

Meeting of:	Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Wednesday, 18 March 2020
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018 - 2022 - Monitoring Report
Purpose of Report:	To update Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee on progress implementing the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan.
Report Owner:	Miles Punter, Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Ian Jones, Housing Solutions Manager
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	<p>Councillor Margaret Wilkinson, Cabinet Member for Housing & Building Services</p> <p>Carys Lord, Head of Financial Services/Section 151 Officer</p> <p>Committee Reports; Legal Services</p> <p>Mike Ingram, Head of Housing & Building Services</p> <p>Pam Toms, Operational Manager, Public Housing Services</p>
Policy Framework:	This report is consistent with the Policy Framework and Budget.

Executive Summary:

- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 Act placed a statutory duty on local authorities to undertake a Homelessness Review and to produce a Homelessness Strategy setting out how each Council, in partnership with other stakeholders would identify and develop the services required to help and support those in housing need.
- Following extensive consultation, a Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan were developed in the Vale of Glamorgan and adopted by Cabinet on 17th June 2019 (Cabinet Minutes C14). These documents set out how the Council, with the assistance of its partners will deliver the required strategic outcomes for clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- The Vale of Glamorgan Homelessness Prevention Action Plan covers the period 2018 to 2022 and is a working document which will be kept under constant review and updated as required.
- This report provides the second quarterly update to Members of the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee on the progress made to date in implementing the Strategy and Action Plan.

Recommendation

1. That Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee assess the progress to date of implementing the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan.

Reason for Recommendation

1. To ensure that the actions in the Homelessness Prevention Strategy and Action Plan are progressing and are driving the improvements in the quality of the homelessness service

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 Housing Wales Act 2014 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 by creating a modern safety net where no one is turned away without help.
- 1.3 Section 50 of the Act also required local authorities to undertake a Homelessness Review and to produce a Homelessness Strategy which sets out how the Council in partnership with other stakeholders would 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 newly adopted Homelessness Prevention Strategy 2018-2022 and Action Plan set out the activities to 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 in-patient, and
 - People receiving mental health services in the community.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1** The Homelessness Prevention Action Plan has four themes and progress is being measured over the four years of the Strategy 2018-22 and reported quarterly to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee.
- 2.2** The required actions have been ranked in order of priority:
 - Low Years 3&4 (2021/2022).
 - Medium Years 2&3 (2020/2021).
 - High Years 1&2 (2019/2020).
- 2.3** The actions found in Appendix 1 of this report are all of the required actions for the period to deliver the strategy, some of which have been completed.
- 2.4** The overall aim of the Strategy is to prevent homelessness at the earliest opportunity in order to reduce the pressure on both service users and the support services across the Vale of Glamorgan, the support is accessible and continues to be monitored to identify any future challenges early.
- 2.5** Between 1st April 2019 and 1st February 2020, the Council's Housing Solutions Team has been able to prevent 84% of households from becoming homeless which relieves the pressure on other resources such as temporary accommodation.
- 2.6** There is also a need to ensure that the Council's front line housing staff, as well as the staff of the Council's Supporting People third sector support provider partners have the tools and knowledge to provide the required support and advice to successfully prevent homelessness.
- 2.7** For this reason, a number of actions were identified, including the need to develop a bespoke staff induction and training package in liaison with Shelter Cymru which has now been completed. This will be kept updated to comply with any changes in Legislation or Policy requirements.
- 2.8** The Housing Solutions Services staff/partners work shadowing initiatives are progressing very positively. Staff from Probation, Pobl and Platform now have a presence in the Housing Solutions Team to provide support to staff and clients which has resulted in improved working relationships.
- 2.9** Progress has been made with colleagues in the Prison Service and arrangements made for staff shadowing, the first of which took place in October 2019 with Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Cardiff and January 2020 with HMP Parc. Arrangements are currently being made to visit HMP Usk in the near future. The visits to date have proved invaluable to staff in helping them to understand the challenges each team faces and those of prisoners on release.
- 2.10** Significant progress continues to be made in the Vale of Glamorgan on homelessness prevention and this was evident in the Welsh Government statistical report published in August 2019, which confirmed that the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Solutions Service was the top performing Council in Wales for homelessness prevention in 2018/19.
- 2.11** To build on this prevention success, the Service has put in place a wide range of ways households can access the support, information and advice to assist them. Information is available on the Council's webpages and service users are provided with a comprehensive information pack when they access the service. Drop-in surgeries are available throughout the Vale of Glamorgan for service

users to obtain advice and support. These are advertised on social media and in key public buildings across the County. In April 2020 a 'One Stop Shop' is also due to open in Holton Road, Barry providing housing advice and assistance to all members of the public.

- 2.12** Work continues to develop the housing opportunities in the private rented sector (PRS), and between April and December 2019, 160 tenancies were either saved or newly secured within this tenure. Officials from Welsh Government recently visited the Housing Solutions Team to discuss the good practice initiatives being delivered to both clients and landlords in the Vale of Glamorgan, including the very well attended local Landlord Forum facilitated by the Council, all of which was being reported back to the Minister for Housing and Local Government.
- 2.13** In response to private landlords concerns that whilst their tenants were able to access support, they were not able to receive support to manage their tenancies, the Housing Solutions and Supporting People Services have recently introduced two new private rented sector support officers to assist landlords and to encourage them to continue to work with the Council and to expand their portfolios.
- 2.14** Youth homelessness is also very high on the agenda in the Vale of Glamorgan and through a successful Welsh Government funding bid, the Council has introduced the Emphasis Project in partnership with Llamau. This service has developed links with all secondary schools across the Vale of Glamorgan and provides structured homelessness and support awareness sessions to the pupils. Through these sessions, teaching staff are also now able to recognise the signs of potential homelessness and where to signpost pupils and their families for support.
- 2.15** Following the publication of the recent LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales Report 'Out of The Door' additional actions have been added to the Homelessness Prevention Strategy Action Plan in order to meet the recommendations and to deliver the required outcomes for these young people.
- 2.16** Attached at Appendix 1 is the updated action plan containing full progress made to date since the adoption of the Strategy.

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 will support vulnerable people to obtain 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 Homelessness Prevention Strategy will be continually reviewed working closely alongside the Supporting People Local Planning Group and endorsed by the Regional Collaborative Committee. 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, ensuring that homelessness services remain appropriate. This also gives

the Council the opportunity to develop new services where required with our 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 needs. In addition, the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has been designed to help encourage households in need to take responsibility for their housing circumstances and help manage the options and solutions available to them. Support and assistance are provided by the services involved to enable them to solve problems themselves in the future. The key message delivered by the Homelessness Service and the Supporting People Programme is "doing with" rather than "doing for" the service user in order to reduce dependency on services and enable the service user to live independently in the future.
- 3.4** Working in a collaborative way - the Council's Homelessness Prevention Strategy places collaboration and coproduction at its core through the consultation process undertaken to develop it and the ongoing integration with the Supporting People 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 Homelessness Prevention Action Plan 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. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 4.1** There are no direct resource implications associated with this report. The Strategy is being delivered within existing departmental resources which include the Housing Support Grant (HSG) received from Welsh Government.

Employment

- 4.2** There is a statutory requirement on the Vale of Glamorgan Council to ensure appropriately experienced staff are in place to meet the statutory duties within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Legal (Including Equalities)

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

5. Background Papers

Appendix 1 - Housing (Wales) Act 2014 & Code of Guidance

Operational Delivery Update Plan (Appendix 1)

High priority actions – YR 1 and YR 2 of Strategy
 Medium priority actions – YR 2 and YR 3 of Strategy
 Low priority actions – YR 3 and YR 4 of Strategy

- To provide a robust and targeted homelessness prevention service

Ref.	Action	Priority	RAG Status	Progress
A001	Undertake a feasibility study to determine costs of a Bespoke IT system	Low	A	Tender opportunity through Sell2 Wales in June 2020 with aim to appoint preferred supplier by the end of September 2020. New systems to be implemented over the following 18 months.
A002	Ensure the Council continues to meet its statutory Homelessness obligations as stipulated within the Housing (Wales) Act 2014	High	A	Homelessness Statists for Qtr. 1 completed and submitted to Welsh Government - on-going action. Welsh Governments National Statistics Department's annual homelessness report published August 2019 which is a league table on homelessness prevention performance across Wales confirms that the Vale of Glamorgan Housing Solutions Service is the top performer for 18/19 with 82% of households prevented from becoming homeless. Action to continue throughout strategy
A003	Develop a robust hospital discharge process for homelessness clients who do not meet the criteria for the Discharge Solutions Service	High	A	An initial meeting has taken place with practitioners working in the Mental Health Wards in Llandough Hospital to determine the required communication prior to a patient being discharged when homeless. On track to be completed by April 2020
A004	Formulate a demand led training and induction programme for front line staff.	High	A	Draft Staff training and induction tool developed with a Staff consultation day arranged for February 2020.
A005	Maintain close working relationships with all relevant agencies	High	A	Shadowing opportunities have been made available to partners, with a more formal plan in development. Shadowing discussions continue and as a result of this initiative the South Wales Probation Service now base themselves in the office every Friday afternoon. Initiatives have also commenced for prison staff to shadow housing staff and this will be replicated by housing staff visiting HMP Parc, Cardiff & Usk over the next 6 months. This action to continue to expand through the strategy
A006	Analyse the current equality monitoring data being captured	Medium	A	Annual data collated and submitted to Equalities Team Currently capturing data for 19/20

A007	Housing Support Grant (HSG) to continue to fund Homeless Prevention Services	High	A	HSG consultation meetings are ongoing with Welsh Government to develop new grant monitoring and reporting framework. The HSG Spend Plan has also been submitted to Welsh Government for 20/21. Action completed for 19/20
A008	Examine Scottish Legislation to support potential amendments to current Welsh Legislation	Medium	A	Desktop analysis of the Scottish Legislation in relation to the impacts of the removal of priority need in 2012 carried out. Telephone discussions also held initially with South Ayrshire Council, chosen due to its similar size to that of the Vale of Glamorgan have also taken place. Impact report produced and findings being analysed.

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

Ref.	Action	Target date	RAG Status	Progress
A009	Develop Rolling Homes4u advert	High	A	On track. Equality Impact Assessment completed for the first stage of the process which is to request Cabinet approval in March 2020 for the current advert to be produced weekly as an on-line advertisement, whilst taking into account the Vale's more vulnerable applicants and their digital abilities. Anticipated commencement of this first stage May 2020 following Cabinet approval and appropriate notice initiatives.
A010	Explore the possibility of developing Pilot Tenancy Ready Training opportunities within HMP Cardiff	High	A	Meeting held with Welsh Government in January 2020 to progress this following a request to deliver a pilot project alongside Welsh Government and Cardiff CC before expansion across Wales. Awaiting further details from Welsh Government. The pilot will also help develop a new risk assessment and information sharing tool between Prisons, Probation, Housing and other key agencies. On track for completion by June 2020
A011	Maximise the use of social media	High	A	Meeting held with Council's Communications Team in September, and Communications Team investigating options particularly for Facebook as this will also support the Housing Solutions Team with case management. On track to be completed by April 2020

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

Ref.	Action	Target date	RAG Status	Progress
A012	To adhere to the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act (VAWDASV)	High	A	Ongoing. Regular multi-agency meetings continue which include the statutory and third sector organisations to review progress on delivering the regional strategy.
A013	Review of supported accommodation services	High	A	Consultation event held in June. Reviews of individual projects underway and ongoing in accordance with the Supporting People Programme Grant Guidance. As a result of the review and legislation emphasis will be to review domestic abuse and mental health provisions. All other support contracts will continue to be reviewed in accordance with Supporting People Programme guidance.
A014	Develop strategy for non- engagement within Supporting People Projects.	High	A	Initial meetings have taken place with Supporting People providers including Pobl and Llamau. Information gathered following meetings and draft report underway to inform new policy.
A015	Analyse the support needs of clients in Temporary Accommodation	High	A	Initial discussions held between Supporting People Coordinator & Housing Solutions Manager to consider introduction of a new support initiative where residents within shared temporary accommodation receive support from the same provider to improve consistency and communication. Housing Related Support (HRS) form to be completed with all temporarily accommodated households.
A016	Explore the need for a 24hr supported accommodation service for clients with mental health issues.	Medium	A	Initial revenue costings received from current support provider in order to commence assessment of viability. Action to be included within Review of Supported Accommodation.
A017	Explore the feasibility of dedicated Support workers for all temporary accommodation households	Medium	A	This work will now form part of the temporary accommodation analysis action above following the identification of support needs.

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

Ref.	Action	Target date	RAG Status	Progress
A018	Further develop working relationships and initiatives to expand the opportunities within the Private Rented Sector (PRS)	High	A	Quarterly Landlord Forum meetings arranged for the next 12 months. Most recent Forum was attended by over 55 landlords. New forum structure developed in discussions with landlords and will now involve additional time for networking. Welsh Government has also acknowledged the Housing Solutions initiatives within the private rented sector and visited the Service on 30 th Jan to further explore these and learn from what the Council is delivering.
A021	Continue our work with partners to provide appropriate accommodation and support services for particular vulnerable groups	High	A	This work continues in accordance with Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Supporting People Programme Guidance (for support services) in line with resources and demands. Action to continue throughout strategy
A022	To support the recommendations from the LGBTQ+ Youth Homelessness in Wales report 'Out on The Streets	High	A	Meeting being arranged to meet with Stonewall to ensure the service is fully compliant with the recommendations of the report

- **Completed Strategy Actions**

A019	Develop and implement a Supporting People Gateway to create a single point of access to all housing related support services	High	G	Completed. Gateway now exists for all support services funded by the Supporting People Programme with a clear referral and monitoring framework in place.
A020	Request that the Regional Collaborative Committee (RCC) for Supporting People co-opt a representative from each of the homelessness services in the Vale of Cardiff onto the Committee	Low	G	Completed. Request declined by RCC as Local Authority representatives from Housing already on RCC and able to update homelessness staff.

A023	Develop a dedicated support service for the private rented sector	High	G	Completed. Two new dedicated officers commissioned through the Supporting People Programme introduced specifically to increase the support available to private rented sector (PRS) landlords in addition to the support available for PRS tenants. Welsh Government also very interested in this initiative and it was discussed during their visit on 30 th Jan.
A024	Develop Youth Homelessness & Early Homelessness Prevention/Intervention services	High	G	Completed. Funding bid successful to develop the Emphasis project that delivers homelessness prevention advice within the secondary schools across the Vale of Glamorgan. Youth Services have also funded a part time post to help expand and deliver services to young people in all Vale of Glamorgan Secondary Schools.
A025	Develop a standard service 'promise' to demonstrate commitment to the client	High	G	Completed. The 'Promise' is a two-way agreement signed by both the case worker and client which sets out the appropriate standards of behaviour and respect expected by each party.
A026	Ensure service delivery and customer engagement complies with Welsh Language standards	High	G	Completed. All staff are encouraged to learn Welsh and allowed time to attend courses. All public documents/forms have been translated and are available in Welsh on request. All currently used documents have been translated in accordance with the legislation
A027	Promote and provide opportunities for staff to access Welsh language courses.	Medium	G	All staff are encouraged to learn Welsh and allowed time to attend courses. Completed with existing staff
A028	Develop close working relationships with DWP and Vale wide Job Centre's	High	G	Completed. Close working relationships have now been forged with DWP and quarterly update meetings held and now an embedded process.
	Review & Improve the quality and range of information provided by the Housing Solutions team e.g. web site links, contact details of external organisations.	High	G	Completed. New documents developed to assist clients on line. Information also provided on the Council's website on services available from partner agencies and 'drop in' support services across the Vale. This information will continue to be reviewed and kept up to date.
A029	Improve the quality and range of information provided by the Housing Solutions Service on the Council's website.	High	G	Completed. Website now updated and current.
A030	Residents are aware of the drop-in support services that are available throughout the Vale	High	G	Completed. Leaflets produced and distributed at events and available at key public venues across the Vale of Glamorgan. Information also available via Council's web pages and the Council's Supporting People inbox on auto reply.

A031	Continue to strengthen relationships with RSL's	High	G	Completed. Homes4U Steering Group now meets quarterly. Quarterly meetings also arranged for front line Homes4U officers. These meetings continue and is now an embedded action
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