

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

County Council

7th March 2017

REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Rosemarie Harris, Portfolio Holder for Property, Buildings and Housing

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Matthew Dorrance

Will the Cabinet Member provide a statement on Homelessness in Powys?

Answer from the Portfolio Holder for Property, Buildings and Housing

The introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 in April 2015 extended the duties of local authorities to prevent homelessness and the increased the timescale to intervene from 28 days to 56 days before people who approach the council for assistance may become homeless. The council now has a duty to prevent or relieve homelessness to all who approach us but still retains its Section 75 duty to accommodate applicants who are entitled to assistance, homeless, in priority need, not homeless intentionally and have a local connection.

The new system is very complex to administer and recording of homelessness has become more complicated since the introduction of the 2014 Act. The fact that the council is required to work with applicants to prevent and alleviate homelessness rather than simply accept a duty to accommodate, means that cases take a greater amount of officer time to administer.

In addition, legislative change and the introduction of new recording systems means that not all the data is comparable with data collected prior to April 2015.

Data that is comparable is the number of homeless presentations. There was a 32% increase in presentations between financial years 2014-15 and 2015-16 across Powys. This was not unexpected as the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 extended entitlement, particularly to single people. However, it should be noted that in the first three quarters of 2016-17, the number of homelessness presentations would appear to have reduced, when compared with 2015-16. It should be noted however that the number of persons in temporary accommodation to whom the Council owes a full duty remains constant see table 3 below.

Table 1

| | 2014/15 | | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | |
|-------|--|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| | Persons presenting as homeless and triggering homelessness application | Of which are single persons | Persons presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness and triggering a s62 assessment | Of which are single persons | Persons presenting as homeless or threatened with homelessness and triggering a s62 assessment | Of which are single persons |
| Qtr 1 | 82 | 44 | 108 | 72 | 109 | 55 |
| Qtr 2 | 61 | 30 | 158 | 94 | 108 | 66 |
| Qtr 3 | 95 | 59 | 136 | 83 | 103 | 65 |
| Qtr 4 | 179 | 116 | 162 | 89 | | |

The impact across the county varied considerably, between 2014/15 to 2015/16 homeless presentations increased by 107% in Brecon, 39% in Welshpool, 30% increase in Newtown and 13% increase in Llandrindod Wells. During the same period there was a 3% reduction in homelessness presentations in Ystradgynlais.

The north of the county tends to experience the greatest number of homelessness presentations. Table 2 below shows the proportion of homelessness presentations in Welshpool, Newtown, Llandrindod Wells, Brecon and Ystradgynlais

Table 2. Proportion of homelessness presentations by housing area

| Housing area office | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 1 st 3 quarters 2016-17 |
|---------------------|---------|---------|------------------------------------|
| Welshpool | 31 | 33 | 43 |
| Newtown | 30 | 30 | 28 |
| Llandrindod Wells | 19 | 17 | 14 |
| Brecon | 10 | 15 | 12 |
| Ystradgynlais | 7 | 5 | 3 |

The numbers of households in temporary accommodation would appear at the present time to fairly constant, shown in table 3 below, although the number of families with dependent children has increased.

Table 3. Households in temporary accommodation

| | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | |
|-------|---|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | Persons accommodated in temp acc at the end of the qtr (snapshot) | Of which are families with children | Persons accommodated in temp acc at the end of the qtr (snapshot) | Of which are families with children |
| Qtr 1 | 50 | 11 | 36 | 10 |
| Qtr 2 | 46 | 5 | 43 | 15 |
| Qtr 3 | 30 | 2 | 40 | 11 |
| Qtr 4 | 35 | 6 | | |

The main change in the legislation is that the council is now required to prevent homelessness from occurring or relieve homelessness by securing alternative accommodation, rather than accommodate applicants who pass the homelessness tests of eligibility, homeless, not intentionally homeless and in priority need. Table 4 below shows data in respect of the authority's performance in respect of its S.66 duty to prevent homelessness. In 2015/16, the s66 duty came to an end in 214 cases and out of those we successfully prevented homelessness in 152 (71%) of cases. In the first three quarters of 2016-17, the s66 duty came to an end in 124 cases and out of those we successfully prevented homelessness in 79 (64%) of cases.

Table 4. Successful prevention of homelessness

| | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | |
|--------------|---|-----|---|-----|
| | Outcomes: Successful prevention of homelessness (S66 duty) | | Outcomes: Successful prevention of homelessness (S66 duty) | |
| Qtr 1 | 6 cases out of 8 | 75% | 38 cases out of 57 | 67% |
| Qtr 2 | 38 cases out of 53 | 72% | 24 cases out of 39 | 62% |
| Qtr 3 | 50 cases out of 66 | 76% | 17 cases out of 28 | 61% |
| Qtr 4 | 58 cases out of 87 | 67% | | |

Table 5 shows the authorities performance in respect of the relief of homelessness in the two years since the legislation was introduced. In 2015-16 the S73 duty came to an end in 175 cases and we successfully relieved homelessness in 85 (49%) of cases. In the first three quarters of 2016-17 the S73 duty came to an end in 195 cases and we successfully relieved homelessness in 88 (45%) of cases.

Table 5 Successful relief of homelessness

| | 2015/16 | | 2016/17 | |
|--------------|---|-----|---|-----|
| | Outcomes: Successful relief of homelessness (s73 duty) | | Outcomes: Successful relief of homelessness (s73 duty) | |
| Qtr 1 | 5 cases out of 9 | 56% | 24 cases out of 62 | 39% |
| Qtr 2 | 25 cases out of 41 | 61% | 27 cases out of 60 | 45% |
| Qtr 3 | 16 cases out of 42 | 38% | 37 cases out of 73 | 51% |
| Qtr 4 | 39 cases out of 83 | 47% | | |

One of the major differences between the old homelessness legislative regime and the regime introduced by the 2014 Act is the number of households that the authority housed as homeless. In the last year prior to the 2014 Act taking effect the council accommodated 93 applicants under its S.193 duty. In 2015-16 the council accommodated 33 applicants under its S.75 duty (persons would also have been accommodated as part of S66 and S73 discharge also).