

## Health, Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee

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Meeting Venue  
**Council Chamber - County Hall,  
Llandrindod Wells, Powys**

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Meeting Date  
**Wednesday, 3 October 2018**

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Meeting Time  
**10.00 am**

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For further information please contact  
**Wyn Richards**  
wyn.richards@powys.gov.uk



County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LG

25.09.2018

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The use of Welsh by participants is welcomed. If you wish to use Welsh please inform us by noon, two working days before the meeting

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### AGENDA

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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To receive apologies for absence.

<b>2.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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To receive declarations of interest from Members.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIPS</b>
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To receive disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

(NB: Members are reminded that under Section 78 Members having been given a prohibited party whip cannot vote on a matter before the Committee.)

<b>4.</b>	<b>HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY</b>
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To receive and consider the report of the Head of Housing, together with the appendices.

(Pages 3 - 84)

<b>5.</b>	<b>LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE STRATEGY</b>
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To receive and consider the report of the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection together with appendices.  
(Pages 85 - 116)

<b>6.</b>	<b>WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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To consider the scrutiny work programme.  
(Pages 117 - 124)

**Cyngor Sir Powys / Powys County Council**  
**Health, Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> October, 2018**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** *Head of Housing*

**SUBJECT:** Powys Homelessness Review and Strategy

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**REPORT FOR:** **Committee Briefing**

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**1. Background**

- 1.1 Under Section 50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, local authorities in Wales are required to review their homelessness prevention services and produce a strategy for the following four years, guided by an Action Plan.
- 1.2 The review of homelessness services in Powys involved discussion and liaison with colleagues within the County Council, such as Adult Social Care, Children's Services, the Youth Service, as well as with partners such as housing associations, Powys Teaching Health Board, Criminal Justice, and third sector support and advice services
- 1.3 The review has identified priorities for the Powys Homelessness Action Plan which are:
  - **The Development of an IT solution to record and manage homelessness applications**
    - **The development of a partnership approach with SP funded agencies (Support People Fund), HMOO's (Housing Management and Options Officers), HPHOO's (Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options Officers), prevention hubs and community connectors**
    - **To reflect the greater demand being placed on the private rented sector, allocating extra resources accordingly**
    - **Develop intensive and assertive support services for those most difficult to house**
    - **Explore the co-location of staff within Job Centre Plus to assist households through the transition on to Universal Credit**
- 1.4 Following confirmation from Welsh Government that Authorities could work on a regional basis to develop their Strategies (provided that each local authority developed its own Action Plan(s)), Powys joined with Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire to develop an over-arching regional Homelessness Strategy.

**2. The review of homelessness and the development of a Homelessness Action Plan for Powys and a regional Homelessness Strategy**

- 2.1 Work on the review of homelessness services commenced in 2016/2017. A Project Board was established to identify workstreams, however the Board meetings were poorly attended by internal partners.
- 2.2 As part of the work of the review the Housing Service commissioned a “Mystery Shopper” exercise undertaken by Shelter Cymru in March 2017. This exercise allowed us to test how the service responded to persons presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness. A copy of the report is attached at appendix 1.
- 2.3 To provide additional capacity for the Housing Service and to drive the review further forward, an independent consultant (Chris Price former Homelessness Advisor to the Welsh Local Government Association) was commissioned in early 2018, to lead the review process and the development of the local homelessness action plan.
- 2.4 A series of Homelessness Workshops have been carried out between late 2017 and June 2018, where internal and external partners have attended to learn more about homelessness issues in Powys and provide their views into the homelessness review – this has allowed partners voices and ideas to be taken account of during the production of the draft review. A copy of the review is attached at appendix 2.
- 2.5 An Action Plan for delivering the priorities identified during the Review process has been developed and this will enable a planned approach to developing and implementing the priorities from the Review. A copy of the Action Plan is attached at appendix 3.
- 2.6 The Regional Homelessness Strategy has been developed by Chris Price on behalf of the 4 mid and west Wales authorities. A copy of the draft strategy is attached at appendix 4.

**3. Scrutiny Committee Comments and Observations**

- 3.1 The Housing Service will be taking the homelessness review, local action plan and regional homelessness strategy to Cabinet in November for approval and would wish to receive the comments of the Health Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee on each of the documents.



APPENDIX 1 -  
Shelter Mystery Sho|



Appendix 2 Powys  
Homelessness Revie



Appendix 3 Powys  
Action Plan v2.pdf



Appendix 4 Dyfed  
Powys Draft Strateg

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## **Mystery Shop Exercise of Powys County Council Housing Services by the Take Notice Project**

**April 2017**

### **1.0 Introduction**

During March 2017, Shelter Cymru's Take Notice Project members were invited to undertake a Mystery Shop review of the homelessness services provided by Powys County Council. The council has a duty to carry out assessments for customers that are eligible for help, homeless or in danger of losing their home.

### **1.1 Background**

Five Take Notice Members who all have direct experience of homelessness or housing crisis agreed to play the role of Mystery Shopper for the task and worked closely with Shelter Cymru's Research Team. They represented a broad spectrum of experience of using local authority housing or homelessness services from all over Wales. This peer led approach aimed to give the local authority an insight into the effectiveness of their housing service from the perspective of the service user.

### **2.0 Method**

The Research Team were told in advance of the task that the vast majority of initial contact between Housing Services and clients is via the phone. Powys County Council has one general telephone number for Housing Services. When a client rings to seek homelessness assistance from the local authority, the call is answered by a First Contact Officer (FCO) who takes initial information and then transfers the case immediately to the Duty Housing Management and Options Officer (DHMOO) if it is felt that the customer needs urgent assistance and/or are homeless at that point in time. Other, less urgent, cases are passed to the Housing Management and Options Officer (HMOO) to make contact with the customer via phone to follow up or make an appointment and undertake a S62 assessment.

None of the Take Notice Project members are resident in Powys so it was agreed that they would either make the call from out of county or travel to visit one of the offices. In order to avoid the DHMOOs having to get involved we agreed to largely keep the scenarios in the realm of preventative homelessness, with the exception of

two scenarios where a member was homeless/ sofa surfing at the time of the visit/phone call. Each of the five scenarios used were based on the Mystery Shopper's real experience of homelessness but with an additional element of local connection<sup>1</sup>.

### *Locations*

It was agreed between the Research Team and Powys County Council that all five of the county council offices were part of the exercise with both face to face and telephone presentations. The mystery shops took place at the following offices:

Ystradgynlais - This involved a face to face presentation

Llandrindod Wells - This involved a telephone call presentation

Welshpool - This involved a face to face presentation

Brecon - This involved a telephone call presentation

Newtown - This involved a telephone call presentation

### *Process*

The Research Team worked with Powys County Council to develop scenarios that each Take Notice Member would present to Housing Service. Take Notice members undertook Mystery Shopping training with experienced members of the Research Team in advance of their presentation.

Each Take Notice Project member was issued with the following:

- A face to face or telephone presentation quick sheet (questionnaire)
- A face to face or telephone presentation expanded sheet (questionnaire)
- A scenario describing their agreed circumstances for presentation
- A list of possible questions they could be asked during the call/visit

All materials used were agreed with Powys County Council before use to ensure that the resulting feedback captured the required information.

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<sup>1</sup> Shoppers stated they wanted to move to Powys for family related reasons



### *Data collection*

There were two stages of data collection; the first was immediately after the presentation in the form of a quick contact sheet and at a later date in the form of a detailed questionnaire. Questions varied depending on whether the presentation was face to face or via the telephone.

The questionnaires were made up of: binary yes/no questions; Likert rating scales where members were asked to rate their agreement with particular statements; and open ended 'further comments' boxes where members were asked to elaborate on their answers. All questionnaires used for the task are attached in the Appendix.

**Face to face contact quick sheet:** Mystery shoppers were asked to complete this form as soon as their presentation was complete to help record their immediate feelings about the visit.

**Telephone contact quick sheet:** Mystery shoppers were asked to complete this form as soon as their presentation was complete to help record their immediate feelings about the visit.

**Telephone contact detailed questionnaire:** Participants were asked to complete this questionnaire when they returned home or once they had time to think about the service they had received.

### *Limitations*

As discussed two mystery shops were carried out face to face with participants presenting at the Welshpool and Ystradgynlais offices. However, in both of these cases the Mystery Shoppers were not seen by a HMOO and were told to make their applications via the general telephone number instead. Both mystery shoppers followed this instruction and made their presentations by phone.

## **3.0 Results**

This chapter will now discuss the results of the mystery shopping exercise; it will begin by focussing on the findings from the face to face presentations and then move on to explore the results from both the telephone quick sheet and detailed questionnaires. Both sections will highlight strengths and areas for improvement. A

summary of the results can be found in the Appendix along with the raw data/comments made by our Mystery Shoppers.

### **3.1 Face to Face presentation**

The two Mystery Shoppers who presented face to face were not seen by a HMOO and were told to make their applications via the general telephone number instead. Both Mystery Shoppers followed this instruction and made the rest of their presentation by phone.

#### *Strengths*

Both Mystery Shoppers were dealt with quickly which meant that they were not waiting in the reception area for a long time. There was also a good level of information regarding Local Authority housing and homelessness services on display in the form of posters and leaflets. Welshpool also had information regarding other services available in the area.

#### *Areas for improvement*

Both Mystery Shoppers found the respective offices difficult to find as they were not easily identifiable from the outside.

*“There was only a small Powys County Council sign saying ‘reception’, it did not say Housing or Housing Department”*

The Ystradgynlais office had a good level of information regarding Local Authority services but there was no information highlighting other services in the area.

As noted, the two Mystery Shoppers who tried to make a homelessness application on a face to face basis were turned away from the offices that they had approached. Both participants were disappointed that this was the case and requested whether it really was not possible to see someone on that day citing difficulties such as: having travelled a significant distance to attend on that day, that they would not be able to get a lift to do so again and that they had nowhere to stay that night.

In both instances they were told that the only option was to make the application by phone and both were left waiting for a return phone call. However, some service users might need extra support and a face to face meeting might be better suited to their needs than a telephone call for a number of reasons including communication needs and to help facilitate rapport.

### 3.2 Telephone presentation

The phone call of one of the Mystery Shoppers was cut off after listening to the declaration. The impression the shopper received of the two call handlers they spoke to were very different. Therefore, they chose to evaluate both call handlers separately to reflect the two different experiences.

Due to personal circumstances one of the project members only answered the telephone quick sheet and was not able to answer the expanded sheet.

The overall number of respondents for the telephone quick sheet questionnaires was six and the overall number of respondents for the expanded telephone questionnaires was five.

#### *Strengths*

Some participants felt that they had received a genuinely helpful and empathetic service from the FCOs, despite the fact that no actual advice or information was given in relation to their housing situations. They praised the fact that they were properly listened to, given time to explain their situation and spoken to in a friendly and polite manner. They did not feel that the lack of actual housing advice given was an issue in the cases when it was properly explained that the FCOs are a 'triage' service. In these instances higher levels of satisfaction with the overall experience were expressed than when this was not explained to the service user.

*"Couldn't really ask for more, very polite, not rushed in them asking me questions and gave me time to answer"*

There were commendations given to the fact that bilingual options were offered in five out of the six cases. In addition, four out of five of the members' communication needs were asked about and established.

*"Yes, went through the whole gamut of communication difficulties, physical disabilities or any special needs"*

Although the specific questions asked in the questionnaires did not elicit this information directly, participants also shared their feelings about the fact that they were not asked about local connection. They were pleased about this because it meant that they weren't turned away from the service simply because they were not currently resident in the county. None of the participants were told to return to their own county homelessness teams for assistance.

#### *Areas for improvement*

Whilst some participants felt that they were listened to with respect and understanding, this was not the case for all Mystery Shoppers and at the opposite

end of the spectrum participants felt that their situation/call was received disinterestedly and that the call handlers were simply “going through the motions”.

“I felt as though the call was boring for the contact. Perhaps apathy would be the right word. The contact was polite but uninterested”.

Only one out of the five members rated the staff member they spoke to as knowledgeable and helpful with some Mystery Shoppers recognising that being knowledgeable was not necessarily the remit of the FCO.

“the officer was very ‘matter of fact’ about my application and didn’t ask any questions outside of the basics and what was minimally required to complete the call”.

When making the presentation via telephone, the average time spent on the call from start to finish was 12 minutes. Four minutes on average was spent waiting for the call to be answered. Fifty per cent of the Mystery Shoppers had their calls transferred to another person during the call. The members raised some concerns regarding the practicality and affordability of this.

“It took eight minutes to be answered [when on hold], way too long if I was on a pay to go mobile phone I would have been panicking about credit. When I finally spoke to someone, I was transferred to another person and it took another three or four minutes to go through. Not once did anybody enquire about me being able to afford the call”

None of the Mystery Shoppers got beyond the FCO. This is despite the fact that in two of the scenarios used, the individual was already homeless and sofa-surfing. The amount of time they were told they would need to wait for a return phone call varied from “a couple of days” to “a couple of weeks”. Only two out of five of the Mystery Shoppers understood what the council were going to do next, and why. Participants stated that this left them feeling uncertain about what would happen next.

“All I was told was that someone would be in touch with me. I had to ask for the timescale and was told that due to the department being busy it could take a week or so. I was left feeling confused and uninformed. I was neither told I would receive help or that I wouldn’t, leading me to worry about what I should be doing next and if the housing department couldn’t help, who would?”

Despite some scenarios incorporating additional support needs (examples included mental ill health, substance misuse, physical health needs) there was a lack of signposting to other agencies that might be able to assist in all of the cases. The Mystery Shoppers expressed significant disappointment with this and felt that this was not beyond the remit of the FCOs.

“At no point was I signposted to any other organisation even when I explained about my disabilities and being a single parent....no practical help was given or offered”

Mystery Shoppers felt that any advice or signposting would have been crucial during the time that they were going to have to wait for a call back. People are willing to help themselves and seek other advice and support but need to be told what these alternative services are and how they can contact them.

“With my own knowledge of other agencies I was surprised that there was no signposting, even when I mentioned my health problems and how this situation was negatively affecting me with anxiety”.

In five out of six cases the name of the call handler was not offered and only volunteered when asked for. The participants generally felt that they should not have had to ask for this information. If people know who they are talking to it makes the call feel more personal, they would also know who to ask for if they needed to ring back and contact the council again. No contact information was provided for five out of the six shoppers to follow up their case.

“I believe they were going to call me back within a couple of days but I don’t know any more than that at this point”

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The experiences of the Mystery Shoppers varied considerably and suggest that there may be a lack of consistency across the service. Some Mystery Shoppers felt that they had received a helpful and empathetic service from the FCOs giving praise to the fact that they were properly listened to, given time to explain their situation and spoken to in a friendly and polite manner. They did not feel that the lack of actual housing advice given was an issue in the cases when it was properly explained that the FCOs are a ‘triage’ service. In these instances higher levels of satisfaction with the overall experience were expressed than when this was not explained.

However, others felt that, although they were not treated disrespectfully, they did not receive any helpful information or guidance on their current housing crisis.

It is hoped that the feedback given in this report is considered constructive and valuable. The Take Notice Project members would be willing to follow up this exercise and discuss findings and their experiences directly to housing staff and managers in Powys County Council on request.

## 5.0 Recommendations

- Consistent responses from call handlers - calls should be handled sensitively and compassionately. Including housing staff providing names and contact details for clients to follow up their case.
- Provision for face to face presentations - Telephone presentations may not be suitable or appropriate in every circumstance and efforts should be made to facilitate and respond adequately to direct presentations.
- Urgent cases are referred - In cases where an individual is homeless a referral should be made to a DHMOO to ensure a timely response.
- More clarity around next steps – for all applicants, including those threatened with homelessness, more certainty needed around call-back times, and what to do if their situation changes or becomes more serious in the meantime.
- Signposting - Where a client presents with other additional support needs housing staff should be able to signpost them to other relevant sources of support and advice or to agencies who may be able to assist with the housing crisis itself.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### ***Face to face contact quick sheet results***

(Two mystery shops were carried out face to face with participants presenting at Welshpool and Ystradgynlais offices. However please note that in both these cases the mystery shoppers were not seen by a housing officer and were told to make their applications by phone instead. Both mystery shoppers followed this instruction and made their presentations by phone.

Therefore the results below show their findings only up to question 7 of the first questionnaire as the remaining questions were not applicable having not seen a housing officer).

#### **1. Was the office easy to find?**

Yes = 0

No = 2

**Sample feedback:**

“There was only a small Powys County Council sign saying ‘reception’, it did not say Housing or Housing Department”

**2. How long were you waiting to be seen (approximately)?**

The average wait time was 2 ½ minutes before the mystery shopper was seen by the receptionist.

**3. Was the office environment welcoming and comfortable?**

Yes 1

No 1

**4. Was the officer wearing a name badge?**

Yes = 0

No = 1

N/A = 1 “I did not speak to a housing officer, just the receptionist”

**5. How long did your presentation last? (approximately) (count from the moment you saw the officer until you left the building, do not include the time you spent waiting for your appointment in reception)**

Neither participant saw a housing officer, no presentation took place, however each person said that they were in reception for approximately 1-2 minutes.

**6. Were there leaflets or posters about the local authority housing and homelessness service available in the reception area?**

Yes = 2

No = 0

**7. Were there leaflets or posters about other local services available in the reception area?**

Yes = 1

No = 1

## **Appendix 2**

### ***Telephone contact quick sheet***

#### **1. Was the contact information for Powys County Council's Housing Service easy to find?**

Yes = 6

No = 0

#### **2. How long did you wait on the phone before your call was answered (approximately)?**

The average wait time was 4 mins.

#### **Sample feedback**

"Over 5 minutes before I spoke to somebody, it felt like a long time; a message told me as soon as somebody is free I will speak to them but not which place I am in the queue."

#### **3. Were you given the option for your call to be dealt with in both English and Welsh?**

Yes = 5

No = 1

#### **Sample feedback**

"This was difficult to answer as I was asked whether I speak Welsh (which I said yes) but not if I wanted to conduct the interview in Welsh".

#### **4. Did the person who took your call tell you their name?**

Yes = 1

No = 5

#### **Sample feedback:**

"Did so when asked"

"I didn't ask so wasn't told the name"



- 5. How long did the phone call last (approximately)? (count from the moment your call was answered to until you put the phone down, do not include the time you spent waiting for the call to be answered).**

The average time spent on the phone was 12 minutes (the shortest call was 4 minutes, the longest was 31 minutes).

**Sample feedback:**

“The 31 minutes that the call took was way too long, the long silences I experienced made me feel insecure with no explanation as to why until the call ended. Though the adviser was polite there was no empathy or curiosity as to why I was in this situation and I had to stop myself from prompting the adviser too much as it would have given away how much I really did know about procedure. I will reiterate that if this had been a genuine call and that I’d been using a pay as you go mobile phone, I wouldn’t have been able to continue the call due to how long it took over all which was 39 minutes”

- 6. Was your call transferred to another person?**

Yes = 3

No = 3

- 7. Did the housing officer speak to you with courtesy and respect?**

Yes = 3

No = 3

**Sample feedback:**

“the lady explained to me that all she can do is take my information”

- 8. Did you feel that the housing officer you spoke to listened to you and let you explain your situation in full?**

Yes = 3

No = 3

- 9. Did you feel that the staff member you spoke to was knowledgeable and helpful?**

Yes = 1

No = 3

N/A = 2 (two mystery shoppers answered this question as not applicable “I can’t judge as I would have to wait for a call back”).

**10. Were you asked whether you had any language or communication needs?**

Yes = 4

No = 1

(one mystery shopper did not answer this question because they could not remember whether they were asked)

**11. Were you told about or signposted to any other services that could help you?**

Yes = 1

No = 5

**12. Was the information you were given easy to understand?**

Yes = 3

No = 1

N/A = 2 (two mystery shoppers answered this question as not applicable "what information? They just took my details")

**13. Did the staff member explain how the authority can or cannot help you?**

Yes = 1

No = 4

N/A = 1 (one mystery shoppers answered this question as not applicable "no explanation as I guess most information is supposed to follow in the second call")

**14. Were you given a timescale for anything that would happen next? (e.g follow up appointment, call back, when a decision would be made?)**

Yes = 6

No = 0

**15. Were Personal Housing Plans mentioned to you?\*** only 5 people answered this question

Yes = 5

No = 0

**16. Were you provided with contact details from someone at the authority for follow up queries?**

Yes = 1

No = 5

**17. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements:**

**I found the overall experience positive:**

**Scores**

**Sample feedback**

totally agree = 2

"I started my journey, she was friendly"

agree = 0

neither agree nor disagree = 2

disagree = 1

totally disagree = 1

**I would recommend the service to others:**

**Scores**

**Sample feedback**

totally agree = 0

agree = 1

neither agree nor disagree = 3

"don't feel as if I received a full service"

disagree = 1

totally disagree = 1

**Staff are friendly and polite**

**Scores**

**Sample feedback**

totally agree = 3

agree = 1

neither agree nor disagree = 2

disagree = 0

totally disagree = 0

**Staff gave me the information I needed:**

**Scores**

totally agree = 0

agree = 1

neither agree nor disagree = 2

disagree = 1

totally disagree = 1

**Sample feedback**

## Appendix 3

### *Telephone contact detailed questionnaire*

**1. Tell us about your initial experience of making the phone call (e.g. how did you feel about the amount of time it took for your call to be answered, was it appropriate? Did you find the phone numbers easily? If you were transferred to a second person did you have to explain your situation a second time?)**

“My call was answered and dealt with quite quickly. I was transferred to a housing officer that did not give her name; I was only asked very basic questions regarding my application (name, DOB, current housing situation, sexual preference). I wasn’t asked anything about the wider issues regarding my situation. I was given no advice or signposting to other services that may help me. I was told to expect a call back sometime in the next few days. The call was ended there.”

“It took 8 minutes to be answered, way too long if I was on a pay to go mobile phone I would have been panicking about credit. When I finally spoke to someone, I was transferred to another person and it took another 3 or 4 mins to go through. Not once did anybody enquire about me being able to afford the call. At one point, during the initial 8 minutes, I thought about hanging up and calling again but realised that if I was using a mobile phone, it would end up costing me a lot more, I even wondered if I’d actually be spoken to. When I did speak to someone, my request was met with confusion, the contact asked if I wanted to speak to a benefits adviser even though I quite clearly asked about an impending eviction and what I could do about it. I was transferred to another person which as I stated earlier took another 3 or 4 minutes, more time that I was worried about and felt like my call wasn’t very important. I explained myself a second time when the call was answered but very minimal questions were asked.”

“The phone number for PCC housing was actually given to me by a member of staff at the Welshpool office but it is very easy to find using a search online. Phone call was answered very quickly and after a few questions I was transferred to an automated recording to do with ‘terms and conditions’ type stuff, rules and regs, it was explained before being transferred that I may be speaking to a different person once this automated part of call was over, and it was a different person as it happens. I did have to repeat a few bits of info I’d already given but this wasn’t a drama - name, address, DOB and my NI number”.

“I asked the person whether I was speaking to a housing officer, she replied ‘this is the housing department.’ I then asked her again whether she was a housing officer and she replied ‘yes’. She gave me her name when asked. She did not interrupt the narrative that I was giving but made no response, so it was difficult to ascertain what her response was. I was put through to listen to ‘declaration’, then the line was cut off”.

“This call was made as a result of being cut off. The call handler was helpful and answered all my questions in an open way and explained the process and reassured me that it would be brief”.

## **2. I was spoken to with courtesy and respect**

### **Scores**

### **Sample feedback**

totally agree = 2

“an incredibly warm and empathetic individual who was obviously deploying reflective listening skills, her voice was warmly reassuring”.

agree = 0

“couldn’t really ask for more, very polite, not rushed in them asking me questions and gave me time to answer. Very good I think”.

neither agree nor disagree = 2

“the agent I spoke to was neither disrespectful nor particularly courteous. She spoke in an almost monotone manner”.

“I had to ask her a second time to confirm her professional status, the tone of her voice suggested she was not best pleased...she was not directly rude or actively hostile. When I discovered from the second call that she was not a housing officer I felt that she had been deceptive”.

disagree = 1

“I felt as though the call was boring for the contact. Perhaps apathy would be the right word. The contact was polite but uninterested”.

totally disagree = 0

## **3. I felt confident that the local authority listened to my housing problem and understood my situation**

### **Scores**

### **Sample feedback**

totally agree = 1

“able in very few words to indicate that she had got the gist of my housing crisis”

agree = 1

“the people I spoke to seemed to understand my needs but then left me with – you’ll receive a call in a couple of days”

neither agree nor disagree = 1

“couldn’t gauge this as there were no interruptions to my narrative”

disagree = 1

“I felt as though the housing officer didn’t really care either way about my situation. Once the required

questions were asked, that was the end of her duty to me...I didn't feel listened to at all really.

totally disagree = 1

"I didn't give a full account of my situation as no leading questions were put to me. Again I feel that the contact didn't really care about my circumstances and was just ticking off answers. I had to clarify my situation a few times and even then I was met with silence".

#### **4. The staff members/s I spoke to were knowledgeable and helpful**

##### **Scores**

##### **Sample feedback**

totally agree = 1

"[they] explained the 'triage' process, asked relevant questions in a meaningful way and was able to guide me through the application and reassured me that within two days a housing officer would get back to me. She answered all questions in an open way".

agree = 0

neither agree nor disagree = 2

"The questions were straight from a format...there was no need for anybody to be knowledgeable. All the people I spoke to were very nice though"

disagree = 1

"I was not offered any advice on my situation nor was I signposted to any other services that may help me. The officer told me that I may not be entitled to housing benefit without knowing anything about my circumstances. This worried me".

totally disagree = 1

"at no point was I signposted to any other organisation even when I explained about my disabilities and being a single parent....no practical help was given or offered"

#### **5. I was asked if I had any communication or additional support needs**

##### **Scores**

##### **Sample feedback**

totally agree = 2

"Yes, went through the whole gamut of communication difficulties, physical disabilities or any special needs"

agree = 0

neither agree nor disagree = 1

disagree = 1

"I was asked if I'd like to conduct my application in English or Welsh but wasn't asked about any other needs other than if I was disabled or not"

totally disagree = 1

"I had to mention my disabilities, no questions were asked. I was asked to spell out my medical conditions. I explained that I had dyslexia and dyspraxia, the advisor still expected me to be able to spell out the words"

**5a. If yes, did you feel staff were sensitive to your needs?**

Yes = 1

No = 2

**Sample feedback:**

"Just through the tone of her voice she was displaying to me that she was 'engaged' in my situation".

"the officer was very 'matter of fact' about my application and didn't ask any questions outside of the basics and what was minimally required to complete the call".

**6. I was told of other agencies that might be able to help me and how I could get in contact with them**

**Scores**

**Sample feedback**

totally agree = 0

agree = 0

neither agree nor disagree = 0

disagree = 1

totally disagree = 4

"not at all; with my own knowledge of other agencies I was surprised that there was no signposting, even when I mentioned my health problems and how this situation was negatively affecting me with anxiety".

"I was not offered any other help, not even sign posting to third sector organisations like Mind, Camfan, Citizens advice or Shelter Cymru to name a few that could have helped me in the interim whilst waiting for a call back that could have taken a week or more"



## **7. The verbal advice and information given to me was clear and easy to understand**

### **Scores**

totally agree = 2

agree = 1

neither agree nor disagree = 0

disagree = 0

totally disagree = 2

### **Sample feedback**

“articulate and deployed easy to understand language free of professional jargon”

“Given that this was the very bare minimum at what was going to be an ‘unexplained process’, the answer must be tentatively yes”

“For each question asked and answered a long a long silence ensued leading me to think, at some points, that there was no one at the other end of the phone except when I could hear another advisor taking on the phone to another client about rent debt. I was given no advice or information as to what I should be doing next to help my situation, just questions that took seconds to answer but were so spaced apart that I felt that no-one was there, it was only at the end of the call that the adviser told me there was some computer issues and that was why everything took so long. I felt that my call wasn’t important”

## **8. At the end of the phone call I understood what the council were going to do to help me OR if they were not able to help me the reason why**

### **Scores**

totally agree = 1

agree = 1

neither agree nor disagree = 0

### **Sample feedback**

“Yes, I had been asked where I wanted to live. I was informed that I had met the eligibility criteria for help”.

“All I was told was that someone would be in touch with me. I had to ask for the timescale and was told that due to the department being busy it could take a week or so. I was left feeling confused and uninformed. I was neither told I would receive help or that I wouldn’t, leading me to worry about what I should be doing next and if the housing department couldn’t help, who would?”

disagree = 2

“At the end of the call I was told that someone else would call me sometime over the next few days. That was it.”

totally disagree = 1

“I believe they were going to call me back within a couple of days but I don’t know any more than that at this point”

**9. The Equal Ground Standard states that you should be given correct information. How did the advice, help and information you were given compare to what you were meant to have received?** (please use the scenario correct response to answer this question)

The response from the local authority exceeded my expectations

The response from the local authority met my expectations

The response from the local authority did not meet my expectations

In asking this question it was expected that at least some of the mystery shoppers would speak to a housing officer and that they would then be able to compare the advice and information given with the legally correct information which was provided by our Housing Law Caseworker. However, in all 5 presentations, the mystery shoppers only spoke to the First Contact Officers who took information from the client but did not give housing advice related to their scenario. Therefore we asked the participants not to answer this question.

## **Powys Homelessness Review**

### **Executive Summary**

#### **Purpose & Methodology**

Each local authority in Wales has a duty to undertake a review of how it is preventing and managing homelessness. The purpose of this review is to inform the Powys Homelessness Strategy which will frame the direction for services over the coming years.

The review engaged a wide variety of stakeholders, including those who have used services; those delivering housing services and those who deliver services outside housing, but have direct experience of working with people who are homeless / at threat of homelessness.

#### **The National Context**

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced several new duties in relation to homelessness for local authorities. It brought into law the 'prevention of homelessness' focus which had been the key direction of national policy development over recent years.

This approach focussed on providing services which focussed on finding housing solutions for all households in housing need, rather than processing people through the legal 'homelessness' process.

This reflects a broader national policy direction around areas such as health and social services which aim to put prevention at the heart of services to avoid more costly options.

There is also increasing evidence through international research that the 'traditional' approach to managing homelessness is focussing too much on the point of crisis, rather than on prevention and longer-term support. A recent Welsh Audit Office report concluded that "Local authorities continue to focus on managing people in crisis rather than stop it from happening".

#### **Part 1 - The Duties Introduced**

The first aim of the review was to consider the duties Powys CC have in relation to homelessness and reflect on how effectively they were being met. This involved exploring each duty in the process.

- **Section 60 – The Duty to provide free & accessible housing advice and information**

In considering the effectiveness of meeting this duty, the review first explored information on the Council's website and the process that people use to access housing services when they first want to present a problem.

The review found that the current website offered some legal information but might not be as 'user friendly' as it could be. It highlights the approach taken in Newport,

which allows people to update their housing situation on-line and receive a plan of potential next steps.

To make first contact in Powys a household needs to telephone the 'first contact officer' who will assess the housing situation of the applicant and refer on to Housing Management & Options Officers accordingly. They then respond to the household, depending on the urgency of the case.

A 'mystery shopper' exercise undertaken by Shelter Cymru found some issues with this approach, i.e. people not getting their urgent housing needs met and being left unsure of next steps. Powys has taken steps since these findings to ensure a more effective service. However, it does raise the question in relation to the current response and whether the current IT approach adopted in Newport and other Welsh local authorities would offer a more effective service.

- **Section 62 – The duty to undertake an assessment**

The local authority has a duty to assess every household who could be at threat of homelessness, regardless of any criteria such as whether they are likely to be in priority need or whether they have a local connection.

Currently there are 22 Housing Management and Options Officers (HMOOs), situated in different areas across the County; who as part of their broader housing role undertake these assessments. Additionally, the Service has recently recruited 3 Homelessness Prevention & Housing Options Officers who will work on more in-depth cases.

The review found that the number of these assessments differed quite significantly between areas in Powys. The offices in Newtown and Welshpool undertook 71% of these assessments. The reason for this needs to be considered in more detail, but in relation to developing services the authority needs to reflect on how it targets resources.

- **Section 66 – The duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness**

This duty is again owed to all households, regardless of whether they may be 'priority need' or have a local connection. It expects local authorities to deliver services to all those at threat of homelessness within 56 days and the Council needs to evidence that it has taken 'reasonable steps to prevent it'.

Through analysis of the statistics recorded a high proportion of those presenting at this stage are facing homelessness from the private rented sector. This is higher than the national average and poses the question about whether enough support is available to both tenants and landlords in the sector.

The figures also indicate a low success rate in preventing homelessness at this stage through mediation and financial advice. It was suggested this could be that HMOOs are not recording the work they do effectively. However, it does raise questions about the delivery of these services and whether they are sufficient.

- **Section 73 – The duty to take reasonable steps to alleviate homelessness**

This duty is triggered when it is no longer possible to prevent. Once more, all households are eligible for this assistance. The expectation is that all reasonable steps are taken to house, regardless of the household's priority need or local connection.

At this stage the figures indicate that the private rented sector is used heavily. Evidence from discussions indicates that this is putting significant strain on the sector and if the solution found is not sustainable it can often lead to repeat presentations.

There is also a proportion of households at this stage who are proving very difficult to house. They are likely to be single and will not necessarily meet the priority need criteria. However, they may lead quite chaotic lifestyles involving substance misuse, etc. This group not only prove very difficult to house, but also create high demands on a variety of services; including Health, Social Services and criminal justice.

Feedback suggests that to meet the housing and other needs of this group the authority needs to explore its approach and consider whether it needs to exceed its statutory duties to save costs across agencies. This should be explored in partnership with all relevant agencies, and especially Supporting People funded services.

- **Section 75 – The Duty to House**

This duty applies once all other options have failed and the household is assessed as having a priority need for housing.

Since the introduction of the Act a local authority can now discharge this duty into the private rented sector and this was utilised for 22% of households during 2016-17. This is further evidence of greater demands on this sector.

Feedback from staff suggests that those who reach this stage often have a variety of complex needs, solutions can prove very difficult and a great deal of time is spent in meeting their needs.

To reflect this demand the Council are employing three new Homeless Prevention and Housing Options Officers to undertake detailed casework, support and linking in with other agencies for this group. These posts will need to link and complement local policy intentions to ensure they are deployed most effectively. The Council also have an action plan to reduce the void periods for its own stock.

As part of the review the approach taken to Homelessness was discussed with Shelter Cymru. They have identified a change of approach in the County since the introduction of the Act. They feel that officers are now focussing more on prevention, although they see first-hand the challenges encountered in relation to sourcing appropriate options.

However, they still witness ‘value judgements’ being made by officers and feel the response a household receives does, to some extent, depend on the Council officer that is dealing with case. To remedy this, they suggest more training for officers and to ensure a deeper understanding of the presenting characteristics of some households and the reasons for these.

## **Part 2 – The Local Policy Context**

An overarching vision for services in Powys, (Vision 2025), includes the aim to ensure affordable housing options and both the Powys Public Service Board’s Well Being Plan and the Housing Strategy emphasise the need to develop the type of housing people ‘want’ and is affordable.

To meet objectives contained within these overarching plans and to successfully meet the duties in the Act, the County needs to work in partnership with a variety of service areas. These areas will now be explored;

- **Linking Homeless Prevention with Supporting People Services**

Approximately half of the County’s Supporting People budget is funding services with the primary aim of supporting households to prevent homelessness. This funding plays a key role in meeting the duties within the Housing Act and the Welsh Government have encouraged all authorities to model services to reflect the prevention of homelessness agenda.

The Supporting People Team have undertaken a great deal of work to understand how services can best be delivered and will be re-tendering services this year to develop a locality-based approach to deliver support.

This aims to develop ‘one support service’ in each area of Powys working with the purpose to prevent homelessness and keep people on an ‘even keel’. This might include a variety of agencies, but they will develop ‘local intelligence’ within each area and utilise this to ‘turn off demand’ as early as possible.

Any strategy developed needs to reflect how these locality services can work in partnership with those who are undertaking the statutory function and explore how services can be modelled to best meet needs and meet them early. Effectively, these support services, if delivered early enough can ‘turn off’ demand for the statutory duties.

The other key consideration in relation to Supporting People funded services is to explore how they can be utilised to support those with the most complex needs who are currently so difficult to find solutions for.

The strategy needs to consider how Powys could deliver an assertive /‘Housing First’ type of approach to ensure support services for this group are complementing the work delivered by the newly created Homeless Prevention and Housing Options Officers.

- **The Private Rented Sector**

The Housing Act has allowed local authorities to utilise the private rented sector to a greater degree in discharging their homelessness duties. Discussions suggest this has led to far greater pressures on the sector.

The authority currently employs two members of staff, (Private Rented Sector Development Officer), who work in close partnership with the Welsh Government funded 'Bond Scheme' run by Gwalia Housing Association.

The authority has an extensive 'offer' in relation how it will support landlords who house people who are homeless or potentially homeless. As the use of the private rented sector has increased the demands on staff to meet the needs of landlords have also risen.

The authority has recently appointed a Social Lettings Agency Project Officer for three years who will be exploring the development of a social lettings agency to help meet this demand and any strategy needs to reflect on whether the appropriate resources are in place to meet these ever-increasing demands of the landlords it is working with.

- **Social Housing**

Social housing continues to play a significant role in supporting the Council to meet its housing duties. The role it plays in meeting these duties needs to be considered in light of the current review of the Common Housing Register (CHR). Housing Associations contribute to preventing and alleviating homelessness via the CHR and the current review by Imogen Blood Associates is an opportunity to enhance the contribution associations can make.

The void period in the local authorities own stock needs to be addressed and could alleviate the pressures on the private rented sector.

To assist in meeting the supply the strategy needs to consider the possibility of re-designating some low demand older persons accommodation and consider the development of new single person accommodation to help meet the needs identified.

The role social housing staff could play in the locality teams being delivered by Supporting People, (and, as will be discussed, by Health and Social Services), in relation to preventing homelessness also needs to be considered.

- **Social Services & Health**

The Welsh Government's Social Services and Well Being Act has introduced a far greater emphasis on a preventative approach to delivering health and social services. In light of this the authority is developing an approach through a Health and Care Strategy which focusses on doing 'what matters' for people and delivering it as early as possible.

The strategy has advocated the development of a community hub approach which mirrors the locality services being developed by Supporting People and synergies are being explored and need to be pursued within the homelessness strategy.

The 'Community Health & Well-Being Coordination service is being delivered through PAVO and employs 'Community Connectors' to help people navigate services in every 'hub' in the County. There is potential to work in partnership with this service to deliver early intervention in relation to homelessness and accessing the right support.

- **Children & Young People's Partnership / Young People**

In light of the Social Services and Well Being Act and its emphasis on prevention the Children's and Young People's Partnership has developed a programme of 'Prevention and Early Intervention.

This plan includes the development of locality-based service networks which mirror the approach discussed throughout this document. The Youth Intervention Service is part of this and currently exists to work with young people and is jointly commissioned by Children's Services and Supporting People.

This service works with young people to intervene early and prevent homelessness wherever possible. This service fits ideally with the broader strategic direction and is a good example of how partnership working can be developed.

- **The Introduction of Universal Credit**

Universal Credit is replacing 6 means tested benefits and will be introduced in Powys for all new claimants, and those who experience a change of circumstance, from October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

There are significant concerns the introduction of the benefit will lead to an increase in housing problems, rent arrears and homelessness. The fears centre on the fact the rent element of the benefit will go directly to the tenant, rather than the landlord.

To avoid issues it was agreed with representatives from the Department of Work and Pensions that there was a need to work in partnership to ensure that people are supported and advised early.

The Job Centres in Powys would welcome co-location of advice staff within their offices to tackle potential issues and respond early.

### **Part 3 – Priorities to Consider**

Following on from the analysis undertaken the following priorities have been identified for consideration within any strategy developed;

- **The development of an IT solution to record, manage and self-assess homelessness enquiries, presentations and applications**

The current recording mechanisms remain basic and the authority should explore the use of a comprehensive system to allow them to manage, prioritise and record homelessness cases. There is currently no facility for persons to enquire and self-assess their current circumstances. The authority should work with neighbouring Councils who have adopted existing IT solutions and explore how they could be utilised in Powys



- **The development of a partnership approach with SP funded agencies, prevention hubs and community connectors**

The local policy direction is consistent in adopting a locality approach to ensure services are as accessible as possible, as early as possible. This approach offers opportunities to work in partnership to prevent homelessness and support households early.

The role of Supporting People funded services will be crucial in developing this approach and how their newly commissioned locality teams work effectively together with those Council staff who are undertaking the homelessness function needs to be a priority.

Similarly, the broader policy direction around prevention, early intervention and locality hubs being pursued by Health & Social Services reflects the direction being pursued by Supporting People services and the opportunities to ensure all services can complement the prevention of homelessness agenda.

- **To reflect the greater demand being placed on the private rented sector, allocate extra resources accordingly**

The Housing (Wales) Act allows homelessness duties to be discharged into the private rented sector. This has led to greater pressure being placed on the sector and evidence suggests that current resources are not sufficient to adequately support landlords.

The Council is researching the development of a social lettings agency and this needs to reflect on what the authority is offering landlords in terms of support and how it will deliver on it.

It is also unclear the impact of the void/empty property turn around in the Council's stock on the private rented sector. The Council needs to improve its void performance therefore making more of its stock available in a timely manner to homeless persons.

- **Develop intensive and assertive support services for those most difficult to house**

Evidence suggests that those with complex needs continue to create high demand on services. Not just housing services, but also Health, Social Services and criminal justice agencies.

Not all these households are necessarily owed a full housing duty, but housing managers recognise that this should not prohibit work to meet these needs and support them to find sustainable housing solutions.

The development of a service for this group of households needs to be explored. Supporting People funding maybe necessary to deliver this service, but it should also work in close partnership with other agencies to deliver on a variety of demands. The newly appointed Homeless Prevention and Housing Options Officers should also play a central role in developing any service model.

- **Explore the co-location of staff within Job Centre Plus to assist households through the transition on to Universal Credit**

The prevent rent arrears and homelessness for those households moving on to Universal Credit the Council should explore whether staff could be located within Job Centres in the County to advise and support those who will be receiving their rent directly through the new benefit system.

## **Powys Homelessness Review**

### **Part 1 – Introduction, methodology & policy / legal context**

#### **1.1 Introduction & purpose of this document**

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has a requirement for all Welsh local authorities to review how they are preventing and responding to homelessness. Any review is then expected to inform a strategy which will frame the direction for services over the following years.

This document details the findings of a review of existing services within Powys. Not only focussing on its housing services, but also exploring the policy context in which they exist and whether the response to homelessness is complimentary to the wider strategic direction within the County.

It is not the purpose of this document to recommend a way forward. The aim of this document is to present the evidence, discuss and explore potential developments and allow the strategy it informs to make recommendations on policy direction.

#### **1.2 Methodology**

The review aimed to ensure a wide range of input. Not only talking to those who are involved in the assessment of homelessness and managing it but also stakeholders who work in other policy areas that impact upon homelessness.

- The review has utilised existing information on homelessness which is available through the statistics collected for the Welsh Government
- The review has explored the national policy context in relation to homelessness
- The review has explored the local policy context and considered how the delivery of homelessness can complement and reflect it

- The review has drawn from the Homelessness Workshops organised by the Council which have included all key stakeholders
- The review has interviewed key representatives from all relevant service areas; including housing / homelessness, social services, health, the private rented sector support team, landlords and lettings agencies, the Supporting People Team, a representative from the Children's and Young People's Partnership, those working in criminal justice, agencies delivering support and social housing providers
- The review has undertaken focus groups with people who have been through homelessness and voluntary sector organisations working with those who experience it
- The review has presented initial findings to the Local Member 'Tackling Poverty (Cross Party) Group'
- The review has presented findings to the County's 'Strategic Housing Partnership'

There were aspects of the findings which influenced how the review developed. As issues / priorities were highlighted as the interviews were undertaken it allowed the review to focus on these areas and consider them in greater depth. Any strategy developed as we move forward needs to reflect on the priorities identified.

In the following section we explore the policy direction around homelessness, the significant new duties that have been introduced by the Act and review how each of these is currently being delivered by the authority.

### **1.3 The national policy direction for homelessness**

For many years the emphasis in relation to responding to homelessness in Wales has been to focus on how we prevent it. This focus has been advocated by the Welsh Government and adopted by Councils and other agencies.

This policy approach has led to services being developed and established to help people as early as possible in relation to any housing need they have and wherever possible work with them to find a solution before it leads to crisis.

In 2015 a new Housing (Wales) Act was introduced to reflect this emphasis on prevention. The Act introduced several new duties. To meet these duties local authorities could hopefully continue with services which for many local authorities had already been established. It is very much a key aim of this review to determine if in Powys the appropriate services are in place and are meeting the duties introduced.

Following the introduction of the Act the Welsh Audit Office has recently undertaken a review to establish if the prevention of homelessness was embedded within the culture of Councils in Wales.

The findings suggest that local authorities still have some way to go and it states - "Local authorities continue to focus on managing people in crisis rather than stop it from happening". The findings of this report have informed this review in relation to the services delivered in Powys.

However, it is not just in the homelessness field that prevention is seen as key. Both Health and Social Services policies and legislation emanating from Welsh Government are highlighting the need for a more robust and extensive prevention approach. There is enormous potential to develop a synergy around these national policies and their focus on prevention activity to develop the effectiveness of homelessness services.

This review needs to reflect upon this and consider how agencies can work in partnership, not just in relation to preventing homelessness but in preventing a variety of factors which impact upon individuals' well-being. All evidence suggests, the more we work in partnership to improve this, the less likely an individual / household will have a housing crisis and fall into homelessness.

We also can't ignore a substantial leading worldwide recent research suggesting we need to take an alternative approach to homelessness. Approaches like 'Housing First'; which advocate permeant housing options for homeless people with support delivered to it, rather than the short term 'hostel' approach; is increasingly evidencing more effective outcomes in tackling long term homelessness.

The diagram below, (which was originally developed in Canada), offer a simple summary of how services could potentially move forward.



The diagram suggests that, traditionally, commissioners have focussed resources on providing the 'emergency response' which support households when they are experiencing a housing crisis.

If we re-focus resources and target them more around prevention and long-term support for those who need it, we could be able to avoid spending and time delivering the emergency response.

Housing First approaches, with an emphasis on prevention and long-term support, have been developed across North America and Europe and have now gained the support of both UK and Welsh Governments. With so much international evidence suggesting a different approach may be more effective this review needs to reflect upon what could be learned in relation to services in Powys and how they could potentially shift from the more traditional approach.

Therefore, Part 2 of this document focusses on how housing services are currently meeting these duties. Part 3 of the document then takes a broader view to consider the local policy context and how other stakeholders are involved in preventing and managing homelessness. Part 4 of the document then draws these two elements together to consider options which could be explored after the adoption of the Homelessness Strategy.

#### **1.4 The Duties introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014**

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 brought into force new duties on local authorities. Previously the legal duties of Councils focussed on those households who became homeless and then only if they passed a number of 'tests' to determine if they were legally entitled to assistance.

The new Act has changed this. The legal expectations on local authorities have been broadened quite significantly. Since the Act, local authorities now have a duty to assist all households who face homelessness, regardless if they 'fit' into the priority need categories. The following sections of the Act break down the responsibilities local authorities now have;

- Section 60 – a duty to provide accessible and free advice and information about homelessness and the prevention of homelessness. This service should be available to everyone who approaches the authority, regardless of any local connection
- Section 62 – a duty to assess all households who approach the authority with a housing issue to determine if they are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Section 66 – Once the household has been assessed and found to be at threat of homelessness, a duty to assist that household to try and prevent homelessness by taking all 'reasonable steps'
- Section 73 – Once the household has been assessed and found to be homeless, a duty to assist the household in resolving their homelessness

- Section 75 – Once the duty under section 73 has ended, if the household is homeless, has a local connection, is unintentionally homeless and fits into one of the priority need groups; (i.e. has children, is 16-17 years old, has mental ill health or learning disabilities, is fleeing domestic abuse, is a care leaver), the authority has a duty to house

In Part 2, this paper explores all these stages / duties of the act and considers, through the feedback it has received; how Powys is currently delivering at each separate stage.

## **Part 2 – Exploring how Powys are currently responding to homelessness duties**

### **2.1 Section 60 - The duty to provide accessible & free advice and information**

- **The Council website**

The internet is playing a far more important role in how most people are accessing information. We can only assume that this will often be the case with homelessness and it can therefore be assumed that the first place a person will potentially access for information will be the County's website.

When first looking at the website it doesn't appear to be particularly user friendly. There is a great deal of information relating to the legal duties of the Council, but less on where to seek help / who to call / where to present, etc.

To give us a better idea of how the current information is perceived and to develop ideas on how it could improve, the review asked people who had experience of using the Council's homeless service to assess it and feedback.

In relation to the website, service users felt that it was very 'dense' with "lots of words". They also thought a phone number to contact the Council should be more prevalently displayed.

It is worth reflecting that it is not possible at this stage for a person to complete and upload their housing issue to the Council through any kind of online form. This is possible in other authority areas, who have the IT systems in place for this to be completed by and then sent on to a housing options advisor.

The example below is from Newport. As can be seen from the illustration of the page on their website, the applicant is invited to complete information about their current housing situation, including about their current home, employment, financial circumstances and whether they have any support needs. As it states on the website;

"Completing this guide will not place you onto the Home Options Newport scheme but will provide you with general information, advice and options possibly open to you within the Newport area and explain how to access these"



## Housing Options

### Introduction

#### Welcome to the Housing Solutions Self Help Guide

The following questionnaire has been designed to help identify the housing services that are potentially available within Newport.

Completing this guide will not place you onto the Home Options Newport scheme but will provide you with general information, advice and options possibly open to you within the Newport area and explain how to access these.

The questionnaire takes approximately 10 - 15 minutes to complete and you will be provided with an action plan that details the options that may be suitable to you based on your responses to the series of set questions. The action plan can be updated at anytime and is not intended to provide detailed and specific advice as this is available from the agencies and organisations listed within the action plan on the various options.

Some of the available options include:

- Low Cost Home Ownership
- Mutual Exchange
- Private Rented Housing
- Sheltered housing
- Additional support
- Money or benefits advice
- Supported housing
- Homelessness prevention



[Get Started](#)



- **The First Contact**

When a person wants to contact the Council for housing advice they are first directed to call the generic contact number and discuss their case with the 'First Contact Officer' (FCO). This position delivers a broad role and is utilised by the Council to field calls on all matters in relation to housing, not just homelessness.

The FCO has questions to ask to determine the household's housing need and the next step to take. For example, if the caller is homeless with nowhere to go, the FCO will pass on immediately to the duty housing officer if they are at threat of homelessness they will be contacted within 4 days.

In discussion with service users all were positive in relation to the advice they had received from the Council when they first approached. Some had phoned and some had approached an office directly.

A 'mystery shopper' exercise was undertaken by Shelter Cymru in March 2017, where people who had experienced homelessness 'tested' the Powys response. The report states that - "Most participants felt they received a genuinely helpful service from the First Contact Officers". Those going through the exercise were positive in relation to the response - "Couldn't really ask for more, very polite, not rushed in them asking me questions and gave me time to answer"

However, there were some issues identified. The participants were unsure what the next steps would be once they had finished contact and the 2 'shoppers' who presented as 'homeless on the day' did not feel there was any urgency and did not get any response on the same day.

The consultation with voluntary sector agencies and Councillors at the 'Tackling Poverty (Cross Party) Group' also raised concerns about how difficult it was to access advice and support. There were also issues raised by social housing providers at the 'Strategic Housing Partnership'.

Since the mystery shopping exercise has been undertaken the Council has utilised the findings and changed its process to ensure those who are homeless get the urgent response they need.

However, the Council should explore the introduction of the 'web-based' application approach which exists in Newport, Ceredigion and other local authorities in Wales. By allowing households to submit their housing issues utilising such a system they can then be allocated to relevant staff based on how urgent they are. It could also allow advice agencies such as Shelter Cymru and other support agencies to be accessed early

## **2.2 Section 62 - The duty to assess**

As discussed, another duty introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act is the duty to assess everyone who maybe homeless or threatened with homelessness. This should be completed with all those who approach the authority with concerns in relation to their housing situation.



The authority has no specific 'Housing Options' team to deliver this assessment service. 22 (FTE) Housing Management and Options Officers (HMOO) are based in different areas across the County.

The role of these officers is far broader than homelessness. They have responsibility for a patch of Council Housing and manage rent collection, housing and estate management, allocations, managing the waiting list for the area; as well as the homelessness function.

In discussions with HMOO's they identified the collection of rent as their primary focus. They have weekly targets to meet and see this as important in terms of maintaining income for the authority.

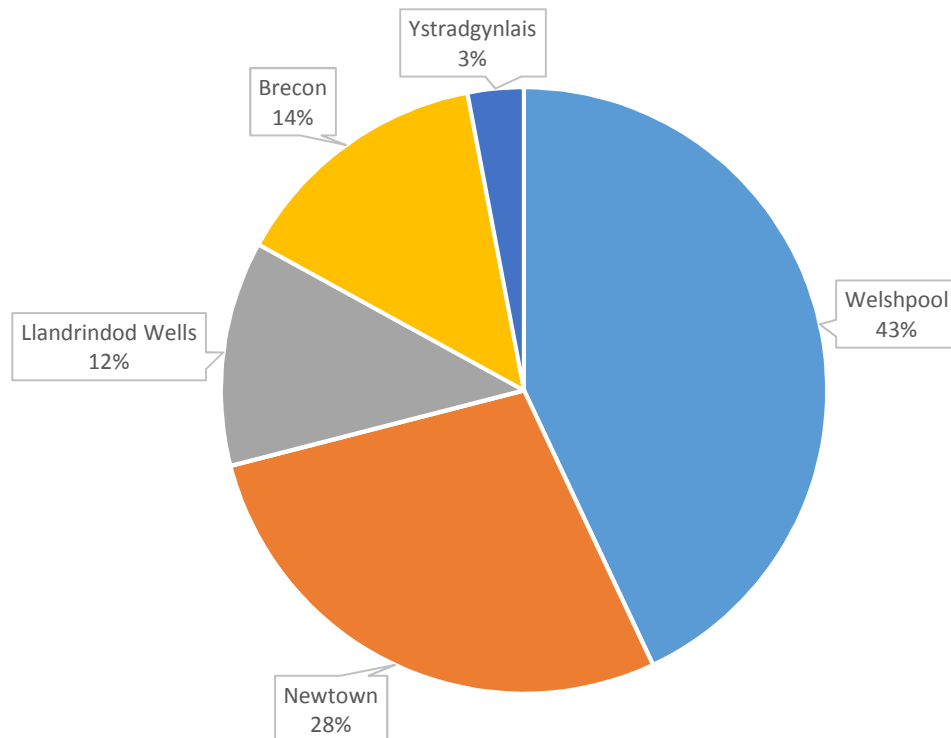
In relation to the homelessness part of the role this was identified as the most demanding. "No case is ever the same" and they highlighted how finding solutions for many households remains very difficult.

The following table shows the number of assessments undertaken in the last 3 years;

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of assessments undertaken</b>
2015-16	468
2016-17	513
2017-18	383

The numbers approaching the authority and being assessed differ quite significantly across the County. The following chart identifies where in the County households presented and an assessment was undertaken;

Proportion of homeless presentations by housing area  
2016 - 2017



The table indicates far greater demand in the North of the County. (Newtown and Welshpool offices undertook 71% of assessments).

The review sought to understand the differences in demand and there were a variety of issues identified.

For example, the housing market in the North of the County was perceived as more fluid with a greater proportion of private rented sector stock at affordable rates and therefore the potential for higher turnover. One reason cited for the high demand in Welshpool was the recently improved trainlines to the Shrewsbury / West Midlands, etc. which has led to greater demand on local housing as it allows workers to commute across the border.

Also, despite there being less demand in the South of the County it has been highlighted that finding solutions can be more difficult, so despite there being less cases the time taken with each case can be significantly longer.

In relation to moving forward and informing the strategy, we do need to consider these differences and consider how and where services are commissioned and delivered to reflect demand.

### **2.3 Section 66 - The duty to take reasonable steps to prevent homelessness**

Following on from the assessment, a decision is made depending on the household's situation. If they are found to be at threat of homelessness within 56

days, then the local authority has a duty to assist the household to try and prevent this.

The following table indicates the numbers of households who have been found at threat of homelessness since the new act was introduced;

Year	Households found to be threat of homelessness
2015-16	213
2016-17	174
2017-18	128

The introduction of this duty reflects the importance Welsh Government is now placing on the prevention of homelessness. As discussed, the expectation is that all households are assisted at this stage, regardless of any 'priority need'.

The Welsh Government expects the local authority to be able to evidence the 'reasonable steps' it has taken to prevent homelessness with all these households. Examples of the type of assistance that would evidence this would include;

- Mediation and discussion between young people and their parents to allow them to stay at home
- Mediation and discussion with landlord or mortgage lender to resolve tenancy issue or allow extra time
- The use of homelessness prevention fund, e.g. to pay for private rented sector deposit
- The use of discretionary housing payments
- Financial advice to help prioritise debts, etc.
- Target hardening measures for those suffering domestic abuse

To successfully discharge this duty the household can either be supported to remain in their own home or be found alternative accommodation before they actually become homeless.

At present this duty to try and prevent homelessness is the responsibility of the HMOOs. The review was able to analyse the data from the first 9 months of this financial year (2017-18) and it's valuable to explore what it tells us;

- **Households at threat of losing their private rented accommodation**

Approximately 50% of households found to be at threat of homelessness were losing their accommodation in the private rented sector (PRS). The national average is only 36%. The fact this is so much higher in Powys needs to be considered.

The reasons more people are becoming homeless through losing their accommodation in the PRS can be varied. HMOOs and the Private Rented Sector Development Officer cited landlords selling properties, letting to those who are working rather than on benefits, as well as affordability issues for tenants.

Whatever the reasons for households losing their private rented accommodation, it does raise the question if there is enough support being delivered within the sector to support both tenants and landlords. This will be explored in further detail later in this document.

- **Households found alternative accommodation**

The second figure which is interesting to explore is the proportion of people at this stage who don't remain in their current home but are found alternative accommodation to prevent their homelessness.

- 35% have their homelessness prevented through being found alternative accommodation in social housing and;
- 45% have their homelessness prevented through being found alternative accommodation in the private rented sector

This is a significant proportion but reflects the average in Wales. It should be noted that there is a considerable amount of work involved. Finding and supporting a household into new accommodation, whether in the social or private sector is likely to be time consuming.

- **Mediation & Financial Advice**

The final figures recorded should be considered are the number of households who had their homelessness prevented through 'mediation & conciliation' and through 'financial advice'.

Over the first 9 months of this financial year only 1 household was recorded as having homelessness prevented through mediation and one through financial advice. Over 2016-17 this figure nationally equated to 17% of households having their homelessness prevented through mediation and 12% through financial advice.

In discussions with HMOOs there was a suggestion that this work might not always be recorded. If this is the case, it is worth exploring how this could be made simpler and ensured. However, it also raises the question if enough focus is being placed on delivering mediation and financial advice and this an area any strategy should consider.

How services are delivered to those households who are at threat of homelessness needs to be explored. Should it necessarily continue only with HMOOs, or could it be delivered in partnership with other agencies? As commissioning developments in other service areas are explored, this will be reflected upon.

## **2.4 Section 68 - The duty for provide interim accommodation**

If prevention of homelessness work fails and the household becomes homeless the Council has a duty to provide interim accommodation if it has 'reason to believe' the household will fit with the priority need criteria.

The authority currently has a variety of temporary accommodation spread across the County for this purpose. Stock is located in Newtown, Welshpool, Llandrindod Wells, Machynlleth, Brecon & Ystradgynalis. Some of this owned by the Council, some by

Housing Associations and some leased from private landlords. The authority also utilises its own housing stock at times and can allocate a general needs property on a temporary basis; either for a family, but also for single people to share. Some is supported on a 24hr basis, some receiving floating support from local agencies and some has no formal support provision; although it is available when needed.

Discussions with relevant staff suggest that demand on this stock is increasing, especially in Newtown and Welshpool. Bed and Breakfast accommodation is still being used and at any one time there are likely to be at least one or two households in this type of accommodation. It is sometimes used for young people and an example was cited of how effective this can be with a particular B&B owner who develops positive relationships with the young people.

In discussion with a variety of agencies there were concerns in relation to the need for households to move considerable distances to access existing properties. Ystradgynlais has accommodation which is commonly utilised for people outside that area. Concerns were expressed in relation to the lack of support networks which are accessible for those households who have to move from their home area. However, with the County covering such a large geographical area this is difficult to avoid.

There are plans to create alternative / additional provision and the authority are exploring the development of 'pods' which can be erected swiftly on Council land and potentially be moved to meet demand. By developing such provision, it is hoped that options can be developed which will allow household to remain in the area of the County they want to be whenever possible.

## **2.5 Section 73 - The duty to take reasonable steps to alleviate homelessness**

The next significant duty introduced is the duty to take reasonable steps to alleviate homelessness for those who are homeless, and it can no longer be prevented. Once again, this duty applies to all households regardless of any priority need.

The following table indicates the number of households who have been found homeless since the introduction of the Act. (These figures will include a proportion of households who have presented to the authority at threat of homelessness, where it was not possible to prevent).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of household found homeless</b>
2015-16	174
2016-17	288
2017-18	231

At this stage re-housing is the only option. Feedback from interviews suggests that the solutions available are very different depending on the area of Powys. For example, options in Brecon may be far more limited, (where affordability issues are prohibitive), than in area such as Ystradgynlais.

The data also tells us that at this stage in the process the private rented sector is used heavily. 63% of households who have their homelessness resolved are placed

in the private rented sector. As discussed with the private sector team, this is leading to significant pressures and there are fears that this is leading to short term solutions and households can often return.

### **Single people with complex needs**

One significant issue which needs to be highlighted at this stage are the difficulties being experienced by those with the most complex needs. These households are often single and therefore may not meet any of the priority need criteria.

Despite this there are still duties the Council has in assisting these households. The feedback suggests that this group is posing increasing difficulties. Their demands are not simply on housing services, but a variety of agencies; including health, criminal justice, the police and other council services.

In discussion, it has been suggested that it is time to develop a combined approach for this group that goes beyond the actual duties we have and offers a far more comprehensive and multi-agency approach.

This will need to be agreed across agencies and Supporting People services will need to play a major part of any response.

### **2.5 Section 75 – The Duty to House**

This is effectively the final duty for those households whose homelessness has not been able to be prevented or relieved. This duty is only applicable to those who are determined to have a priority need, are unintentionally homeless and are eligible to be housed on a temporary basis if there are no immediate longer-term options. The local authority can discharge this duty in either social housing or the private rented sector.

The following table indicates the number of households accepted under this duty since the introduction of the Act;

<b>Year</b>	<b>Full housing duty accepted</b>
2015-16	33
2016-17	69
2017-18	64

The figures indicate an ever-increasing number of households being owed this duty. HMOO's highlighted the ever more complex nature of the households presenting and the difficulty in finding these households solutions.

Mental ill health and substance misuse issues were highlighted as particularly prevalent in these complex cases.

Affordability of housing was certainly an issue, but it was stated that other factors ran far deeper than simply housing and even when a suitable housing solution was found it did not always mean that this would prove sustainable due to the other issues involved.

Recent research has indicated the prevalence of 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' within the homeless population and this is particularly the case for those who have the most complex needs and are creating such high demand on services. Any response developed needs to consider the complex nature of the issues involved and explore how services can reflect this.

In response to this the Council has agreed to employ three new staff to focus on working with the most complex cases. These officers, (Homeless Prevention and Housing Options Officers), will offer detailed casework with those households and work intensely to both support the household to find suitable accommodation, but also look to link and work in partnership with other agencies to ensure the household's support needs are met.

These posts will offer vital support for the HMOO role and it should be ensured that they complement and reflect broader policy intentions locally which will be considered in the next section.

Although they will work with those with a full housing duty and priority need they will also work with other 'vulnerable' people and therefore can also focus on supporting meet the duties to help prevent and alleviate homelessness for those with complex needs.

- **The Views of Shelter Cymru**

As part of the review Shelter Cymru staff were interviewed for their thoughts on how Powys CC were meeting homelessness duties.

Shelter Cymru offer legal advice; as well as generic housing advice and homelessness prevention activity throughout the County. They have one member of staff focusing on the North and one in the South.

They have identified a change of approach in the County since the introduction of the Act. They feel that officers are now focussing more on prevention, although they see first-hand the challenges encountered in relation to sourcing appropriate options.

However, they still witness 'value judgements' being made by officers and feel the response a household receives does, to some extent, depend on the Council officer that is dealing with case. To remedy this, they suggest more training for officers and to ensure a deeper understanding of the presenting characteristics of some households and the reasons for these. They still feel the culture within the authority needs to move away from one of 'box ticking'; to a more person-centred approach.

In relation to the issue of rough sleeping and those with the most complex needs, they too have seen a significant increase in demand from these households. They still believe a 'night shelter' type approach, in partnership with churches, might be necessary, but they would also welcome a move towards 'Housing First' principles.

### **Part 3 - The Local Policy Context**

Having explored each of the duties introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act and how Powys are currently delivering them, it is now worth examining the broader context in which they must be delivered.

Powys County Council has set out a vision, (Vision 2025), which sets out its policy direction over the coming years. Any homelessness strategy needs to consider this vision and ensure it is working to the same aims.

The 2025 vision includes a priority to support its residents and communities and includes the objective that “communities have access to a choice of both affordable and market housing”.

This is reflected in both the Powys Public Service Board’s Well Being Plan and the county’s Housing Strategy.

The Well Being Plan stating a desire to see- “People have more choice and can access the type of homes they want. Advances in technology ensures good access to affordable housing”; whereas the Housing Strategy pledges to develop a homelessness strategy with an emphasis to “work in partnership with key stakeholders to prevent, where possible, the incidence of homelessness and where this isn’t possible to seek the most positive outcome for the citizen”

We will first explore those areas which are part of the broader housing function and how we can ensure we are working in partnership to prevent homelessness.

#### **3.1 Linking Homeless Prevention with Supporting People Services**

Supporting People is a specific grant allocated by the Welsh Government to all councils in Wales to provide housing related support. This support is delivered to households to support them maintain their tenancy and ease pressures on more intensive services, such as health and social services. It is delivered by a wide variety of agencies commissioned by local authorities.

In Powys there is a Supporting People budget of £5.1m. Approximately half of this is used to support people with learning disabilities and older people, whilst the remainder is focussed on delivering services for people who are at threat of homelessness. This includes people struggling with mental ill health, young people, those experiencing domestic abuse, those with substance misuse issues, ex-offenders and those who have become homeless.

As these services have developed since the introduction of the fund in 2003 they have played a significant part in the prevention of homelessness agenda and local authorities have been encouraged by the Welsh Government to commission services to support them meet the duties introduced by the Housing (Wales) Act.

Powys has adopted this approach and recognises the important role Supporting People services play in the prevention of homelessness.



The Supporting People Team have conducted an extensive amount of work in determining how to deliver services in the most effective manner. This work has focussed on ensuring they are delivered at the right time, i.e. are delivered early before crisis wherever possible.

From the evidence gathered during this work the team have concluded that services should be established to work area by area in Powys, rather than having 'specialist' services delivering support to specific groups. This does not mean that no specialist support will be delivered, just that it becomes more integrated with other support services in any area.

This year the team is planning to establish and tender for locality-based support services which will be based in all major towns in Powys. The aim of this exercise will be to re-model support so that in each area there is one support service, which may have a variety of agencies delivering it, but they will be working in partnership as one 'team'.

The support service in each area will be available to anyone in that area who has a demand for support, i.e. they need help to maintain their tenancy and keep their lives on an 'even keel'.

As the service develops the teams will develop 'local intelligence' and retain all the people they are supporting as part of the service. This does not mean that they will continue to support everyone who is 'signed up', but each individual will know they are available if they want to be supported again. However, the team will also utilise their 'local intelligence' to keep a watching brief on the people they have supported and try and intervene as early as possible if there are indications that they require additional support.

By focussing the teams within a locality, the Supporting People Team believe they will be able to deliver a more cost-effective service with less travel time, but also by successfully utilising their 'local intelligence' and delivering support as early as possible the demand for other cost intensive services will be 'turned off'.

In relation to this review we need to explore how these new locality 'support teams' can work.

- How can we ensure that they work with people at threat of homelessness as early as possible?
- How can we utilise these teams to 'turn off' demand to the HMOOs and successfully prevent homelessness?
- To achieve this, do we need to bring these teams together, so they are working in partnership to meet needs and prevent homelessness?
- How could we potentially utilise an IT system to ensure that caseloads can be allocated to both HMOOs and locality support teams to prevent homelessness?
- How could they be prioritised to best meet needs and ensure homelessness is prevented wherever possible?

- Could those who are at threat of homelessness be supported through the locality teams and allow the HMOOs to focus on those whose homelessness can't be prevented?
- Even better, how can housing needs be picked up earlier and support delivered to avoid duties being triggered?

There is currently a pilot being undertaken in Welshpool where support services and the HMOOs are working in partnership to ensure that support is being delivered to those households who are at threat of homelessness or have become homeless and have identified support needs.

This pilot is proving successful so far, but more work will need be continued to see how it can progress and evolve.

In discussions with Supporting People staff involved in the pilot they stressed that the best learning is gained through delivery, rather than commissioning and this was proving to be the case. This learning included HMOOs developing a much better understanding of the complexities of the 'support relationship' and it's not necessarily always the fault of the support provider if the support delivered doesn't achieve the desired outcomes.

They also reflected on how people from different agencies are often working to a different 'purpose'. Some of the key learning points have been the acceptance of this, developing a deeper understanding of the different 'purpose' different agencies have and then moving forward to find some shared objectives and 'purpose' in order to meet the needs of households.

As discussed earlier in the document, the statistics recorded suggest there are proportionally fewer households prevented from becoming homeless through mediation and financial advice services than the national average.

Therefore, is there is scope to explore whether these services could be delivered through the locality teams? Could the support being developed in each locality work in partnership with HMOO's to deliver these services to help prevent homelessness?

There is also the issue of the differing levels of demand for a homelessness response in the different areas of the county. With 71% of homelessness assessments being undertaken in Welshpool and Newtown, does this suggest that support services should be commissioned to reflect this greater level of demand and have increased resources in the locality areas in the north of the county?

- **The role of Supporting People in delivering support for those with the most complex needs**

As discussed, there remain households who are creating large demands on housing and other services who are unable to retain stable housing and can often end in sofa surfing or even in extreme cases rough sleeping. They will often 'fall out' of priority need groups and therefore the Council may not have a legal duty to house.

It is recognised that there is the need to develop services for this group of people which do not simply aim to meet housing duties but take a more corporate approach

to meeting this groups needs and reduce demand on other services. The Housing Service see Supporting People services as playing a crucial role in delivering an element of the support to meet the needs of this group.

To achieve this, it cannot be the role of housing alone. All relevant agencies will need to be engaged. Health, adult services, the police, probation and social services will need to play their part. Importantly though, they will need to be engaged in the commissioning of any service, as well as then delivering it operationally, e.g. through case conferencing.

There are examples across Wales & the UK of support services developed for this group. For example, in Ynys Mon a 'Housing First' approach has been adopted and a service is being delivered to support single homeless people. In Ceredigion the 'Corporation St' project has been developed with support offering a high degree of psychologically informed practice.

As the locality teams are developed it is important to explore how support can be delivered for this group. It is often difficult for people with a variety of issues to engage with services and examples of assertive approaches should be considered. Due to the rural nature of Powys and the relatively small number of cases likely to be in each area, how the service operates without the need for new cost intensive accommodation options also needs to be explored.

Any service developed also needs to work in partnership with the newly appointed Homeless Prevention and Housing Options Officers.

- **The future of Supporting People Funding**

There remains some uncertainty in relation to the future of the Supporting People fund. The Welsh Government Budget indicates the grant will be merged with other funds (Families First, Communities First & Flying Start) to become the "Early Intervention – Prevention and Support Grant".

This would allow Powys greater flexibility in relation to how to spend the grant. However, it remains unclear at this stage how this will operate in practice. Any strategy developed will need to bear these changes in mind and consider the opportunities and threats of how this proposed merged grant could impact upon the prevention of homelessness services currently being delivered.

### **3.2 The Private Rented Sector**

As discussed, since the introduction of the Housing Act local authorities can discharge their housing duties into the private rented sector if it's for at least six months and is deemed affordable.

To help access suitable accommodation in the private rented sector the authority employs two 'Private Rented Sector Development Officers' who work very closely with the Welsh Government funded 'Bond Scheme' which is managed by Gwalia and employs one member of staff. The second Private Rented Sector Development Officer was only appointed recently (fixed term to March 2020).

The key purpose of both these services is to access properties in the private rented sector to prevent and manage homelessness. The services work with private landlords and offer the following services;

- By being available if there are issues with tenancies to support landlords
- Assessment of accommodation using Housing Health and Safety Rating System [HHSRS]
- Pre-tenancy Work. Tenants are assessed for affordability and suitability, referenced
- Assisting with the drawing up of bespoke tenancy agreements.
- Assistance with arrangement for safety certificates
- Notification to utility companies on change of tenancy
- Post tenancy—continued support for you and your tenants in their new home to help sustain the tenancy
- Periodic Property Inspections
- Negotiating of bond disputes Notify you of rent arrears and negotiate repayments with tenants
- Advise on steps to end the tenancy if the rent account falls into arrears due to being unable to afford it etc
- Handle reports of disrepair and co-ordinate repairs if required
- By offering financial support for tenants when setting up a new tenancy
- By identifying and contacting new landlords to work with
- Being available for referrals from the HMOOs and HPHOOs to support them house those who are threatened with homelessness or homeless

This list is taken from the current 'Landlord Pack' and offers an extensive and comprehensive service for landlords.

However, since this list of how the Council would assist was devised the use of the private rented sector for housing vulnerable households has undoubtedly grown significantly.

- 45% of those prevented from becoming homeless are re-housed in the PRS.
- 63% of households whose homelessness is relieved are found a housing solution at the Section 73 stage are housed in the private rented sector.
- Over 2016-17 22% of those housed following the final duty were found accommodation in the private rented sector.

In discussions with the Private Rented Sector Development Officer and the Bond scheme there was evidence of the pressure they are currently feeling to deliver the service.

They cited numerous issues around affordability due to welfare reform, landlords leaving the market because of perceived increase in 'paperwork' due to the national registration scheme, as well as a lack of understanding in relation to private rented sector among HMOOs.

There was also feedback from both the Private Sector Development Officer and a local Councillor that the authority needs to improve communication with landlords in

a time when there is a great deal of change, both in terms of the national registration / licensing scheme and welfare reform. The suggestion was made to re-establish local landlord forum to help engage and educate landlords of the changes. This is worth exploring, but the amount of resources needed to set up and facilitate needs to be considered.

The current offer the Council is offering private landlords is comprehensive. The question that needs to be asked is whether the current resources are sufficient to meet it?

With the more central role the private rented sector is playing in the housing of vulnerable people and those who are homeless or at threat of homelessness the strategy developed must explore how extra resources can be delivered within the private rented sector to support the landlords who are housing people who can often find it difficult to manage and maintain a tenancy.

The authority has now appointed a new member of staff to research the development of a 'social lettings agency'. This post will "take a leading role in researching, establishing, promoting, and managing a Social Lettings Agency across the diverse private sector markets in Powys".

This 'social lettings agency' will look to recruit landlords across Powys and offer to take over the management of properties, mirroring what a traditional lettings agency provides. Potentially it will charge landlords for this service, but how this will operate will be explored as part of its development.

The proposal is to develop this service over and above what already exists, so the 'Private Rented Sector Development Officer' role, as well as the Gwalia bond scheme will continue. It will need to be considered how both these services complement and work in partnership with the new service to avoid any duplication. Since the review has been undertaken the authority have also advertised and appointed another Development Officer so that resources are sufficient, although funding for the second post is in place only until March 2020.

### **3.3 Social Housing**

Social housing continues to play a significant role in supporting the Council to meet its housing duties. Over the first 9 months of this year 45% of those who were found homeless had it alleviated by an allocation into social housing. Of those found to be owed the full housing duty over 2016-17, 53% had this duty discharged through accepting an offer in social housing.

Powys retains its own housing stock, and this plays a significant role in meeting homelessness duties. There are also 7 Housing Associations with stock within the County and the general feedback was that these were playing a positive role in assisting in meeting duties.

A common housing register is currently being developed which would should allow simpler access arrangements for those applying for social housing. A previous form of this, piloted in Newtown before the new Housing (Wales) Act was introduced,

reduced homelessness quite significantly. Any lessons from this exercise and how they could be applied moving forward should be considered.

Through consultation with the County's 'Strategic Housing Partnership', (which includes all the Housing Associations working in the area), the review considered some of the issues already discussed.

- There was broad agreement that current access to advice and help to meet housing needs was not fit for purpose. Those partners who'd had experiences in other authorities who had adopted an IT solution, (such as Ceredigion), were cited as far more effective and accessible.
- Another issue raised was the information sharing between those who assess the needs of those households applying for housing and those in Housing Associations who were expected to house them. Communication and more information about those to be housed was a priority if tenancies were to be sustainable
- They also highlighted the importance of recognising the very different housing markets that exist across Powys and to ensure that any solutions were 'local' to these different markets, rather than a County-wide approach

As discussed, the pressures are increasing on the private rented sector and this is only likely to further increase pressures on social housing which is deemed a more affordable and sustainable option.

Any strategy needs to consider how to develop more housing options in the social housing sector to help meet homelessness duties. The following are two examples which Powys could look to consider;

- **Re-designation of low demand sheltered housing stock**

Another possible option to free up supply of affordable options which has been suggested is the freeing up of some sheltered housing which is currently designated for older people.

Some concerns were raised by Members in relation to this idea. They feared it would destabilise the current mix within schemes and this would especially be the case if it was not implemented sensitively.

- **Making sure Social Housing Staff are playing a full part in Locality Teams**

As discussed, with the changes in how Supporting People is being commissioned and the development of locality teams it is important to explore how social housing staff can work in partnership with these teams. With the greater emphasis on developing 'intelligence' to ensure that people are advised, helped and supported as early as possible, it is important to develop the working relationship between those managing accommodation and the support teams in their locality.

It needs to be explored how housing management staff can access support services as early as possible and as soon as they identify potential issues within tenancies.

### 3.4 Social Services & Health

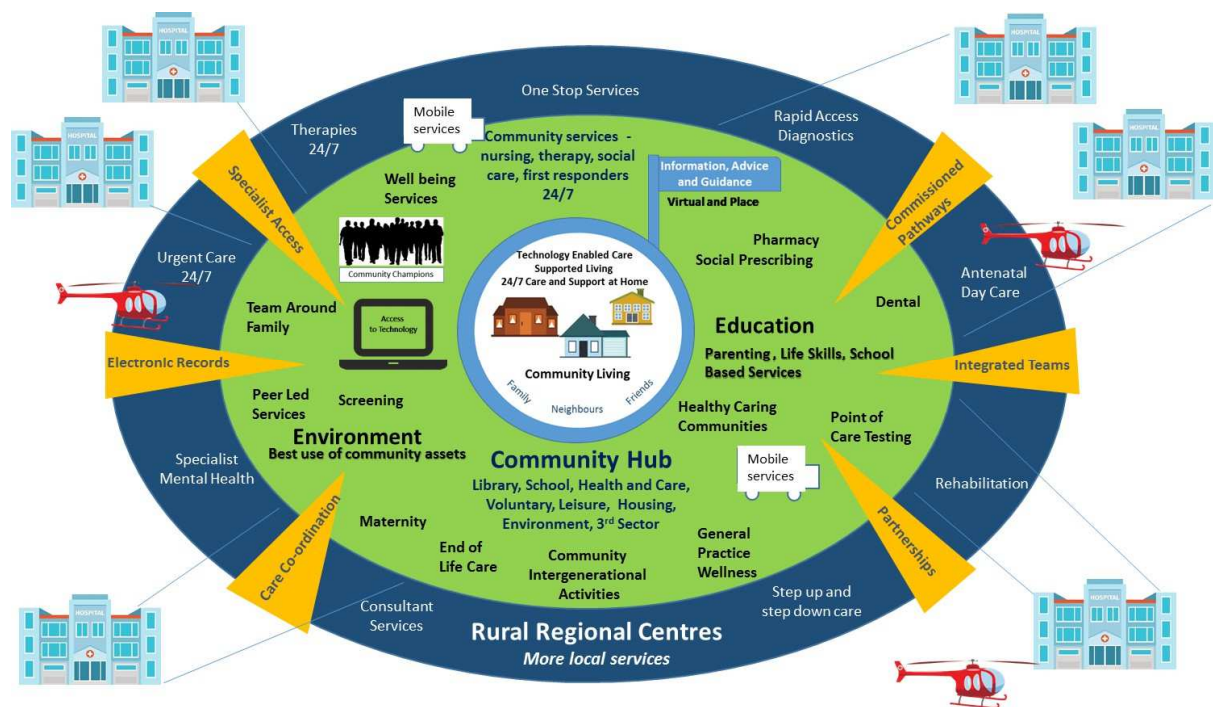
Social Services all are also working within a new statutory framework. The introduction of the Social Services and Well Being Act also places a far greater emphasis on delivering the right prevention services and easing the pressure on more costly alternatives.

This new environment has led to an approach being explored in Powys; which like managing and preventing homelessness; is attempting to ensure that people are supported as early as possible and their needs met. In partnership with Health services, they are implementing this approach through the 'Health & Care Strategy for Powys'.

This strategy will deliver an approach around three themes and looks to deliver and commission services accordingly. These three areas are 'Start Well', 'Live Well' and 'Age Well' and reflect the different stages of each of our lives.

The focus of this approach is based around the principle of doing 'what matters' to the individual and ensuring this is delivered as early as possible. It wants to avoid people repeating their situation and strives to deliver an approach where there is 'no wrong front door'.

To deliver on these objectives, they have developed a model of care which is detailed below;



As detailed in the diagram, the model advocates community hubs to deliver services which is line with the locality approach being developed through Supporting People.

If we are to successfully prevent homelessness we need to consider how we link in with this approach and work with partners commissioned through this model to ensure it links with the support being delivered both by Supporting People services and any staff within housing working on the prevention of homelessness.

As part of this approach, the Powys Association of Voluntary Agencies (PAVO) is delivering the 'Community Health and Wellbeing Coordination Service' and employs 'Community Connectors' with aim of working "with the individuals referred to it to identify their requirements and then supports them to access the community services or activities that they feel are right for them and seeks to provide this information on first contact with the individual using a "right first time" approach".

These staff will work with people who are at threat of homelessness and processes need to be in place to ensure that they are able to connect as easily as possible with prevention of homelessness services. By developing the locality approach through Supporting People, the community connectors will be able access the support necessary to prevent homelessness.

To discuss the effectiveness of partnership working currently, and how the 'locality' approach is being embedded, a meeting was organised through PAVO to consider how the voluntary sector is currently operating and the role they could potentially play in the prevention of homelessness. The meeting included representatives from food banks, a street pastor, PAVO staff and trustees.

The following key areas for consideration formed part of the discussion;

- **Accessing advice and support to prevent homelessness**

Agencies felt that they did not have enough knowledge of how to access services for those who are homeless or threatened with it. Concerns were also raised about what knowledge households may have, especially those who might be arriving in the County with no home.

They were positive about the potential development of a web-based approach to allow households to record their housing needs, although they did raise the importance of the security / safeguarding implications and ensuring that those potentially fleeing violent situations were not put at risk.

They welcomed a joint approach and would be positive about supporting households to complete their housing needs electronically. They emphasised the important role voluntary sector agencies must play in advising people and how the Council is not always seen as 'approachable' by the people they support.

In relation to the developing role of 'Community Connectors' they cited the development of 'Integrated Team' meetings happening in each locality based around



the purpose of the connectors and the importance of housing and housing support agencies playing a full part in these meetings and the actions agreed.

- **Support for those with the most complex needs**

The agencies had all experienced cases which were complex and, in their view, the current 'system' had to some degree failed them. They could identify the need for a service to support this group, but with the proviso that any commissioning process looked very closely at existing services and how they could play a full part, rather than a brand-new service simply being parachuted from on high.

- **Current Council Approach**

Several issues were raised about the current Council approach. These included the decisions to develop services 'in-house' when they didn't think this was always appropriate; the role of those undertaking the homelessness assessment and how neutral they were, i.e. that they maybe working in the interests of the Council housing section, rather than the person in need.

They would welcome far greater partnership approach to homelessness and how housing and related agencies can be linked to locality teams and services, such as foodbanks, in order to prevent homelessness early needs to be explored.

### **3.5 Children & Young People's Partnership / Young People**

Developments in commissioning and delivering services for children and young people also reflect the focus on prevention. The Powys Children and Young People's Partnership has been the key driver in developing a programme of 'Prevention and Early Intervention'.

The key components of this programme are as follows;

- Locality Based Service Networks
- Whole system approach across the Continuum of Need
- Integrated commissioning strategies and delivery
- A co-ordinated 'Everybody's Business approach to Early Intervention and Prevention and delivering a Team Around the Family (TAF) approach
- Progressive Universalism and building community capacity – 'Community Focused Services'
- Consistent, evidence-based approaches to delivery and intervention
- Multi-agency workforce training and development
- A Single Point of contact (PPD) - 'Front Door'

These key components are consistent with the approaches discussed in this document. Once again, there is an emphasis on a locality-based approach which mirrors the proposed approach in Supporting People services.

The key focus in developing a relationship with these services is to prevent youth homelessness. At present the Youth Intervention Service is a jointly commissioned service funded by Children's Services and Supporting People and works with young people, primarily to support them into education, training or employment; but has found they are increasingly working with young people with housing issues. In discussions with the senior officer responsible it became apparent that they were delivering a valuable service in supporting young people through the homelessness system when necessary, linking into relevant support and helping them to find the right accommodation to move on in their lives.

This 'signposting' role is similar to that offered by the community connectors, (although the work with the young person is more intensive) and shows the potential for this partnership approach to work successfully to prevent homelessness.

### **3.6 The introduction of Universal Credit**

Universal Credit is a benefit being introduced across the UK to replace 6 existing means tested benefits. It is already in place in Powys for claimants who have less complex claims but will be going live for all new claimants, and anyone who experiences a change of circumstance, from Oct 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

This new benefit will include housing costs and will be paid directly to the individual. Claims will need to be made online and then the claimant is invited to their local Job Centre Plus.

There are significant concerns that the introduction of the benefit will lead to an increase in housing problems, rent arrears and homelessness. The fears centre around the benefit being paid direct to the claimant, rather than directly to the landlord and the claimant then not passing on the rent element.

There are a variety of agencies working in Powys to support individuals with the transition on to the new benefit. Powys Council provides a Personal Budgeting Service, as well as funding the Money Advice Service.

In discussions with the Partnership Manager for the Department of Work & Pensions the importance of ensuring any advice was timely for new claimants and could be accessed easily as soon as the claimant is moved on to the new payment system.

There was still some misunderstanding on how landlords will be informed if a tenant is moved over to Universal Credit. For example, if a tenant who has been suffering from mental ill health has recovered and is declared fit to work; from October 10<sup>th</sup> this person will be considered to have had a change of circumstance and will be moved on to Universal Credit.

Will the social or private landlord be informed of this and can support be accessed to help establish rent payments, etc. once Universal Credit is received?

In discussions with the Partnership Manager it was agreed that the DWP would welcome advice agencies to 'sit in' for perhaps one morning per week, so people moving over to the new benefit can access advice and early. This might be

something worth experimenting with, especially if any staff are able to work remotely within the Job Centre.

### **3.7 Mental Ill Health & Health**

As part of the review discussions took place with the Health Board's operational lead for occupational therapy across the County. She has been asked to take a lead on homelessness.

The Health Board recognise the importance people's housing can have on an individual's health and can identify how insecure housing situations can both be caused by mental ill health or exacerbate it.

They have experienced difficulties in finding accommodation for people with mental ill health and highlighted the importance of allowing people to remain in the area where their support mechanisms exist. This can be particularly difficult in some areas of the County.

The Health Board is aware of those who have multiple issues in relation to mental ill health, substance misuse and offending behaviour and how difficult it can be for these people to access services. If homelessness occurs too they concede that this only adds to the issues and households can often 'fall through gaps' and find it very difficult to engage.

- **Linking with 'Health & Care Strategy for Powys'**

Discussions took place on the development of the 'prevention hubs' and locality approach being developed as part of the 'Health & Care Strategy for Powys'. The Health Board can identify the synergies between the approach being taken in relation to the remodelling of Supporting People services and highlight the need to explore how GP surgeries can become engaged with the prevention of homelessness agenda.

To develop this, they highlight the need for health professionals to develop a greater awareness of homelessness in Powys, as well as information on how and where to access advice and support.

- **Working with Health to support those with most complex needs**

There was a positive response to the possibility of an intensive outreach and support service being developed. It was highlighted how such a service could work in partnership with existing 'crisis' teams who are currently based in the north and south of the county.

The Health Board would be keen in being involved in the commissioning of such a service and felt it was important to establish and commission something new, rather than try and 'add on' to existing services.

Any commissioning process needs to explore how any service can complement and work in partnership both with the crisis teams and the potential of working closely with primary care services.

In summary, the Health Board are very positive in relation to developing more of a partnership approach to meeting the needs of homeless people and especially those who are also struggling with mental ill health. They would like to be involved in implementing the strategy and play a role in the commissioning of any new service for those with the most complex needs.

### **3.8 Domestic Abuse**

The authority has recently undertaken an extensive review of its domestic abuse service. The findings of this review are currently being taken forward, so it was agreed that domestic abuse services would not be part of the remit of this review as it could lead to complications.

### **Part 4 – Priorities to Consider**

- **The Development of an IT solution to record and manage homelessness applications**

As discussed, to record and receive homelessness applications other local authorities in Wales have developed IT systems. This not only allows better recording of the statistics but would allow cases to be allocated more effectively.

The Abris system which has been adopted in a number of local authorities across Wales allows those who are concerned about their housing situation to record this through a web-based system. Importantly this could be accessed and completed either by the individual or by agencies working with them.

The system generates a plan for individual to take things forward and can be accessed directly by housing staff which will allow them to focus their workload and allocate accordingly. There is also the opportunity to bring in other agencies to support the local authority to meet its housing duties.

- **The development of a partnership approach with SP funded agencies, HMOO's, HPHOO's, prevention hubs and community connectors**

The policy direction within the local authority indicates a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention. To prevent homelessness, the authority should consider how it models services to reflect this.

The re-tendering of Supporting People services to deliver support on a locality basis reflects developments in Health and Social Services, as well as the Children and Young People's Partnership. There are undoubtedly opportunities for housing / homelessness to model their services in light of this and develop a partnership with the 'Supporting People' locality teams and the broader Health & Social Care agencies, so they are assisting households to prevent homelessness together.

The authority should explore how it develops mediation and financial advice services, so they are available early and within each locality. Through utilising the IT

system discussed above the allocation of this support could be achieved more effectively. Again, it is important these services are placed so that they can be accessed by households before any homelessness duties are triggered, rather than after they've been assessed.

The development of 'prevention hubs' and community connectors on a locality basis also offer opportunities for closer partnership working and there is scope to engage and educate staff working in these roles so they can spot issues early and refer accordingly. Once again, by utilising a new IT system and allowing the opportunity for other agencies to work with households to complete and record issues early via a web-based system may allow households to be supported before duties are triggered.

The role of the HMOOs also needs to be considered. How can they play a full part in this partnership? As housing officers, they have a deep understanding of their local 'patch' and the people living there. This local intelligence should not be underestimated and the development of close working relationships with the support service / worker who will be working alongside them. With the HMOO being responsible for both housing management and homelessness it is imperative they are taking a full role in liaising with support agencies across their patch and effectively aiming to reduce their homelessness caseload.

As services are developed, tendered and modelled the higher level of demand for homelessness assistance in the North of the county should be considered and how resources are deployed should be explored.

The homelessness review undertaken in Carmarthenshire explored the homelessness presentations coming from each ward within the county. This data will now be used to focus support services in the areas which are creating the highest proportion of duties, so that it can act early with the aim of 'switching off' demand on those officers fulfilling homelessness duties.

Unfortunately, this data was difficult to access in Powys and would need to be extracted manually. This is something which the authority might want to consider doing soon to help model re-tendered support services and ensure that services are in the 'right place at the right time' to prevent homelessness.

- **To reflect the greater demand being placed on the private rented sector, allocate extra resources accordingly**

With the Housing (Wales) Act allowing local authorities to discharge their homelessness duties in the private rented sector, the pressures on this sector have increased.

However, not only is the sector being used more to house vulnerable people there are also additional pressures mounting on private landlords with the development of the national registration / licensing scheme and additional welfare reforms. With these additional pressures, landlords require further support.

The authority should consider developing its private rented sector housing service and reflect upon increasing its resources in this area. Any additional resources

should focus on supporting landlords and link with the locality teams to ensure the appropriate support services are available for tenants.

By establishing the post to explore and develop the 'social lettings agency' this will be tackled, but any development needs to ensure the balance between recruiting landlords and ensuring that the resources are available to adequately support those recruited.

- **Develop intensive and assertive support services for those most difficult to house**

Feedback from HMOOs and other stakeholders suggests that despite the new duties and the requirement to do more assist households, there remain a number who prove to be very difficult to house. This not only leads to far greater demands on housing services, but a wide variety of different services too.

The introduction of the Homelessness Prevention and Housing Options Officers offer the opportunity for far more detailed casework with this group. However, if solutions are to prove to be long term there need to be the appropriate support services in place to support households to retain accommodation which is accessed.

Any support service developed needs reflect how difficult this group can be to engage and explore how a model of support can be developed to ensure it reflects this and offers assertive / outreach services which don't easily give up on the household and retain them as part of any service in the long term.

As part of this development explore the possibility of developing a 'Housing First' approach in partnership with Housing Associations or private landlords and explore how a service could work in partnership with similar services developed in Ceredigion.

In Neath Port Talbot, the Community Safety Team and South Wales Police have established a Street Vulnerable Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference. This reflects processes which have been used for those suffering domestic abuse and applies it to those people within the County Borough who are creating the highest demand on services, rough sleepers, etc.

Such an approach is worth exploring in Powys. It ensures all agencies are engaged, as all relevant agencies attend monthly meetings. Each person who needs support is discussed at the meeting on a case by case basis, and possible solutions / support options are considered and acted upon.

By establishing such a meeting in Powys it could be utilised as a vehicle to adopt a 'Housing First' model and ensure all relevant agencies are engaged.

- **Explore the co-location of staff within Job Centre Plus to assist households through the transition on to Universal Credit**

The new way of allocating benefits through Universal Credit has led to significant concerns in relation to its impact on levels of homelessness, especially as rent

payments will form part of the benefit going directly to the tenant, rather than the landlord.

To ensure that those moving on to Universal Credit are supported at an early stage the authority should explore the possibility of co-locating staff within Job Centre Plus Centres so that the right support can be accessed / landlords can be notified / rent payments can be arranged.

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## Dyfed Powys Homelessness Strategy – Action Plan for Powys

This action plan reflects the priorities identified in the regional Dyfed Powys Homelessness strategy and identifies the actions needed in Powys to help meet the wider regional strategic objectives and prevent homelessness.

The plan draws out the key priorities and reflects on the local context in relation to taking them forward. The priorities identified in the regional strategy are as follows;

- **Continue to evolve and harness community-based services to assist in the prevention of homelessness**
- **By utilising intelligence, explore how we can focus support to households in those localities which are producing the highest proportion of homelessness cases**
- **Utilise IT systems and technology to prevent homelessness by ensuring systems are in place which flag up issues early to trigger help and advice as early as possible**
- **In partnership with key agencies explore how a multi-agency case management approach can evolve to meet the needs of households who revolve around the homeless system and place demands on a variety of services**
- **In partnership with local stakeholders and other statutory services, explore whether a ‘Housing First’ approach can be developed to support those with the most complex needs**
- **Each authority to explore with their Housing Association and private landlord partners how to develop affordable and sustainable housing options for single people**
- **Each authority to develop close partnership working with DWP/Job Centre+ to mitigate any impact the introduction of Universal Credit may have on household’s ability to retain their tenancies**

The following plan takes each of these priorities in turn and describes the actions which will be taken to help meet the objective of preventing homelessness whenever possible.

*This is an initial plan and is short-term in nature. As these preliminary tasks are undertaken and partners engaged, the plan will evolve to reflect findings of research exercises, views of stakeholders, etc.*

*As different approaches are experimented with we need to reflect and adapt the plan accordingly. (“We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience” – John Dewey- American Philosopher)*

- **Priority 1 - Continue to evolve and harness community-based services to assist in the prevention of homelessness**

What are we trying to achieve?	Responsible Officer/s	Key Actions / Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
This priority aims to develop a far greater partnership approach across all agencies working in Powys communities, so that they see the prevention of homelessness as something they are part of and know how to bring in relevant support	Head of Housing / Health & Social Care Change Manager	<p>Bring together key senior officers responsible for the Homelessness Strategy, and those involved in developing the Powys 'Vision 2025' and Health &amp; Care Strategy, to agree a joint plan on how agencies can work more effectively in the heart of communities to prevent homelessness</p> <p>Following the re-tendering of all Supporting People funded services, ensure whichever organisation/s commissioned are fully engaged with this agenda</p> <p>Through these meetings / consultations develop a 'shared purpose' in relation to the preventative approach</p> <p>Meet with Housing Associations, the Voluntary Sector, (including Shelter Cymru) and other community stakeholders to agree and embed these principles</p>	<p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign up from agencies in relation to adopting a partnership / 'locality' approach to prevent homelessness and reduce homelessness presentations</li> </ul> <p>Longer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reductions in the number of households triggering homelessness legislation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through Welsh Government homelessness statistical returns</li> </ul>	

- **Priority 2 - By utilising intelligence, explore how we can focus support to households in those localities which are producing the highest proportion of homelessness cases**

What are we trying to achieve?	Responsible Officer/s	Key Actions / Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
Through this priority we aim to gather intelligence and knowledge in relation to the localities / Council Wards of Powys from which most homelessness applications are emanating from. Once this is understood, we can target resources accordingly	Service Manager Housing Solutions / Health & Social Care Change Manager / Supporting People Lead	<p>The review was unable to ascertain, (on a ward by ward basis), where homelessness applications are originating. The information is available but will require a manual exercise and involve an extensive trawl of information. This exercise will be undertaken.</p> <p>Once this has happened, key partners will utilise the findings to prioritise where homelessness prevention services should be focussed</p> <p>Once initial areas have been identified, Supporting People will lead in setting up partnerships in these areas. These partnerships will be broad and engage all organisations working in these localities and look to utilise local assets, such as libraries from which to deliver services</p>	<p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Sign up' from agencies in the localities identified in relation to adopting a partnership approach to prevent homelessness and reduce homelessness presentations</li> </ul> <p>Longer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reductions in the number of households triggering homelessness legislation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through Welsh Government homelessness statistical returns</li> </ul>	

		Housing organisations will form an important part of this approach and agreements on how each will work will be drawn up. (Including Housing Associations, Shelter Cymru and other relevant housing types)			
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- **Priority 3 - Utilise IT systems and technology to prevent homelessness by ensuring systems are in place which flag up issues early to trigger help and advice as early as possible**

What are we trying to achieve?	Responsible Officer/s	Key Actions / Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
Through this priority we aim to introduce an approach, through utilising IT, to ensure any housing issues are identified as early as possible and the relevant support response triggered	Service Manager Housing Solutions / Homelessness Prevention & Housing Options Lead	<p>The authority is currently commissioning a new IT system to help manage its housing allocations and ensure housing needs are recorded and acted upon as effectively and as early as possible. In developing this system, the authority needs to ensure it 'flags' potential homelessness and allows a support response</p> <p>The system will be developed to reflect the 'locality approach to support' being delivered through previous priorities</p>	<p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The adoption of the new system will play a full part in the 'prevention of homelessness locality approach'</li> </ul> <p>Longer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reductions in the number of households</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Through Welsh Government homelessness statistical returns</li> </ul>	

		<p>All agencies working in locality areas, who are likely to work with people at threat of homelessness, will need to be trained in how it works, how to access and complete. A training programme will be devised and delivered.</p> <p>The system will be designed to ensure it gives on-going intelligence in relation to the localities in which homelessness is prevalent in order to inform and influence future commissioning and service development</p>	triggering homelessness legislation		
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- **Priority 4 - In partnership with key agencies explore how a multi-agency case management approach can evolve to meet the needs of households who revolve around the homeless system and place demands on a variety of services**

What are we trying to achieve?	Responsible Officer/s	Key Actions / Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
Through this priority we aim to work in partnership across agencies to support those people with the most complex needs	Head of Housing	Learning from approaches such as the 'Street Vulnerable Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee' being utilised in Neath Port Talbot; key agencies, such as the Police,	<p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An established multi agency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced levels of repeat homelessness</li> <li>• Reduced demands on a</li> </ul>	

and reduce the demands they create on a variety of services		<p>Probation, Housing, Mental Health, Substance Misuse need to meet and discuss the development of a Powys approach for those with most complex needs</p> <p>A decision will need to be taken on how a multi-agency approach will be taken in Powys. Will a case conference approach be adopted? If so, will this be Powys-wide or on a more local basis?</p> <p>Once the way forward is agreed, the agencies will identify those individuals who are creating high demands and should be case-managed on this basis</p> <p>An exercise will be undertaken to understand and develop evidence in relation to the demand these individuals are currently placing on services</p> <p>A partnership approach will then be adopted to try and meet the needs of these individuals</p>	<p>approach to help support those with the most complex needs to ease pressure on a variety of services</p> <p>Longer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilising the evidence gathered at the beginning of the exercise, is there evidence that this approach has led to a reduction in the demands these individuals are placing on services? Learn from</li> </ul>	variety of services	
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		In relation to housing's role, the newly appointed Homelessness Prevention & Housing Options Officers will take the lead on facilitating the housing response and play a full part in any case management approach developed	this and evolve accordingly		
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- **Priority 5 - In partnership with local stakeholders and other statutory services, explore whether a 'Housing First' approach can be developed to support those with the most complex needs**

What are we trying to achieve?	Responsible Officer/s	Key Actions / Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
There is ever-increasing international evidence that a 'Housing First' approach reduces homelessness and rough sleeping for those with the most complex needs. This priority will explore whether this approach could be adopted in Powys	Head of Housing / Service Manager Housing Solutions / Homelessness Prevention & Housing Options Lead	Following on from the actions taken to deliver on 'Priority 4', research with partners whether there is an appetite to develop a 'Housing First' project in Powys  If so, develop learning from how the approach has been adopted elsewhere, with specific reference to examples in rural areas	Short term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine if there is the necessary appetite for a 'Housing First' project within Powys</li> </ul> Longer term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced levels of repeat homelessness</li> <li>• Reduced demands on a variety of services</li> </ul>	

		<p>If considered appropriate, utilise this learning to establish a Housing First project in Powys and bring in relevant housing partners, (either HAs or from the PRS), to provide accommodation</p> <p>Use the multi-agency case management process adopted through priority 4 to commission and service and identify those individuals who would benefit from the approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That a 'Housing First' model has been adopted and led to greater tenancy sustainment for those individuals with the most complex needs</li> </ul>		
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• **Priority 6 - To explore with Housing Association and private landlord partners how to develop affordable and sustainable housing options for single people**

What are we trying to achieve?	Responsible Officer/s	Key Actions / Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
<p>Affordable and sustainable accommodation for single people is increasingly difficult to access.</p> <p>This priority aims to develop options for</p>	Service Manager Housing Solutions / Affordable Housing Team Leader / Homelessness Prevention & Housing Options Lead	Through utilising the recently developed social lettings agency work 'locality by locality' to develop relationships with landlords and collect intelligence in relation to the availability / affordability of PRS	<p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A more detailed understanding of the need for single person accommodation and temporary accommodation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less single people becoming homeless</li> <li>Less single people on social housing waiting lists</li> </ul>	



single people, including actions in relation to the purpose and models used for temporary accommodation		<p>accommodation for single people</p> <p>Work 'locality by locality' with social landlords to understand the affordability and availability of single person accommodation</p> <p>Through the Housing Strategy and development programmes utilise the findings of this work to determine development of affordable single people accommodation in the areas of demand, (both through social housing grant and the private rented sector)</p> <p>Undertake an exercise to reflect on existing temporary accommodation provision in relation to its purpose. For example, what proportion of households are successfully moving on from this accommodation to sustainable housing options?</p> <p>Utilising the findings of this exercise, consider how existing and future provision</p>	<p>Longer term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of single person accommodation in the areas it's needed</li> <li>• Remodelling of temporary accommodation with a clear purpose and vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of single person accommodation through the social housing programme</li> </ul>	
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		should evolve. Do we need temporary accommodation, or should we move towards temp-to-perm options?			
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- **Priority 7 - Develop close partnership working with DWP/Job Centre+ to mitigate any impact the introduction of Universal Credit may have on household's ability to retain their tenancies**

What are we trying to achieve?	Responsible Officer/s	Key Actions / Milestones	Outcomes	Evidence	Update
This priority seeks to ensure close partnership working in relation to the introduction of Universal Credit to ensure all households have the relevant support to sustain their tenancies	Head of Housing / Service Manager Housing Solutions / Homelessness Prevention & Housing Options Lead	Discussions held with DWP/Job Centre + to explore placement of housing advice staff at Job Centres	Short term  Determine if placement of staff at Job Centres is an effective method of providing advice  Longer term  That placement of staff in the Job Centres has been deemed a success	Intervention results in less instances of persons at risk of homelessness due to arrears	

## Dyfed Powys Homelessness Strategy

### Purpose of this document

This document gives a brief overarching direction in relation to how each of the 4 authorities in the region will tackle and prevent homelessness over the coming years.

For greater detail each local authority has completed a review of their current services and from these, and from drawing on this strategy, they have all completed individual action plans.

This document offers the broad direction and, as could be expected, there will be different priorities in each of the 4 councils.

### Key principles / direction of travel



\*Diagram taken from the 'Homeless Hub', Canada <http://homelesshub.ca/solutions/prevention>

The diagram illustrates how international thinking is progressing in relation to effectively tackling homelessness.

The diagram at the top indicates how, traditionally, services and resources have been focussed. The majority are centred on providing the 'emergency response', i.e. are triggered when a household is homeless. To make services more effective and

prevent people falling into crisis we should be thinking differently and focussing resources differently.

As our action plans develop and we implement our strategies, we want to model services to get to households early. We have resources offering support in many community settings, our objective is to harness this support so that it is delivered early; whether through Supporting People funding, financial advice funding, or housing advice funding, etc.; so that people can access help before they fall into crisis and approach the local authority.

Therefore, the purpose of this strategy is to outline our desire to shift the current approach, by drawing resources and demand from the 'emergency response', (and triggering our homelessness duties); to the following two key areas;

- community-based support to prevent homelessness before it becomes a crisis
- assertive support and accommodation options for those with complex needs who are creating more & more demands on a variety of services

By adopting such an approach this strategy argues, that not only will it reflect the direction advocated by a great of international research, but also complement the national and local strategic direction, not only in relation to housing / homelessness; but also, other related service areas such as Health, Social Services and Criminal Justice.

### **National Strategic Context**

The Welsh Government's 'Well Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' is the driving force of national policy. It "requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other, and to prevent persistent problems such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change". To facilitate these aims each authority has now established a 'Public Service Board' bringing all key partners to oversee progress and plan action.

These boards have each developed a plan and any homelessness strategy must work to complement these plans.

Sitting underneath this Act are two other important pieces of recent Welsh Government legislation

- Housing (Wales) Act 2014

This is particularly relevant to this strategy. It introduced new duties for local authorities and its partners; it puts the prevention of homelessness at the very heart of the homelessness agenda and it brought the use of the private rented sector into far more prevalent position in relation to discharging homelessness duties.

However, despite this focus on prevention, a recent Welsh Audit Office report still highlighted how "local authorities continue to focus on managing people in crisis rather than stop it from happening".

This is perhaps an indication of how new legal duties are not enough. If we are to truly change cultures in relation to preventing homelessness, we need to work across departments and agencies.

- Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2015

The other key piece of legislation in relation to homelessness and how we prevent it is the 'Social Services & Well Being (Wales) Act 2015. Once again, the emphasis in this legislation is not to focus resources on 'crisis', but to deliver and commission services which prevent more costly care options.

This offers an excellent opportunity in relation to preventing homelessness. Agencies commissioned by Housing, Social Services and Health should all be working to the same aim; so how do we work in partnership to achieve it?

### **Local Strategic Context**

Firstly, it is worth stressing the importance the Welsh language plays in all four local authority areas. Dyfed / Powys continues to be one of the strongholds of the Welsh language with bilingual communities at the foundation of its culture and everyday life. Communities are continuing to change due to the lack of affordable housing and employment, and this change is having a direct impact on the Welsh language and culture.

To sustain the culture and enhance the use of the Welsh language in all aspects of everyday life in Dyfed /Powys one of the principle aims of this Strategy is to address the lack of opportunities for local people to access both suitable housing and employment due to both availability and / or affordability.

The strategy aims to ensure sufficient opportunities for local people to access affordable or social housing and to enable them to remain within the community of their choice. This is considered in more detail in each individual action plan.

In more general terms, following the implementation of Local Service Boards, in line with the 'Future Generations' agenda, each of the four Dyfed Powys authorities are working to implement over-arching Corporate Plans. These are;

- 'The Carmarthenshire We Want'
- 'Ceredigion for All'
- 'Well Being Plan for Pembrokeshire'
- 'Powys – Vision 2025'

All these plans aim to help people at 'the right time, in the right place' and to empower local communities. All are focussing on developing preventative services to ease the pressure on more costly options. The direction discussed in relation to how we approach homelessness in the first section of this strategy will complement and help meet the aims of all 4 corporate plans.

### **What's happening to homelessness in the region?**

If we are to plan how to take services forward, we must first take stock. To this end, each of the authorities have undertaken reviews of how homelessness services are currently delivered and how they are working in partnership with all key stakeholders.

Clearly, there are differences in each area; but it is possible to identify some key themes.

- **Since the introduction of the recent Housing Act the number of households being found homeless has increased**

Local Authority	Number of households found homeless (under s73) 2015-16	Number of households found homeless (under s73) 2017-18	% increase
Carmarthenshire	573	786	37%
Ceredigion	171	192	12%
Pembrokeshire	342	345	1%
Powys	174	231	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1260</b>	<b>1554</b>	<b>23%</b>

- **This has led to increasing pressure on Housing Options / ‘the emergency response’**

In discussions with managers and staff responsible for fulfilling each authority’s homelessness duties; the evidence suggests the increase in numbers is having an impact.

Housing Options Teams are carefully managing their resources to meet increased demands. However, there is concern if demand continues to rise there less time dedicated to each case and the options available to assist and help the household resolve their housing issue are becoming increasingly difficult to access.

In effect, authorities face a choice. Either they will need to increase staff numbers to help support the larger numbers of households approaching the statutory service; or they can explore ways to help ‘turn off’ this demand.

- **People are approaching Council homelessness services with ever more complex needs**

The other key piece of feedback from those delivering the ‘emergency response’ and discharging the authority’s homelessness duties, was the increase in the complexity of the issues being faced by some households who are approaching them. The reasons for this need to be explored in more depth, but the evidence suggests that those with a variety of complex mental ill health, substance misuse and offending

issues are unable to sustain their housing and are returning regularly for help and assistance.

Those working in the service often feel 'out of their depth' in tackling these issues and the households create significant demands on their already stretched time.

- **Less affordable options for single people, (especially those under 35)**

To add more difficulties to the two factors discussed above, the options for single people, which are both affordable and sustainable are becoming increasingly difficult to access. The table below indicates the proportion of single people on each Council's current housing register.

Local Authority	% of households with one bed housing need on housing register
Carmarthenshire	40%
Ceredigion	49%
Pembrokeshire	61%
Powys	44%

As the table illustrates, the demand for single person accommodation would appear high. The proportion of households on waiting list with a need for one bedroomed accommodation far exceeds the proportion of one bed properties available within the social housing stock. (This becomes even more pronounced when you omit one bed accommodation designated for older people).

The private rented sector was highlighted as a key partner in meeting these needs, but the reviews indicate an ever-greater reluctance for landlords to get engaged in this agenda.

Landlords are reportedly leaving the market, not only because of increased regulation, (such as 'Rent Smart Wales'); but also, welfare reform which is being perceived as an increasing risk when letting properties and will be discussed below.

- **Challenges of the introduction of Universal Credit**

Universal Credit is a benefit being introduced across the UK to replace 6 existing means tested benefits. It is already in place in all 4 authorities for claimants who have less complex claims but will be going live for all new claimants, and anyone who experiences a change of circumstance, imminently across the 4 LA areas.

All reviews have flagged the concerns of agencies, both working in housing and beyond, in relation to how this new approach will impact upon vulnerable people and the impact it will have on them being able to pay their rent and vis a vis retain their housing.

- **All services are facing on-going financial challenges**

In recent years local authority services across the region have faced the challenge of making efficiency savings, not just in relation to homelessness and housing, it has been a challenge facing all public services

There is no indication of this environment changing imminently. We are not able to provide extra services, we are in a position where we must think more carefully about how we spend existing / decreasing funds.

### **Our Key Priorities - What are we going to do?**

To reflect national and local objectives and tackle issues indicated within reviews, we will;

- **Continue to evolve and harness community-based services to assist in the prevention of homelessness**

We need to manage the increased numbers of households triggering homelessness duties. Therefore, we need to find a way of working to get to people earlier and 'turn off' this demand.

There are community services currently aiming to do this. For example, the Regional Supporting People Plan is advocating the development of locality-based support services across the region and this is in the process of being adopted. These services will play a key role.

However, it is not just these services. Health services are moving into the community, Social Services are recognising the importance of getting to people early, and developments like 'Local Area Coordination' & 'Community Connectors' are vital to tap into. Community led organisations, such as food banks, are in a position where they can spot vulnerable people early and draw in the support they need.

We will also work closely with social housing providers, both Council and Housing Associations. Their housing officers are the 'eyes and ears' on the estates they work; and their local intelligence will be harnessed to ensure support can be delivered early to any household facing housing issues.

- **By utilising intelligence, explore how we can focus support to households in those localities which are producing the highest proportion of homelessness cases in order to prevent it**

From research undertaken as part of the review in Carmarthenshire, it was established that those triggering homelessness duties are often living in certain areas. There are 58 Council Wards in the authority; over 50% of households found homeless / at threat of homelessness came from just 10 of these wards.

If we are to focus scant resources, we need to develop this intelligence across the region. We will identify the wards which are experiencing most homelessness, and then model our early intervention services, so they are targeting these wards / households and preventing homelessness.

- **Utilise IT systems and technology to prevent homelessness by ensuring systems are in place which flag up issues early to trigger help and advice as early as possible**



IT can have an important role to play in identifying issues early. Ceredigion already has a system in place which allows households and the agencies they are working with to upload their housing needs on line. This then allows a response early and can 'turn off' demands on the frontline service.

A similar system is now being commissioned by Carmarthenshire and Powys. When establishing these systems, it is essential they are developed in full partnership with partner agencies working in communities and that they can trigger responses for support before any statutory duty.

- **In partnership with key agencies explore how a multi-agency case management approach can evolve to meet the needs of households who revolve around the homelessness system and place demands on a variety of services**

The reviews found that all authorities are struggling to meet the needs of those with the most complex needs. These might not constitute large numbers of households, but the demands they create are significant; not just on housing services but Health, Social Services, criminal justice and substance misuse services.

Other local authority areas in Wales are trying to meet the needs of this group by establishing partnerships to 'case manage' the support these households receive. For example, Neath Port Talbot has established a 'Street Vulnerable Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee', chaired by South Wales Police and involving a variety of agencies.

This type of partnership approach, which doesn't simply end once the household is housed, will be explored to identify if it can help reduce demands on homelessness services and improve the outcomes for those households who often 'revolve' through the homelessness system.

- **In partnership with local stakeholders and other statutory services, each local authority to explore whether a 'Housing First' approach can be developed to support those with the most complex needs**

In partnership with the multi-agency approach described above, each authority will also explore taking a 'Housing First' approach to meeting the needs of the households with the most complex needs.

#### **What is Housing First?**

“'Housing First' is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional support and services as needed” -WG 2018

For more details the Welsh Government have published Housing First – National Principles & Guidance - <https://gov.wales/docs/desh/publications/180206-housing-first-en.pdf>

The approach is being advocated by both UK and Welsh Governments and international evidence suggests it leads to far more positive outcomes for these households in relation to the sustainability of their accommodation.

By taking this approach, authorities will work over and above their duties. Any service will ignore issues like 'priority need' or 'intentionality'; the housing provided will sit outside the normal allocations process and be made available on a permanent basis.

Each authority will explore with partners, such as housing providers, Health and Social Services; if there is an appetite to develop this type of service and, if so, plan and commission a service to reflect local needs.

- **Each authority to explore with their Housing Association and private landlord partners how to develop affordable and sustainable housing options for single people**

As discussed, it is not just those with the most complex issues who are placing pressures on the emergency response. Each authority is facing pressure securing housing options for single people.

Therefore, as part of this strategy, we will develop plans with our partners to increase affordable and sustainable housing solutions for single people.

- **Each authority to develop close partnership working with DWP/Job Centre+ to mitigate any impact the introduction of Universal Credit may have on household's ability to retain their tenancies**

The implementation of this new benefit system has been flagged up as a challenge. Work is on-going in all four authorities to prepare for this, but it needs to be key objective of this strategy to ensure we are working in close partnership with DWP and Job Centre+ colleagues so that the required help and support is available for all households making the transition to the new benefit.

## **Our Strategy in Summary**



Returning to the diagram, each of our objectives looks to explore how we can refocus services, so they are working to either prevent households becoming homeless or offer the right support and accommodation options to avoid them becoming homeless again.

As each action plan evolves during the period of the strategy greater details on how we achieve this will become apparent and it is important that learning is shared across the region.

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## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

HEALTH, CARE AND HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
October 2018

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor James Evans  
Portfolio Holder for Corporate Governance, Housing and Public Protection

**SUBJECT:** 'Love Where You Live' – a Tenancy Sustainability Strategy for Powys

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**REPORT FOR:** Discussion and Information

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## 1. Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposal and outline Action Plan to introduce to Powys a comprehensive Tenancy Sustainability Strategy: 'Love Where You Live'. The Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider 'Love Where You Live' as a Statement of Intent for the Council's Tenancy Sustainability Strategy.

## 2. Proposal

- 2.1 The Council provides homes for one in ten of all households living in Powys as well as supporting mixed tenure estates that were initially developed by the Council. How the Council manages these estates and its tenancies will impact upon how people feel about their homes and their neighbourhoods and how they can take advantage of social and economic opportunities to improve their quality of life.
- 2.2 A comprehensive Tenancy Sustainability Strategy which brings together in a single coherent plan all that we need to know and do to help people make the most of their homes, neighbourhoods and lives offers an effective way of the Council improving life in Powys. 'Love Where You Live' is the proposed strategy for the county. 'Love Where You Live' – an Executive Summary of which is attached to this report as Appendix 1 - is currently a 'Statement of Intent' which will, as it develops, impact not only on services provided directly by Housing Services but also those provided by other services. A fuller version of the draft strategy is attached at appendix 2.
- 2.3 'Love Where You Live' focuses on how tenancy and estate management can help people enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods. It is designed to recognise the importance of understanding how people experience and feel about their homes and neighbourhoods and the services offered by the Council. 'Love Where You Live' has three themes:

- **Understanding.** This theme focuses on how we better capture the way people feel about our services and their neighbourhoods and how that intelligence can then be used to shape policy and practice.
  - **People.** This theme has been inspired by the work being undertaken to help people manage and make the most of the transition to Full Service Universal Credit. It will include a greater focus on supporting people to find and keep decent paid employment. A smarter approach will be taken to offering practical support people for people to enjoy their homes, especially those making their own home for the first time. This theme will be developed alongside the Council's work to develop the Powys economy and create more and better employment opportunities in the county.
  - **Place.** This theme recognises that clean and tidy places encourage pride by individuals and communities in where they live and have been proven to reduce anti-social behaviour, crime, encourage community interaction and support self-help and reliance by individual households. It proposes a new locality based approach to grounds and estate maintenance to address major concerns about local landscapes, highlighted by tenants and residents.
- 2.4 A draft Action Plan has been drawn up for 'Love Where You Live' with a full launch planned for April 2019. A copy of the draft is attached at Appendix 3. This is to allow the strategy and Action Plan to be further developed over the winter period. This time table allows for sufficient resources to remain dedicated to the introduction of Full Service Universal Credit in October 2018 and the Council to respond to the recommendations and actions arising from the review, undertaken in summer 2018, of the Common Housing Register.
- 2.5 Delivery of 'Love Where You Live' will be overseen operationally by a Project Group, with members drawn from all relevant services. This approach is currently being used successfully for the preparations for Universal Credit Project and the review of the Common Housing Register.

### **3. Finance**

- 3.1 'Love Where You Live' because of the intention to focus activity on communities where the Council provides affordable and secure housing will be led by Housing Services. This is because in the majority of these areas the Council remains the major landlord and property owner and is therefore able to deploy the resources of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in pursuit of improving the lives and neighbourhoods of its tenants. While the Council will be clear about not transgressing the regulatory boundaries between HRA and General Fund (GF) activity, the transition over the years via such policies as 'Right to Buy' to mixed tenure estates, means that it is possible that non HRA tenants and owners, will also be able to gain benefit from the implementation of 'Love Where You Live'.

- 3.2 Proposals for investment in 2019-2020 arising from Love Where You Live will be presented as part of the annual budget setting process for the Council, reported to Cabinet later in 2018.

#### **4 Views of the Scrutiny Committee**

- 4.1 The views of the Heath, Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee are sought on the proposed Love where you live Strategy.

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Email: [andy.thompson@powys.gov.uk](mailto:andy.thompson@powys.gov.uk)

#### **Appendix 1 – Love where you live executive summary**



Love Where You  
Live Executive Summ

#### **Appendix 2 – Love where you live draft strategy**



Love Where You  
Live v3.docx

#### **Appendix 3 – Love where you live draft action plan**



Love Where You  
Live Action Plan v2.d

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### 1. Introduction

It is not hard to love where you live if that place is safe and secure, clean and tidy and makes you proud to be part of the community. Powys County Council provides homes for just under one in ten of all households living in the county and is ideally placed to help people love where they live.

Love Where You Live is the Council's strategy for our estate and tenancy management services to help make the experience of living in a Council home something of which to be proud.

#### 1.2 What is Love Where You Live?

Love Where You Live focuses on how tenancy and estate management can help people enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods

-  Understanding. To continually improve we need to continually know what to improve by understanding how our services and estates are experienced by tenants and residents.
-  People. To help people be able to enjoy their homes and communities, we can support, encourage and help people to play an active part in their communities and economy as well as improve their own personal well being
-  Place. To give people reasons to love where they live, we need to make sure that the environment is green and thriving, clean and tidy – in short, a pleasant place to be

'Love Where You Live' will make a substantial contribution to 'Powys 2025':

- Economy and Learning and Skills: 'there is significant investment in the development of affordable and sustainable housing and in the fabric of our estates, benefitting the local economy and creating employment and training opportunities'.
- Health & Care: 'there is an increasing supply of housing with care and support'.
- Residents and Communities: 'communities have access to a choice of both affordable and market housing and the improvements to the fabric of our estates will increase tenant and resident satisfaction with their communities'.

#### 1.3 Next Steps

Love Where You Live brings together and recognises a lot of Housing Services work already under way, while at the same time suggesting challenge from an 'experience' perspective and offering proposals for different or new activity, which will enhance the way people experience our services and neighbourhoods.

It is divided into three sections – Understanding, People and Places. Each section outlines the current state of play and sets out ideas for the future.







There is an overall Action Plan, based on the outcomes desired. This Action Plan assumes no changes to the current structure of Housing Services. That does not mean that change should not be considered if upon further development of Love Where You Live, changes in the way we work are needed to improve the way our housing services are experienced.

*“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”. Maya Angelou (Poet and Civil Rights Activist)*

## 2.0 Understanding

The concept of home is as much about emotion as it is about logic<sup>1</sup>. This means our understanding of our services needs to reflect the experience people have of the Council and the work it does in providing them with a home. This means we need to gather and be able to understand a mix of objective and subjective intelligence and be able to use it wisely and effectively to shape services, so that people are better able to enjoy the experience of where they live. We also need to consider the future tenants of the Council which means finding out more about the needs and aspirations of younger people.

### *Understanding Action Plan – Overview*

-  Review all current engagement and consultation using an agreed set of criteria, drawing on the expertise and knowledge of other Council services, most importantly Youth Services (to make sure we capture the views of the tenants and households of tomorrow) and Communications (to make sure we are exploiting effectively all avenues of communication and contributing to corporate intelligence gathering)
-  Use an understanding of best practice and the outcome of the review to identify options to increase the effectiveness of engagement and intelligence gathering
-  Introduce any necessary changes to our approach to engagement and gathering and using intelligence
-  Revise and amend our management and performance indicators (including how we understand the actual impact of our contractors and service providers on clients and tenants) to focus our attention on the client experience, when we shape and deliver services directly or indirectly
-  Develop and introduce simple and easy-to-access approaches to continually gain feedback on how our services are experienced
-  Improve our understanding the needs and desires of housing applicants and tenants when agreeing housing options and allocations, to drive forward as the way we let homes ‘right first time, every time’

## 3.0 People

For people to enjoy where they live, they need to feel safe and secure in the knowledge that they can maintain and enjoy their home. Not everyone finds that easy to do, which is why we need to make sure we are able to help everyone sustain their tenancies. Understanding what we do will help us shape our services but there will be a need for more intensive and targeted support for some people who, because of their circumstances, life chances or background are at risk of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, economic dislocation and social isolation, may be at greater risk of tenancy failure or an unhappy experience in their home.

One of the most important aspects of sustaining a home is having the financial capacity to do so, a point recognised by the Welsh Government’s vision: ‘to provide affordable homes and sustainable communities with excellent services to tenants and customers’<sup>2</sup>. Around four in ten adults in Wales do not manage their money day-to-day as well as they might and only a quarter of working-age

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<sup>1</sup> The Idea of Home – Social Research, John Hopkins Press, 1991; Home – Blunt and Dowling, Routledge, 2006

<sup>2</sup> Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales - Welsh Government, 2016

adults in Wales have a savings buffer equivalent to three months income or more.<sup>3</sup> Encouraging and supporting financial capacity and capability is therefore an important part of a landlord's role helping support people to retain and enjoy their homes.

### *People Action Plan – Overview*

There are a number of initiatives already underway, as part of current tenancy management and the preparations for the introduction to Powys of Full Service Universal Credit. These will be further developed and supplemented by new services and changes to policy and practice to improve the way we help people be better able to take advantage of opportunities to enjoy a better life. Continue to make sure the information, support and guidance to all CHR applicants helps them make informed choices to improve the likelihood of a successful tenancy.

-  Make greater use of Personal Housing Plans to create more personalised and relevant tenancy management
-  A robust 'Financial Well-being Assessment' will be used to help not only housing applicants but existing tenants who face financial disruption or difficulties matching income and expenditure
-  Tri-Annual Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT will allow for closer relationships between the Council and our tenants, helping us to work together to respond promptly to any requests for help and support to sustain tenancies and encourage financial independence
-  Encourage early intervention to prevent breaches of tenancy around home and garden condition and anti-social behaviour.
-  Housing officers will be able to spot signs of fuel poverty and offer or signpost basic energy saving advice (including wiping debt from meters, accessing low-income tariffs and reducing energy needs)
-  Develop a comprehensive and locally sensitive Housing Services 'Highways to Work' Action Plan

## **4.0 Places**

Clean and tidy places encourage pride by individuals and communities in where they live and have been proven to reduce anti-social behaviour crime, encourage community interaction and support self-help and reliance by individual households. That is why effective estate management is critically important to giving people reasons to love where they live. Encouraging people to take part, either collectively or as individuals in maintaining and improving their environment can also help develop stronger and more sustainable communities. The Council's 'Health and Care Strategy' makes a commitment to: "make best use of community strengths and the physical environment to support people to maintain their health and wellbeing"<sup>4</sup>.

Now that the Council is once again building new homes, the design and layout of both homes and communities needs to take into account what will give people a sense of social ownership. Appropriate emphasis should be given to reducing the opportunities for anti-social behaviour, discontent amongst and between members of communities and high cost or complex maintenance and management liabilities. The desires and preference of current and future residents should influence design and appearance – homes last for a lot longer than even architectural fashions and mistakes have been made in the past in the way social housing has been designed<sup>5</sup>.










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<sup>3</sup> Financial Capability in Wales - Money Advice Service, 2015

<sup>4</sup> The Health and Care Strategy for Powys - Powys County Council, June 2017

<sup>5</sup> Never Again: Avoiding the Mistakes of the Past - Young Foundation, March 2012

## *Places Action Plan – Overview*

-  To encourage neighbourhood pride, community events and activity that bring together people in pursuit of a common and widely recognisable outcome, will be promoted.
-  Wherever possible, localised, dedicated teams will be deployed for work in housing estates on in villages to encourage a focus on quality through local pride and ownership.
-  Environmental activity, such as gardening, will be encouraged with the back-up of tenancy condition enforcement in respect of gardens
-  Community activity will be promoted by piloting a resident reward scheme
-  Play areas will be focused on areas where there is clear demand and where they can be managed with the involvement of or directly by the community, to avoid being focal points for anti-social and criminal behaviour and to provide the most opportunities for children to play and enjoy their time outdoors. There will be a Play Area Strategy to guide investment in play areas on housing estates
-  Greenery (grassed areas, trees, planted areas, shrubberies, hedges), footpaths and car parks should be managed and maintained so that they are not overgrown, unsightly, in poor condition or present risks to the health, safety and well-being of communities. This includes individual gardens and as well as shared areas. Gardens, Open Spaces and Boundaries guidance will be introduced to improve our work in these critical areas of activity
-  To make roads and pavements safer and less congested, wherever possible off-street in-curtilage car parking will be encouraged and facilitated.
-  Unsightly non-residential structures, such as garages, will be removed to create space for new activity, including new homes or areas for play, and to improve the appearance of neighbourhoods. There will be a Garage Strategy to guide investment in garage areas on housing estates.
-  To make sure that Anti-social Behaviour is dealt with quickly by the agency best equipped to resolve the problem, a rapid referral system will be introduced.




Date: September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018

## 1. Introduction

It is not hard to love where you live if that place is safe and secure, clean and tidy and makes you proud to be part of the community. Powys County Council provides homes for just under one in ten of all households living in the county and is ideally placed to help people love where they live. Love Where You Live is the Council's strategy for our estate and tenancy management services to help make the experience of living in a Council home something of which to be proud. There is a clear interdependence of understanding what makes our homes and estates good places to live with how we help people make the most of their homes and how we create places where people are proud to live. That is why Love Where You Live is an all embracing approach to tenancy and estate management and sustainability.

### 1.2 What is Love Where You Live?

Love Where You Live focuses on how tenancy and estate management can help people enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods

-  **Understanding.** To continually improve we need to continually know what to improve by understanding how our services and estates are experienced by tenants and residents.
-  **People.** To help people be able to enjoy their homes and communities, we can support, encourage and help people to play an active part in their communities and economy as well as improve their own personal well being
-  **Place.** To give people reasons to love where they live, we need to make sure that the environment is green and thriving, clean and tidy – in short, a pleasant place to be

Love Where You Live will contribute to the new Service Standard for all Powys Housing Services:

- ✓ **Clear.** we will be easy to contact and do what we say we do
- ✓ **Respect.** we will treat you and your home with respect
- ✓ **Understand.** we will understand the issue or question you have
- ✓ **Resolve.** we will resolve your issue where ever possible the first time
- ✓ **Learn.** we will learn from complaints, issues raised and feedback

The Council's values and guiding principles will define the way we work:

- ✓ **Professional.** We act with professionalism and integrity
- ✓ **Positive.** We take a positive attitude in all we do
- ✓ **Progressive.** We take a proactive and responsible approach to planning for the future
- ✓ **Open.** We keep each other informed, share knowledge and act with honesty and integrity
- ✓ **Collaborative.** We work constructively and willingly on joint initiatives

Love Where You Live will make a substantial contribution to 'Powys 2025'<sup>1</sup>:

- Economy and Learning and Skills: 'there is significant investment in the development of affordable and sustainable housing'
- Health & Care: 'there is an increasing supply of housing with care'

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<sup>1</sup> Powys 2025: Our Vision for the Future – Powys County Council, 2018

- Residents and Communities: ‘communities have access to a choice of both affordable and market housing’

### 1.3 Next Steps

Love Where You Live brings together and recognises a lot of Housing Services work already under way, while at the same time suggesting challenge from an ‘experience’ perspective and offering proposals for different or new activity that will enhance the way people experience our services and neighbourhoods.

It is divided into three sections – Understanding, People and Places. Each section outlines the current state of play and sets out ideas for the future. As Love Where You Live goes into action it will evolve to reflect the feedback we get from our communities and residents and the opportunities and challenges that come about as society and the economy develop and change.

There is an overall Action Plan, to deliver the outcomes desired. This Action Plan assumes no changes to the current structure of Housing Services. That does not mean that change should not be considered if upon further development of Love Where You Live, changes in the way we work are needed to improve the way our housing services are experienced.

## 2. Understanding

*“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel”. Maya Angelou (Poet and Civil Rights Activist)*

The concept of home is as much about emotion as it is about logic<sup>2</sup>. This means our understanding of our services needs to reflect the experience people have of the Council and the work it does in providing them with a home. This means we need to gather and be able to understand a mix of objective and subjective intelligence and be able to use it wisely and effectively to shape services so that people are better able to enjoy the experience of where they live. We also need to consider the future tenants of the Council which means finding out more about the needs and aspirations of younger people.

### *Current Status*

A Tenancy Engagement Team of four officers is responsible for leading on engagement and feedback across the service, with a Tenant Liaison co-ordinator and two Tenant Liaison Officers dedicated to the engagement needed to make the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) investment a success.

There is considerable contact between housing team members, in particular First Contact Officers (FCOs), Homelessness Prevention and Options Officers (HPOOs), Housing Management and Options Officers (HMOOs), Tenancy Support Officers (TSOs) and Surveyors, with current and potential tenants (for example housing applications, allocation and letting of homes, income recovery, repairs inspections and general enquiries) that open up avenues for feedback to be continuously gathered either directly or indirectly. Other contacts occur as result of the existing tenancy visit practice of Introductory Tenancy Visits (starting with a settling in visit after two months), Mutual Exchange Visits and Transfer Request Visits. However, there are many tenants with whom we have no contact at all from year to year.

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<sup>2</sup> The Idea of Home – Social Research, John Hopkins Press, 1991; Home – Blunt and Dowling, Routledge, 2006

Social media, including Facebook, is being used more and more to reach out to residents, opening up new avenues for constant and real-time engagement, intelligence gathering and promoting closer tenant-landlord relationships.

Information is gathered about why offers of accommodation are refused, providing us with some insight into the desirability of particular areas and property types and the appropriateness of our allocations policy and practice. However we do not always gather enough detailed information about why tenancies are ended to be able to understand fully why people choose to leave the Council. Increasing our understanding of why people choose where they wish to live – and where they do not – and why they terminate their tenancies is included in the Common Housing Register Action Plan, which will complete its work in spring 2019.

Housing Services has in place a wide and comprehensive range of formal consultation and customer research processes in place. These have been guided by the Local Tenant Participation Strategy (LTPS) introduced in 2014 and revised for 2018-2020 with an ambitious Action Plan running for same period. The LTPS includes a Service User Engagement Strategy which will be monitored by a Local Tenant Participation Strategy Sub Group.

A number of the current approaches to consultation and engagement rely to a lesser or greater extent upon there being an explicit and potentially time hungry commitment by tenants to participate. Not all our tenants are in a position to make such a commitment but all will have valuable insights into how our services are experienced.

Housing Services has a number of performance indicators and a single Service Standard. These are collectively used to set out what residents can expect of the Council, guide the way we manage our work and assess how effective are our services. Of the formal performance indicators, only the measures of repairs, adaptations and major works satisfaction can be said to relate directly to how our services are experienced by residents. In the case of day-to-day repairs, the repairs contractor Heart of Wales Property Services (HOWPS) is carrying out satisfaction surveys of those tenants who have had a repair undertaken. There is currently no independent monitoring of tenant satisfaction with repairs and adaptations, covering all tenants who request repairs. A review of management and performance indicators and the eleven Services Standards began in June 2018.

The Council's Communications Team consults with local people on the work of the Council. Intelligence gathering and engagement undertaken by Housing Services, which provides homes for 10% of Powys households, could usefully be used to complement and support this corporate activity.

### *Next Steps*

Capturing the views of all our residents is essential to give us more of the intelligence we need to constantly shape and reshape our policy and practice to reflect the needs and desires of our tenants.

The intelligence we gather should:

- ☺ Reflect the views of as many of our tenants, clients and neighbourhoods as possible
- ☺ Be used to shape policy and practice
- ☺ Be shared with those who share it with us

To keep our approach to consultation and engagement relevant and productive, we need to constantly review the effectiveness and impact of all our consultation and engagement work, and our service standards and customer facing performance indicators, against four criteria:

- ? *How representative of the community – be that a local estate, a specific group of tenants or clients or all tenants – is the intelligence we receive?*
- ? *How does the intelligence help us constantly understand how our services (and those delivering services on our behalf) are experienced by the community, tenants and clients?*
- ? *How is the intelligence we are gaining being tangibly and practically used to shape policy and practice?*
- ? *How cost effective is the way intelligence gathered, understood and translated quickly into policy and practice?*

A framework for assessing current engagement and intelligence gathering activity has been developed to support Love Where You Live.

#### *Understanding Action Plan – Overview*

- Review all current engagement and consultation using the four criteria set out above, drawing also on the expertise and knowledge of other services, most importantly Youth Services (to make sure we capture the views of the tenants and households of tomorrow) and Communications (to make sure we are exploiting effectively all avenues of communication and contributing to corporate intelligence gathering)
- Use an understanding of best practice and the outcome of the review to identify options to increase the effectiveness of engagement and intelligence gathering, assessing all proposals against our criteria
- Introduce any necessary changes to our approach to engagement and gathering and using intelligence
- Revise and amend our management and performance indicators (including how we understand the actual impact of our contractors and service providers on clients and tenants) to focus our attention on the client experience, when we shape and deliver services directly or indirectly
- Develop and introduce simple and easy-to-access approaches to continually gain feedback on how our services are experienced
- Establish an appropriate resource to support, develop and manage intelligence and understanding, to make sure our consultation and intelligence gathering are able to constantly inform improvements to services (see Appendix B).

#### *Concepts and Proposals*

- 👁️ **Housing Services Service Standard.** A single service standard for Housing Services and an appropriately relevant set of management and performance indicators. *Proposal within 'Tenant Satisfaction and Improving Service Standards Action Plan 2018-2019' - under discussion by SMT.*
- 👁️ **Tenant Satisfaction Survey.** SMT has agreed to carry out a tenant satisfaction survey every year/every two years. This survey will be carried out by an external company using an existing methodology like Housemark's STAR survey. *Proposal within 'Tenant Satisfaction and Improving Service Standards Action Plan 2018-2019' - under discussion by SMT.*
- 👁️ **Three Yearly Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT.** Every tenant getting a visit once every three years would give us the opportunity build a relationship and capture intelligence from as many tenants as possible about services and perceptions of the Council as a landlord and help us maintain up to date information about the condition of our homes and commission preventative repairs and maintenance. This approach guarantees that every tenant will have the opportunity for a face-to-face conversation with members of the housing team. Conversations during such a visit could encompass experiences of all Council services, health and well-being, safeguarding, financial security, access to other services (e.g. digital



communication), fuel poverty, housing options (e.g. under occupation, suitability of property for people with mobility or health related needs), property condition, garden maintenance, and where there is a potentially adverse health and safety impact, hoarding. It would also allow us to highlight to other agencies risks, such as 'cuckooing'. A pilot project to test the feasibility and effectiveness of visits to all tenants has been prepared for Powys but has been put on hold since July 2017 due to concerns about the capacity of HMOOs to undertake such visits (one hour per on-site visit plus one hour follow up equals 11,000 hours – 5.2 FTE per annum for an annual visit) and the risks of generating demands, for example around repairs and maintenance, that the Council may not currently be able to meet.. *Pilot stage – next stages are to agree a timescale for progressing the proposal, the nature of the visit and conversation, test and validate with the help of a pilot and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and assess outcomes before considering a full roll-out*

- 👁️ **Tell Us By Text.** Post activity surveys by text of matters such as how housing applications are managed and the satisfaction with the standards of a new home upon letting, would allow for direct understanding of how services are experienced by tenants and inform management of both the Council itself and its service providers with first-hand intelligence. *Concept stage – next stages are to agree the concept as one to develop, formalise the questions to be asked, test and validate with the help of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and agree the roll-out programme.*
- 👁️ **Customer Call-backs.** A quick call to gather feedback after a service has been delivered will provide useful intelligence and demonstrate a commitment to customer service. Estimates suggest this will need around 2,700 calls using current technology. If the service becomes more digitalised more efficient ways than phone calls could be deployed (see above). *Proposal within 'Tenant Satisfaction and Improving Service Standards Action Plan 2018-2019' - under discussion by SMT.*
- 👁️ **Question of the Month.** A question that all officers ask everyone they meet, the question being changed every month (could also be used on e-mails, Facebook and texts), to prompt conversations, relationships and gather useful information about ad hoc issues. *Concept stage.*
- 👁️ **Why Did You Say No?** Improving the information we gather about tenancy terminations and property refusals will help us shape the way we allocate and manage homes around the experiences of our residents, reducing the time taken to allocate homes, reducing the risk of avoidable tenancy terminations and establishing stable communities. To target investment where it is most needed, both spatially and socially, such intelligence will also help inform new development programmes for both the Council and other developers. *Proposals under development.*

### 3. People

For people to enjoy where they live, they need to feel safe and secure in the knowledge that they can maintain and enjoy their home. Not everyone finds that easy to do which is why we need to make sure we are able to help everyone sustain their tenancies. Understanding what we do will help us shape our services but there will be a need for more intensive and targeted support for some people who, because of their circumstances, life chances or background are at risk of rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, economic dislocation and social isolation, may be at greater risk of tenancy failure or an unhappy experience in their home.

One of the most important aspects of sustaining a home is having the financial capacity to do so, a point recognised by the Welsh Government's vision: 'to provide affordable homes and sustainable communities with excellent services to tenants and customers'<sup>3</sup>. Around four in ten adults in Wales

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<sup>3</sup> Financial Inclusion Strategy for Wales - Welsh Government, 2016

do not manage their money day-to-day as well as they might and only a quarter of working-age adults in Wales have a savings buffer equivalent to three months income or more.<sup>4</sup> Encouraging and supporting financial capacity and capability is therefore an important part of a landlord's role helping support people to retain and enjoy their homes.

Housing organisations have for many years worked to help reduce unemployment amongst their tenants<sup>5</sup>. The need for housing organisations to be involved in helping people find work and navigate changes to social security and so sustain their tenancies and homes is growing in the context of 'Welfare Reform'<sup>6</sup>.

### *Current Status*

The day-to-day work of HMOOs includes a lot of one-to-one activity to help individuals find a home if they are homeless, through Personal Housing Plans, general support and drawing upon the resources provided by the Supporting People service. This personal support continues at a less intense level to those people who are given a home in property owned by the Council, primarily through contacts prompted by income recovery work, requests for home moves and help resolving anti-social behaviour. The introduction of HPOOs in summer 2018 and the introduction of TSOs in autumn 2018 will increase the resources available to support those looking for a home and those trying to sustain their tenancies in the face of financial hardship.

Changes will be made to the way Supporting People services are provided after April 2019, with a move to a locality model of support. The way this service is shaped and then provided will be an important component of the overall approach taken to sustaining tenancies.

Considerable additional investment is now being made, as part of the preparation for the introduction to Powys in autumn 2018 of Full Service Universal Credit, in tenancy sustainability, with an immediate focus on helping people manage the transition to the new social security arrangements. The immediate focus of this work is by necessity focusing on financial management and income recovery in the context of wider social security changes. However this work is laying a solid foundation for developing a wider approach to tenant sustainability.

There is little direct work currently undertaken by Housing Services to help people secure employment or if working, where practicable increase their income. However, there are numerous examples across the United Kingdom of social landlords using their local knowledge and purchasing power to support employment, some of which could be considered by Powys County Council.

While anti-social behaviour (ASB) has little or no effect on the quality of life of the majority of people living on our estates, it does have a significant impact on the lives of a minority of people who are in locations where ASB takes place. Prevention of ASB is the most effective option but there is a balance to be struck between prevention and enforcement<sup>7</sup>. This needs to take account of the differing perspectives of people on ASB and the impact on the sustainability of individual tenancies – both those affected by and those responsible for ASB - and communities which can suffer reputational damage and loss of social confidence as a result of ASB. Of particular concern is the recent growth of 'cuckooing' and 'county lines' activity in Powys, in which organised criminal groups from the West Midlands and Merseyside conurbations are extending their marketing of illicit

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<sup>4</sup> Financial Capability in Wales - Money Advice Service, 2015

<sup>5</sup> Ends & Means: The Future Roles of Social Housing in England - ESRC, 2007; Employment and Skills Development Initiatives Provided by Housing Associations in Wales - Community Housing Cymru, 2016

<sup>6</sup> Review of Impacts of Welfare Reform - Learning & Work Institute, October 2017

<sup>7</sup> Anti-social Behaviour Strategies: Finding a Balance - Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2005

narcotics into Powys. The Council is a member of the Powys Community Safety Partnership and developing the involvement in this by Housing Services will be an essential component in helping to reduce crime in Powys and our housing estates.

### *Next Steps*

Tenancy sustainability policy and practice, interventions and services, should be designed to support the core principals set out below:

- ☺ Enjoy Life – helping applicants and tenants have the advice and support they need to make the most of their home and take advantage of social opportunities to improve their health and well-being.
- ☺ Financial Stability – supporting applicants and tenants to have sufficient financial resilience and employability to take advantage of employment and career opportunities and successfully manage the impact of changes in social security and the ups and downs of economic life.

Interventions will therefore need to reflect reasonable and community-friendly individual aspirations on how people want to enjoy and use their home and become part of the wider community.

Work that does provide people with a secure income that is sufficient to cover their basic living costs is generally recognised as being beneficial to overall social well-being. The Council's 'Health and Care Strategy' makes a commitment to: "grow the Powys workforce through local training and development"<sup>8</sup>. Many landlords have initiatives designed to help people achieve this goal<sup>9</sup>. However, it is difficult to gauge the tangible success or effectiveness of many of these interventions. It will for example be necessary to understand the impact of displacement arising from a fixed pool of work being redistributed amongst a fixed pool of people rather than additional work being created.

The design and deployment of any training and employment interventions to be supported by Housing Services will need to recognise the changes in work over the past few years. At the lower end of the income scale, wages are no longer keeping pace with inflation. The increasing use of zero hours contracts and other forms of insecure employment tenure have made it harder for people to manage their lives around a predictable and secure income. Since the introduction of changes in 2012 under the 'Welfare Reform' programme the social security system has become less generous and more prescriptive for many people with low incomes, both employed and unemployed. People in Wales endure the lowest take home pay in the United Kingdom<sup>10</sup>. It will therefore be necessary to consider the extent to which insecure, poorly paid work increases overall well-being compared to relatively predictable social security payments and how to increase the amount earned by tenants, an area of increased focus<sup>11</sup>.

The interventions we develop and offer – and crucially how we make them available - should reflect:

- Understanding the causes of the need for a specific type of intervention
- Understanding how and when an intervention will help – and when it will not or could exacerbate existing or cause additional problems

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<sup>8</sup> The Health and Care Strategy for Powys - Powys County Council, June 2017

<sup>9</sup> Delivering Change - Housing Associations and Employment and Skills – Centre for Cities, June 2015; Worklessness, Welfare and Social Housing – Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, July 2015

<sup>10</sup> Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings – Office of National Statistics, October 2017

<sup>11</sup> Moving Up Higher Wages for Social Housing Tenants - Social Market Foundation, October 2016

- Deciding and agreeing with both client and all relevant agencies what the intervention should be and its expected outcome
- Being able to make sure interventions offered are ready to roll when they are needed by the client
- Being able to maintain an understanding of how effective are our interventions in raising well-being and supporting financial security
- Being able to move quickly to amend and alter interventions if they are not helping the clients or preventing problems escalating

To keep our approach to supporting and encouraging tenancy sustainability relevant and productive, we need to constantly review the effectiveness and impact of this work, against four criteria:

- ? *Can we effectively measure the success or otherwise of an intervention?*
- ? *Are our interventions complementary to, and do not displace, other available activity that will contribute to individual sustainability?*
- ? *Do our interventions recognise and offer mitigation of the impact of unintended consequences?*
- ? *Are the interventions we are offering to individuals cost effective when assessed against the outcomes achieved?*

#### *People Action Plan – Overview*

There are a number of initiatives already underway, as part of current tenancy management and as part of the preparations for the introduction of Full Service Universal Credit. A number of these initiatives can be assessed against the objectives and criteria set out above and where they will contribute positively to improving the lives of our tenants, be further developed and supplemented by new initiatives and interventions.

#### Summary of Tenancy Sustainability Activity – Current and Proposals

Activity	Outcome	Current	Proposals
<b>Key</b>	<i>Part of Full Service Universal Credit preparations</i>		
Supporting Applicants	Every homeless client has adequate information, support and guidance to make informed choices about their future housing provision	Personal Housing Plan (PHP)	Continue to make sure the information, support and guidance to all CHR applicants helps them make informed choices to improve the likelihood of a successful tenancy. Make greater use of the PHP beyond the initial period of support, to shape tenancy management
		Homelessness Prevention and Options Officers	
	Risk of tenancy failure reduced	A Financial Well-being Assessment' triage is being introduced for CHR applicants and homeless households to help understand and manage financial risks.	Extend the triage assessment to include assessing other elements that may increase the risk of tenancy failure or reduce the ability of future tenants to make the most of their home as a foundation for general well-being.
		Vulnerability Assessment – to safeguard against	

		exploitation of vulnerable residents (e.g. county lines, cuckooing)	
		Mixed provision of redecoration of voids and decorating packs	Develop a framework to consistently deploy redecoration options and resources in a way that supports tenancy sustainability
		Furnished tenancies	Develop the range of furnishing options to encourage recycling, self-help and schemes specifically targeted at first-time-tenants
		Tenant Ready Training	
Supporting Tenants	To understand and prevent problems arising with tenancies, strong and enduring relationships developed with all tenants	Introductory Tenancy Visits (starting with a settling in visit after two months), Mutual Exchange Visits and Transfer Request Visits	More frequent 'settling in visits' for tenants who have been identified as being vulnerable and/or at risk of tenancy failure.
			Tri-Annual Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT - to include a vulnerability assessment to identify and respond promptly to the support needs those who will need additional support to sustain their tenancy and encourage financial independence
	To be able to provide full tenancy support to all tenants, make sure that area team resources are deployed when and where they are most effective	Patch sizes and composition reviewed and revised summer 2018	Encourage early intervention to prevent breaches of tenancy around home and garden condition and social behaviour.
Advice and Understanding		Tenancy Support Officers	
	Powys has a comprehensive network of financial advice and access to affordable, low risk financial services	Map current provision of benefit, debt and financial/money management advice and financial services in Powys.	Fill gaps in provision where it is needed to support tenants unable to access services
	Tenants can reduce the cost of living their home		Housing staff able to spot signs of fuel poverty and with support from the Affordable Warmth and Renewable Energy Officer offer or signpost basic energy saving advice (including wiping debt from meters, accessing low-income tariffs and reducing energy needs)
	Understanding and managing the risks	Triage process being introduced to help assess	'Financial Well-being Assessment' to be used for existing tenants

	to tenancy sustainability that may arise from the transition to Full Service Universal Credit	the needs of each tenant, including a 'Financial Well-being Assessment', for CHR applicants and homeless households.	who face financial disruption or difficulties matching income and expenditure
		Sign-up check list amended to ensure full understanding by applicants of UC – including the requirement to arrange payment of rent to PCC – and what actions are to be taken to successfully make and maintain a UC claim	
Independence and Resilience	Help people increase their incomes and independence from the social security system by encouraging work and skills progression	Understand the scope and provision of current work and skills initiatives available in Powys. Understand the routes by which tenants can take advantage of these initiatives.	Develop a comprehensive and locally sensitive Housing Services 'Highways to Work' Action Plan
		Increased access to the internet to manage UC claims on line and facilitate easier access to employment and training opportunities.	
Rent	Making sure tenants understand when and how to claim and maintain Universal Credit awards	TSO and HMOO meetings/visits to explain Universal Credit to tenants, assess risk to PCC and mitigate as necessary using the 'Financial Well-being Assessment'	
	To maintain income to the Council, align our income recovery work with the changing nature of social security payments to tenants arising from UC	Communication texts amended to reflect social security changes and are succinct, direct and easy to understand Thirty-one direct debit due days to be introduced	
	Prevention of arrears	Income recovery process to be refined to include earlier contact, intervention, support and where needed rapid enforcement action on arrears.	
		New performance indicators to support HMOOs income recovery work with tenants	

- 👁 **Reward Programme.** A number of landlords have introduced reward schemes which are designed to encourage and reward sustainable tenancy management on the part of tenants themselves<sup>12</sup>. Sustainable tenancy management can include making rent payments in full accord with the terms of the tenancy, allowing prompt access for annual gas or other compliance checks, keeping gardens clean and tidy, having no rechargeable repairs and no incidences of anti-social behaviour. Rewards can be financial (for example rent credits) or in-kind (for example vouchers to spend at local shops or to receive higher standards of service). Some schemes extend beyond the tenant's home and include contributions to wider community life. The extent to which such schemes encourage more sustainable tenancies and communities depends very much upon the schemes being adapted and tailor made to the local circumstances in which they are introduced, the service culture of the landlord and the engagement at the design stage of tenants and residents. For an area as large and diverse as Powys, it will be necessary to undertake extensive and evidenced research within our communities to understand what rewards schemes would be of interest to residents and which would help achieve sustainable communities and tenancies. *Concept Stage*.
- 👁 **Highways to Work.** Develop a comprehensive and locally sensitive Housing Services 'Highway to Work' Action Plan. Powys is a diverse area with many different employment markets. A 'Routes to Work' activity will need to be designed to recognise this and also the intensive work being undertaken by DWP, as part of the Claimant Commitment, to encourage people to find, keep and increase paid work. Housing Services will therefore need an understanding of what employment opportunities are available, what skills are in short supply and what is already available to help people with employment before it shapes its own bespoke 'Routes to Work' programme. This will mean close working with the Schools, Youth and Regeneration and Development services of the Council, the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations, the DWP and those housing associations working in the county. To increase the chance of success, all proposals will need to be sense checked by comparing them against the initiatives of other housing agencies in Wales, not just those programmes currently operating but also those that have ceased to work.

#### 4.0 Places

Clean and tidy places encourage pride by individuals and communities in where they live and have been proven to reduce anti-social behaviour crime, encourage community interaction and support self-help and reliance by individual households. That is why effective estate management is critically important to giving people reasons to love where they live. There is also evidence to demonstrate that the presence of greenery in residential areas, such as trees and planted areas, helps improve the quality of the air and reduce the incidence of depression and people feeling low. Encouraging people to take part, either collectively or as individuals in maintaining and improving their environment can also help develop stronger and more sustainable communities. The Council's 'Health and Care Strategy' makes a commitment to: "make best use of community strengths and the physical environment to support people to maintain their health and wellbeing"<sup>13</sup>.

Tidy, green and flourishing gardens help improve the overall ambience of a neighbourhood and encourage people to take pride in where they live. Pride in your home and neighbourhood are integral to being able to live where you live. Overgrown and untidy gardens can not only make an area look uncared for but can in some cases pose a danger to the health and safety of local people if they contain items which may be harmful to health or a nuisance for example rotting food waste which may create smells or attract vermin or abandoned cars with inflammable fuel in their tanks

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<sup>12</sup> Tenant Reward Scheme: An Options Appraisal - Simon Inkson Ltd in partnership with, Anne Delaney Associates Ltd and Arnold Phillips Associates Ltd, March 2012

<sup>13</sup> The Health and Care Strategy for Powys - Powys County Council, June 2017

and oil leaking into the soil. There is however much to gain for individual and community well-being from encouraging tenants to look after their gardens. Gardening in itself has been shown to have beneficial effects, including improving the health and well-being of the gardeners<sup>14</sup> and encouraging stronger social bonds<sup>15</sup>.

Now that the Council is once again building new homes, the design and layout of both homes and communities needs to take into account what will give people a sense of social ownership. Appropriate emphasis should be given to reducing the opportunities for anti-social behaviour, discontent amongst and between members of communities and high cost or complex maintenance and management liabilities. The desires and preference of current and future residents should influence design and appearance – homes last for a lot longer than architectural fashions and mistakes have been made in the past in the way social housing has been designed<sup>16</sup>.

### *Current Status*

The current aesthetic and amenity of a number of the Council's estates is very poor, with residents regularly citing as part of the current Estate Action Plan scheme and resident surveys litter, unkempt streets, car parks and footpaths, poor quality grass cutting, over-grown hedges and greenery, poor condition garage sites and drying areas and diminishing play facilities as matters of concern. Some areas of fencing and boundary works, kick boards for example in Ystradgynlais, are in some cases broken and decayed. A substantial initial investment in cleaning up and restoring order to the maintenance of our estates is now urgent both to demonstrate commitment to the principle of Love Where You Live and to make future maintenance as trouble free as possible.

Attempts to encourage and where necessary enforce improved maintenance of gardens are floundering because of the poor condition of the areas for which responsibility rests with the Council.

The exterior of some properties that have not benefitted from WHQS works can be poor, with soffits, fascia and barge boards and other external timber such as cladding not having benefitted from recent painting although this work is now being undertaken. Tenants of rendered properties, where painted, have in some cases had a relatively limited choice of pallets, restricting the opportunity to gain greater ownership by tenants of their homes and to brighten up with colour the appearance of estates.

Housing Services is currently undertaking on an area-by-area basis a review of individual garage sites, in response primarily to concerns expressed by residents about condition. To provide a framework to allow for an objective consideration of the Council's role in providing garages it would be helpful to have an understanding of the financial impact of garage provision, both income and estimated expenditure to maintain the estate.

Community-based events take place as part of the general engagement work, primarily related to Estate Action Plans. In an increasingly fragmented society, encouraging people to come together is difficult but doing so can help promote more sustainable communities and tenancies. Working together to improve the local environment can be a catalyst for encouraging greater community togetherness.

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<sup>14</sup> Six Unexpected Health Benefits of Gardening - Earth Easy, September 2014; Gardens and Health - Implications for Policy and Practice – The Kings Fund, May 2016

<sup>15</sup> The Social Benefits of a Garden - Irish Food Board, 2018

<sup>16</sup> Never Again: Avoiding the Mistakes of the Past - Young Foundation, March 2012









## *Next Steps*








To help make it easier for people to love where they live, become involved in their communities and have a positive relationship with Housing Services on other matters such as payment of rent, the Council needs to make tangible investments to bring its estates up to a high standard. It also needs to have in place the mechanisms and resources to maintain them to a high standard, with some general principles established to guide the standards to be provided.

## *Effective Estate Management*


### **Feeling Good**

-  To encourage neighbourhood pride, community events and activity that bring together people in pursuit of a common and widely recognisable outcome, should be promoted.
-  Wherever possible, localised, dedicated teams should be deployed for work on housing areas to encourage focus on quality through local ownership
-  Environmental activity, such as gardening, should be encouraged with the back-up of tenancy condition enforcement in respect of gardens
-  Play areas should be focused on areas where there is clear demand and where they can be managed with the involvement of or directly by the community to avoid being focal points for anti-social and criminal behaviour.
-  To create aesthetically pleasing environments, external decoration of council-owned properties should offer residents wherever possible a varied choice of colours, materials and finishes.
-  To engender a sense of care and support for residents, fly-tipping, graffiti and abandoned cars should be removed as soon as they are seen.

### **Looking Good**

-  Greenery (grassed areas, trees, planted areas, shrubberies, hedges) should be cut, pruned and otherwise managed so that they are not overgrown, unsightly or in poor health.
-  Grassed areas in and around homes should have grass clippings removed after cutting.
-  Paths and pavements should be kept clear of weeds and other plant growth, litter and debris, have clearly delineated borders and have surfaces on which people are safe to travel.
-  Car parks and un-adopted highways should be kept clear of weeds and debris in gutters and drains, abandoned vehicles and fly tipping and have surfaces that are safe to drive on.
-  To make roads and pavements safer and less congested, wherever possible off-street in-curtilage car parking should be encouraged and facilitated.
-  To be able to act as effective boundaries to the areas they are protecting, fencing and walls should not be unsightly and should be in good condition.
-  Unsightly non-residential structures, such as garages, should be removed to create space for new activity and improve the appearance of neighbourhoods. A policy to determine the future of garage provision is currently under development.

## *Concepts and Proposals*

-  **Eyes Open.** With many members of the Housing Services team out and about on estates and in communities where the Council provides homes, there is a great opportunity to gather intelligence about what is happening in these places. Intelligence that can help resolve problems as quickly as possible such as litter and fly tipping, poor quality grass cutting, graffiti, garbage not put in refuse bins, changes in the way properties and communal areas are being used and exterior repairs. It can also help identify unusual tenancy patterns, which may be useful in the work to prevent antisocial behaviour and county lines/cuckooing. An

‘Eyes Open’ policy, in which all team members are encouraged to note and report things they notice could help us resolve such issues promptly, nipping problems in the bud before they escalate and adversely affect the quality of life and well-being of our residents and their communities. *Concept Stage.*

- 👁️ **Gardening for Good.** Tenants have a responsibility to help make the neighbourhoods in which they live pleasant places to be. They can contribute to this by keeping gardens tidy and free from rubbish that endangers health to themselves and their neighbours. Not all tenants, for example those with mobility impairments can do this, so provision needs to be made to help these residents keep their gardens tidy. For others it may be necessary to take stronger action, including undertaking works by default and recharging tenants. To establish a solid basis for a garden enforcement policy, it will however be necessary to have achieved first a high standard of grounds maintenance across our estates so that the Council is leading by example. *Concept Stage.*
- 👁️ **Rainbow Homes.** A wider choice of pallets for render painting schemes will introduce brighter estates and give tenants the opportunity to have a greater involvement and proprietorial feelings about the way their homes look. *Concept Stage*
- 👁️ **Places to Play.** A Play Area Strategy ‘Places to Play’ for municipal housing estates will help the Council to make the most of the opportunities available to the Council to develop desirable and user friendly play areas where they are most needed. This is currently being developed by Housing Services and the Council’s Leisure and Recreation Service.





## Love Where You Live Action Plan

Date: 12.09.18

### Summary

- The Action Plan sets out the actions needed to bring Love Where You Live to life.
- The aim is to complete each action by the end of the specified quarter. In the case of deployment or introduction of new policy and practice, that means the new approach should be up and running by the end of the designated quarter.
- A number of actions are being taken forward as part of other projects, including the Common Housing Register Action Plan which runs from September 2018 until the summer of 2019 and is the Council's response to the outcomes of the Common Housing Register Review undertaken in summer 2018.
- A number of actions are evolutions of work undertaken in the Universal Credit Action Plan, which runs until April 2019 as part of the Council's preparations for Full Service Universal Credit in Powys.
- A number of new Frameworks, Guidance Notes and Policies will be developed to support Love Where You Live. These are detailed below and referenced where appropriate within the Action Plan.

Love Where You Live – New Frameworks, Guidance and Policies	Love Where You Live – New Services
ASB Guidance Note	Caretaker Service
Garage Site Assessment Framework	Eyes Open
Gardening for Good	Financial Well-being Assessment
Intelligence and Engagement Assessment Framework	Fuel Poverty Awareness Programme
Places to Play	Furnishing Programme
	Grounds and Highways Maintenance – Local Service
	Highways to Work
	Peer Landlord
	Extended Personal Housing Plan
	Rainbow Homes
	Reward Programme
	Settling in Visits
	Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT

Understanding																
Stage	Key Milestones	Lead	2018/2019		2019/20				2020/21				2021/22			
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Analyse	Review – with TSP, Youth Services and Communications Team - all current engagement and consultation <sup>1</sup>	Mel														
Plan	Develop and agree a new Housing Services Service Standard.	SMT														
	Use an understanding of best practice and the outcome of the engagement review to identify and develop options to increase the effectiveness of engagement and intelligence gathering, including easy-to-access approaches to continually gain feedback on how our services are experienced <sup>2</sup>	Mel														
	Develop an improved Understanding of Refusals of Housing Offers (CHR Action Plan)															
	Develop an improved Understanding of Tenancy Terminations (CHR Action Plan)															
Do	Pilot Tri-annual Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT <sup>3</sup>															
	Introduce an improved understanding of Refusals of Housing Offers (CHR Action Plan)															

<sup>1</sup> Use 'Intelligence and Engagement Assessment Framework'

<sup>2</sup> Examples include Tell Us By Text, Customer Call-backs, Question of the Month

<sup>3</sup> Tri-Annual Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT - to include a vulnerability assessment to identify and respond promptly to the support needs those who will need additional support to sustain their tenancy and encourage financial independence

	Introduce an improved understanding of Tenancy Terminations (CHR Action Plan)															
	Introduce agreed changes to our approach to engagement and gathering and using intelligence	Mel														
	Review and if positive, introduce for all tenancies Tri-annual Tenancy Visit and Housing MoT															
	Complete STAR Survey	Mel														
	Establish a dedicated resource to support, develop and manage intelligence gathering	Terry & Mel														
	Revise and amend management and performance indicators to focus on the client experience	SMT														

People																
Stage	Key Milestones	Lead	2018/2019		2019/20				2020/21				2021/22			
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Analyse	Consider and assess Reward Programme options for Powys															
	Consider and assess 'Highways to Work' scheme options for Powys (UC Action Plan)	Kirstie														
	Map current provision of benefit, debt and financial/money management advice and financial services in Powys (UC Action Plan)	Kirstie														
Plan	To shape tenancy management, develop the Personal Housing Plan to reach beyond the initial period of housing support (CHR Action Plan)	Helen														
	'Financial Well-being Assessment' being introduced for Universal Credit to be used for existing tenants who face financial disruption or difficulties matching income and expenditure (UC Action Plan)	Kelly and Ceri														
	Develop the Universal Credit triage assessment to include assessing other elements that may increase the risk of tenancy failure, reduce the ability of future tenants to make the most of their home as and to safeguard people against criminal exploitation (UC Action Plan)	Kirstie														
	Develop a framework (policy) to consistently deploy redecoration	Phil														



	options and resources in a way that supports tenancy sustainability															
	Develop the range of furnishing options to encourage recycling, self-help and schemes specifically targeted at first-time-tenants															
	Develop a comprehensive and locally sensitive range of 'Highways to Work' initiatives (UC Action Plan)	Kirstie Gallacher														
Do	Introduce more frequent 'settling in visits' for tenants who have been identified as being vulnerable and/or at risk of tenancy failure.															
	Train HMOOs, HPOOs and TSOs to be able to spot signs of fuel poverty and offer or signpost basic energy saving advice (including wiping debt from meters, accessing low-income tariffs and reducing energy needs)	Catrin Sneade														
	Deploy for all applicants for housing the revised Personal Housing Plan which reaches beyond the initial period of housing support (CHR Action Plan)															
	Deploy for all tenants who need it the 'Financial Well-being Assessment' being introduced for Universal Credit (Universal Credit Action Plan)															
	Deploy the revised triage assessment to include assessing other elements that may increase the risk of tenancy failure, reduce the ability of future tenants to make the most of their home as and to safeguard people against criminal exploitation															

	Introduce a comprehensive and locally sensitive range of 'Highways to Work' initiatives (Universal Credit Action Plan)	Kirstie Gallacher														
	Introduce decorating and furnishing policy changes															
	Introduce thirty-one direct debit due days (Universal Credit Action Plan)	Ed Jenkins														
	Income recovery process to be refined to include earlier contact, intervention, support and where needed rapid enforcement action on arrears (Universal Credit Action Plan)	Ed Jenkins														

Places																
Stage	Key Milestones	Lead	2018/2019		2019/20				2020/21				2021/22			
			Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Analyse	Understand HRA land Play Area status	Andy Thompson														
Plan	To be able to quickly respond to matters of concern, research and develop proposals for an Eyes Open policy for all who work on our estates															
	Plan how investment in play areas can be focused where it will most serve local needs and encourage collective community engagement <sup>4</sup>	Andy Thompson														
	Develop capability to deal immediately with small works (e.g. litter, rubbish, footpath sweeping) and act as a quality control and prompter for grounds and highways maintenance <sup>5</sup>	Kirstie Gallacher														
	Develop localised arrangements for grounds and highways maintenance on HRA land <sup>6</sup>	Simon Inkson and Andy Thompson														
	Develop a strategic framework to determine the future of garage provision by the Council <sup>7</sup>															
	Develop a Gardening for Good policy to encourage flourishing garden maintenance															

<sup>4</sup> Use Play Area Strategy 'Places to Play'

<sup>5</sup> Caretaker Service across Powys, able to intervene directly to resolve small problems and to call in rapid response for larger problems, to help develop relationships with residents.

<sup>6</sup> Joint working group established June 2018 by Housing and Highways to develop proposals for dedicated grounds and highways Housing Maintenance Teams

<sup>7</sup> Use 'Garage Site Assessment Framework'

Do	To give tenants choices and ownership, develop different colour pallets for external decoration 'Rainbow Homes'	Phil and Roger														
	Develop a quicker ASB response <sup>8</sup>															
	Introduce an Eyes Open policy backed up by increased estate based HMOO activity															
	Introduce localised arrangements for grounds and highways maintenance on HRA land	Simon Inkson and Andy Thompson														
	Deliver Estate Action Plans (EAPs) to catalyse community engagement in improving neighbourhood <sup>9</sup>	HMOTLs														
	Introduce HRA Play Area Strategy	HMTOLs														
	Implement the Garage Estate Strategy across Powys	HMTOLs														
	Introduce a Gardening for Good policy to encourage flourishing garden maintenance <sup>10</sup>															
	Introduce a 'Most Improved Garden' competition															
	Introduce 'Rainbow Homes'															
	Introduce a quicker ASB Response															

<sup>8</sup> Use 'ASB Guidance Note'

<sup>9</sup> HMOTLs developing proposals autumn 2018 for 30 EAPs - 2018-2019 through 2020-2021 for delivery by 2021-22

<sup>10</sup> Use 'Gardening for Good Framework'

Scrutiny date	Scrutiny Committee	Item	Cab/Mgmt Team Date	Cab Date
20/09/18	PSB	Steps towards 2040 Well-being Plan Review effectiveness of WCCIS		
Wed 26/09/18	HCH	LAC strategy and Education of LAC Update on Bannau Camlas		
Mon 01/10/18	LSE (Estyn attending to observe)	Standards incl LAC, attendance, exclusions, use of PDG Annual Estyn Inspection outcomes Youth Service restructure review	13/11/18	28/11/18
Wed 03/10/18	HCH	Homelessness Strategy Love where You Live Strategy (Housing)	23/10/18 13/11/18	06/11/18 28/11/18
Tue 9/10/18	Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs			
Mon 15/10/18	HCH	BUPA Care Homes ( b/f from Dec 2018) Social Care Perf Reports (August 2018) Notes - Improvement and Assurance Board		
Wed 17/10/18	LSE	Post 16 review - defer to briefing 9th Nov Review of Pre-School provision HOWPS Annual Report	23/10/18	06/11/18
Wed 24/10/18	FSP	Budget		
Thur 01/11/18 (will not run)	HCH	Improvement Plans (3) - Topic TBA		
Fri 02/11/18	LSE	HAMP (deferred from Aug)	14/11/18	28/11/18
			11/12/18	15/01/19
Thur 08/11/18	HCH	Social Care Perf Report (Sept 2018)		

		WHQS	04/12/18	18/12/18
		WAO Housing Inspection (confirmed)		
Fri 09/11/18 (possibly won't run)	LSE	date to be used for education briefing School Org/Post 16		
Tue 13/11/18	Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs	CIP Performance Reports		28/11/18
Fri 16/11/2018	Audit	Corp Tracker, Risk Register, AGS		
		Improvement Plans (1) - Topic TBA		
November	FSP	Budget		
Wed 21/11/18	LSE	Funding formula review		
	(invite audit reps)			
Thur 22/11/18	HCH	Review of Daytime Activities OP	04/12/18	18/12/18
		Improvement Plans (2) - Topic TBA		
Mon 10/12/18	HCH	Crime and Disorder		
		Social Care Perf Reports (October)		
Tues 11/12/18	Joint Chairs and Vice-Chairs			
Thur 13/12/18	LSE	ALN Review	11/12/18	15/01/19
Wed 19/12/18	FSP	Budget		
<b>2019</b>				
Thur 03/01/19	HCH			
Fri 04/01/19	LSE			
Wed 09/01/19	Audit	Workforce Strategy and Plan		
Tue 15/01/19	Joint Chairs			

Wed 16/01/19	HCH	Update on Virtual Ward and Integrated Team CIW update on Inspection - Children's Services		
Fri 18/01/19	LSE	Categorisation of schools (increase in green/yellow)		
Thur 31/01/19	PSB	Update on integrated social and health care staffing increase Update on Integrated disability service		
Wed 06/02/19	HCH	Progress of 16+ support service Review of progress on foster carers strategy		
Fri 08/02/19	LSE	ERW		
Thurs 14/02/19	Audit	Corporate Support Services remodel Workforce Strategy and Plan		
Mon 18/02/19	Joint Chairs			
Wed 27/02/19	HCH			
Fri 01/03/19	LSE	Youth Structure Review		
Tue 19/03/19	Joint Chairs			
Mon 25/03/19	Audit			
Wed 03/04/19	HCH			
Fri 05/04/19	LSE	Support for children and families - early years Public Toilets Strategy		
Fri 12/04/19	Audit	Engagement and Communications Strategy TM Q4		

Mon 15/04/19	Joint Chairs			
Thurs 25/04/19	HCH	Improve housing choice availability incl extra care Supported housing update		
Fri 26/04/19	LSE	Proportion of revenue spend increase 2% 18/19 Review marketing opportunities and programme Check progress against removing barriers to employment		
Mon 29/04/19	PSB	Developing integrated commissioning with PTHB - care homes Annual Report Wellbeing Plan		
9/05/19	Audit			
14/05/19	Joint Chairs	Annual Governance Statement		
22/05/19	HCH	Community Hubs		
24/05/19	LSE			
10/06/19	Audit (seminar)	Draft Statement of Accounts Annual Governance Statement		
12/06/19	HCH			
14/06/19	LSE			
17/06/19	Joint Chairs			
03/07/19	HCH	Community Transport service - progress		
05/07/19	LSE			



08/07/19	Joint Chairs			
15/07/19	Audit	TM Review and Q1		
18/07/19	PSB			
19/08/19	HCH			
23/08/19	LSE			
30/08/18	Audit Seminar	SoA		
06/09/19	Audit Committee	Final Statement of Accounts Annual Governance Statement		
09/09/19	HCH			
10/09/19	Joint Chairs			
11/09/2019 (pm)	LSE			
13/09/19	Audit	Final Statement of Accounts Annual Governance Statement		
01/10/19	PSB			
09/10/19	HCH			
11/10/19	LSE			
14/10/19	Joint chairs			
15/10/19	Audit			
31/10/19	HCH			
01/11/19	LSE			
11/11/19	Audit			

18/11/19	Joint Chairs			
20/11/19	HCH			
22/11/19	LSE			
11/12/19	HCH			
13/12/19	LSE			
16/12/19	Joint Chairs			
19/12/19	Audit			
2020				
Q1 2020				
	LSE	Proportion of revenue spend increase 2% 19/20		
		Assess effectiveness of marketing programme		
		Check inward investment strategy and action plan		
	HCH			
	Audit			
	Joint Chairs			
Q2 2020				
	LSE	Increase % of pupils assessed in Welsh in Year 2		
	HCH			

	Audit			
	Joint Chairs			

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