rented homes is sustained and properties are available to homeless households
Work closely with private landlords to support them to deal with the requirements of the Renting Homes Wales Act	The supply of private rented homes is sustained
Establish opportunities to work with lettings agents to increase the number of homes available to homeless households	The supply of private sector homes is maximised

Priority Seven: *Support the most vulnerable to sustain their tenancy and integrate into the community*

Action	Outputs/ Outcomes
Develop hostel for individuals with complex needs	Housing with intensive support is available to the most vulnerable people
Promote 'One stop shop' and expand the range of integrated services delivered	Housing related support is accessible and available
Prioritise housing related support towards homeless people	Homeless people receive support when needed

Priority Eight: *Increase the supply of permanent and temporary accommodation*

Action	Outputs/ Outcome
Explore potential to replicate MMC development on Council or RSL owned land	Increased supply of high quality, temporary accommodation for homeless households
Purchase commercial properties with potential for conversion into 1-bedroom homes e.g. former care homes, hotels	Secure access to temporary accommodation and reduced reliance on hotels

Prioritise one bedroom accommodation in Barry town centre via the Planned Development Programme (PDP) and Housing Prospectus	Increased supply of permanent accommodation
Explore potential to reconfigure Council owned two and three bedroom flats into bedsit accommodation with shared facilities	Increased supply of permanent accommodation

Impact assessment

A comprehensive impact assessment was completed using the Council's Corporate proforma. No negative impacts were identified and no one with protected characteristics is excluded from accessing housing support or homelessness services e.g. religion, sexuality, gender etc.

All Housing Support and Homelessness staff have recently received training from Stonewall to raise awareness related to LGBTQ+ issues. The role of LGBTQ+ champion has also been established within the organisation.

Working with partners

The council will work with Partners to ensure that the strategy and action plans are implemented and monitored accordingly, and to review and revise any plans where necessary based upon performance evaluations.

- C&V UHB Substance Misuse Service
- C&V UHB Community Mental Health Service
- HSG Support Providers
- Shelter Cymru
- National Probation Service
- RSL partners
- South Wales Police
- Vale of Glamorgan Adult Social Services
- Vale of Glamorgan Children's Social Services

Funding sources

The following funding streams will be used to implement the strategy:

- Housing Support Grant (HSG)
- Core Funding (statutory service provision)
- Intermediate Care Fund

Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Strategy

The Overarching Housing Forum, a Strategic Group of RSLs' and other key partners will monitor and review the implementation of the Strategy on a quarterly basis. There will also be annual progress reports considered by the Council's Homes & Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee

