

Carmarthenshire County Council

Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy 2022–26



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Foreword

I am delighted to present Carmarthenshire County Council's housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026.

The Strategy builds upon the existing efforts and progress being made by not only the Local Authority, but also its key stakeholders and partners to look forward and develop homes and solutions to meet the current and future demand and prevent future homelessness.

There is also a clear recognition of the 'everyone in and no one left out' approach and careful consideration into ensuring our solutions meet the needs of our communities, which are often multifaceted and diverse by nature. This includes broadening the range of accommodation to give people brighter and sustainable futures, and where homelessness cannot be prevented, ensure that it is brief and non-recurrent.

We welcome the rapid rehousing approach to homelessness and the additional financial support and guidance from Welsh Government to support us in accelerating much of our, and our partners', social housing development programmes that will increase the creation of high quality affordable, low carbon homes at pace and scale to work to better meet the needs of our community going forward.

We also recognise the importance of the private rental sector in seeking solutions to reducing homelessness, therefore I look forward to strengthening our relationship with this sector in the future in seeking sustainable housing solutions for our residents.

Whilst this paves the way for innovative solutions through better prevention and rapid responses to homelessness, we also recognise the significant challenges ahead. With pockets of already high levels of deprivation locally, pressure from rising living costs, high market rents and the significant challenge in exit planning from the excessive use of temporary accommodation, the scale of the challenge is considerable, but together with our partners we are committed to helping the most vulnerable in our communities throughout Carmarthenshire.

I therefore welcome and commend this strategy in providing us with the strategic framework for housing support and homelessness prevention in Carmarthenshire.

Cllr Linda Davies Evans
Cabinet Member for Homes,
Carmarthenshire County Council

Purpose of this Strategy

This strategy sets out our approach in continuing to support our most vulnerable residents – those who are at risk of, or experience homelessness and those who need support to maintain their tenancies and live as part of their communities.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic we have stepped-up the services that the Council provide to ensure that everyone who needs shelter is accommodated and can receive support.

There is much more that we need to do to prevent homelessness and make homelessness rare, brief and unrepeatable. This Strategy will inform the future development of the Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan which will set out our intention to provide the range and volume of accommodation that is needed to meet demand and how it will be allocated.

Included in this document are our priorities and those of our partner agencies for homelessness prevention, homelessness relief and housing related support services over the coming four years (2022-26). It refreshes earlier priorities that were included in the Council's former homelessness strategy, which was reviewed in 2018, and the Housing Support Grant Delivery Plan for 2021-22. Development of the priorities was informed by a comprehensive need assessment exercise which included direct engagement with stakeholders within the Council and providers of support services. More information on the needs assessment process and findings is provided in this strategy.



The Housing Support Grant (HSG) forms a key element of the overall strategy. This is an early intervention grant programme to support activity which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation. The grant is designed to augment, complement and support statutory services, thus ensuring that the overall local offer helps people into the right homes, with the right support to succeed. It makes a significant contribution to the implementation of Part 2 of the Housing Act (Wales) 2014 which focuses on homelessness prevention. Services supported through the HSG should be person centred and address multiple problems vulnerable people who are homeless or likely to become homeless often face (for example debt, unemployment, substance misuse, violence against women, domestic and sexual abuse and mental health problems). The services should ultimately reduce the need for costly intervention in these areas by other public services.

Strategic planning is key to ensuring alignment of the HSG and Carmarthenshire's statutory duties to prevent and relieve homelessness and the effective commissioning of HSG services. This will help ensure that homelessness is prevented and that people needing services are supported appropriately. This will also help ensure value for money is achieved in deploying the grant. Welsh Government requires a single strategy incorporating Carmarthenshire's homelessness prevention and support and covering the statutory homelessness duty funded through the revenue settlement and non-statutory, preventative services funded through the HSG. The strategy recognises the inter-dependency between these elements and more widely with other public services providing support to vulnerable people. The strategy recognises the inter-dependency between these elements and more widely with other public services providing support to vulnerable people.

Introduction

Carmarthenshire County Council is the 3rd largest local authority by geography in Wales covering some 2,395 square kilometres. It borders Ceredigion to the north; Powys, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea to the east; the Bristol Channel to the south; and Pembrokeshire to the west.

The three largest towns are Llanelli, Ammanford, and Carmarthen (the county town and administrative centre). The Carmarthenshire population is one of the sparsest in Wales at just 78 people per km2 who live across a diverse County of both urban and rural communities. Llanelli, Carmarthen and Ammanford are home to 25% of the population. 60% of the population live in rural areas.

The total population is projected to grow by an average of 373 people a year between 2021 and 2040, and there will likely be an accompanying growth in the use of the health and social care services in Carmarthenshire. In addition, the proportion of people aged 80+ will increase by more than 50% in a similar time frame, will likely contribute to greater pressure being placed on health and social care services in the future.

Deprivation in Carmarthenshire is largely concentrated in the main urban centres of the local authority: Llanelli, Ammanford and to a lesser extent Carmarthen. Llanelli features the highest level of deprivation in the Authority with four areas in the south of the Town and Llwynhendy 3 to the east of the town, ranked as among the 10% most deprived in Wales. These are the only areas in Carmarthenshire ranked among the 10% most deprived.

Some of the rural towns and villages, such as Pembrey, Burry Port, Llandybïe, Kidwelly and Trimsaran, feature higher levels of deprivation. These places all feature areas that are ranked amongst the 10% to 30% most deprived in Wales, with the majority of these areas featuring particularly high levels of income, employment, and education deprivation.

In mid and north Carmarthenshire deprivation is generally at very low levels, with many of the areas in this part of the County ranking among some of the least deprived in the country.

This is reflected in 54% of small areas Carmarthenshire ranking among the 50% most deprived, which is higher than the regional average of 42% and the national average.

The total population is projected to grow by an average of

373

people a year between 2021 and 2040



Temporary accommodation Needs peaked at the end of the Summer in 2020 with close to

120

Households in temporary accommodation this remains high compared with pre-pandemic levels



Homelessness and Covid-19

A clear trend, which is mirrored across Wales, is the growing proportion of single people presenting to us as homeless. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a considerable amount of people being newly eligible to be housed by the Council from March 2020. The situation is currently unchanged meaning that all who present are in ‘priority need’. This is also referred to as the ‘Everyone In’ policy.

We responded exceptionally well to Welsh Governments ‘everyone-in’ and recently ‘no-one left out’ approaches ensuring that we fully met the widening of our responsibilities effectively.

The profile of eligible individuals meant that there was also unprecedented demand for single person units. Inevitably this resulted in growing numbers of people in temporary accommodation (TA) who because of challenges for them to move on, and growing numbers of people to whom we owe a full housing duty there has simply not been the supply to meet demand.

This change in policy increased the number of people requiring temporary and emergency accommodation. We normally catered for 70 households at any one time but this rapidly increased to 140 households in temporary accommodation with over a hundred of these being single people. The situation was added to by larger numbers of prison leavers single

people who had been ‘sofa surfing’ (staying with friends or other people’s homes’) no longer being able to remain and coming forward for housing.

Despite the immediate challenges we face Welsh Government have indicated that:

- there will be no going back on the ‘no-one left out’ approach;
- that transitional legal arrangements are being drafted which have been consulted upon;
- they have made three-year funding available for Rapid Rehousing Project Leads; and
- the first iteration of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (agreed by Cabinet in September 2022) is now required for us to set out our current position and the actions that need to take place to deliver the plan over the next 5 years.

As an authority we have also made some rapid changes and restructured services to enable us to move from the reactive stage to prevention and bring together the main elements of the prevention programme under one umbrella. This will ensure that the transition to Rapid Rehousing is made effectively and will ensure that early intervention and prevention is our key priority moving forward.

The main reasons why people contact us in relation to housing/homelessness issues in the first place are:

- Parents won’t accommodate;
- Family or friends will no longer accommodate e.g., sofa surfing;
- Notice from landlord in private rented sector;
- Relationship breakdown with partners; and
- Domestic abuse;

Our first duty is to consider how we help people to not become homeless and avoid the need to be re-housed. With an increase in demand our existing services need to develop to ensure they continue to focus on prevention, and avoid people moving into housing crisis.

The need for temporary accommodation peaked towards the end of the summer in 2020, and remains high compared with pre-pandemic levels, with close to 120 households in temporary accommodation. This represents an increase of 60% in the total number of households in temporary accommodation (primarily single people) compared with prior to the pandemic, suggesting that need remains (and will continue to remain) at an elevated level.

Our main longer term solutions to resolve housing/homelessness issues are:

- to either rehouse by the Council or Housing Associations;
- rehousing in the private rented sector; and
- supporting people to remain in their homes using a range of methods.

An applicant must be assessed under several sections of the Housing Act, which is complex for both applicants and caseworkers. The increase in demand has come at a time when there has also been also supply challenge in the housing market, with reduced availability and affordability of accommodation in the private sector and reduced numbers of people that we have been able to help access accommodation in the private rented sector through our support in 2021.

Ukraine Resettlement

As of 10th August 2022, total Ukrainian arrivals within Carmarthenshire through both routes - Homes for Ukraine (H4U individual sponsorship) and the Super Sponsor Scheme (SS Forge Inn St Clears) is as follows:

- 82 Ukrainian Households. 216 individuals 130 Adults - 86 Children.
- 9 Ukrainian households in the Forge Inn St Clears.
- 64 Ukrainian households currently staying with hosts/sponsors.
- 8 Ukrainian households in temporary accommodation.
- 82 Expression of Interest (EOI) to become a Host/Sponsor have confirmed they are still interested and want to progress to DBS. However, there will be a % drop off at DBS and property inspection before any matching to a family.
- 20 rooms (52 individuals) can also be accommodated at the Ivy Bush commissioned directly by WG and who could be re-settled anywhere in Wales.

Ukrainian arrivals household size	No. of Households
Households arrived	73
Single person	13
2-person household	25
3-person household	19
4-person household	11
5-person household	2
6-person household	3

The above households are dispersed throughout the County many of which have children in local schools. This may influence where they want to settle in the County in the future.

Should Welsh Government implement some form of quota system from their Welcome centres then we would anticipate several hundred additional households requiring homes.

Asylum Seekers Dispersal Scheme & people with no recourse to public funds (NRPF)

In addition to the Ukraine pressures the Home Office has recently advised us that we can anticipate receiving 141 Asylum Seekers of which it is estimated 70% will require single person accommodation by December 2023.

These remain challenging times and we recognise we need to be prepared for increasing numbers of people who will need help with housing, with increasingly complex needs, and this strategy will help us respond to this growth in demand.



Vision and Principles

Our vision and principles for preventing and alleviating homelessness is grounded in the framework of our Corporate Strategy 2022-2027, Developing Carmarthenshire Together: one Council, One Vision, One Voice.



Our vision for the County states that:

‘Life is for living, let’s start, live and age well in a healthy, safe and prosperous environment’

Our values are at the heart of everything we do. They help us to make the right decision and shape how we work together.



Our 4 well-being objectives provide the framework through which we will deliver our strategy for homelessness prevention, alleviation and housing related support.

Enabling our children and young people to have the best possible start in life (Start Well): Giving young people a strong start in life will contribute to the prevention of homelessness.	Enabling our residents to live and age well (Live and Age Well): People who are homeless will be supported to maximise their housing opportunities and find meaningful and fulfilling employment. We will ensure that people are able to stay in their homes as they age.	Enabling our communities and environment to be healthy safe and prosperous (Prosperous Communities): We will pay attention to the needs of people with complex needs and ensure that we are not meeting the needs of the current generation at the expense of future generations.	To further modernise and develop as a resilient and efficient Council (Our Council): We will ensure local and regional partnership working is efficient and effective and adds value to the work of the Council.



In summary our vision for homelessness is that:

‘homelessness is prevented, or where it occurs it is rare, brief and unrepeated’

Start Well	Live and Age Well	Prosperous Communities	Our Council
Outcomes we hope to achieve			
1. Improved opportunities for all residents in literacy, numeracy and digital skills to upskill for employment. 2. Reducing the inequalities faced by children from disadvantaged backgrounds which may affect their later life chances. 3. Families facing difficulties are supported to provide stable, safe and secure home environments for their children.	1. Help and support to alleviate the effects of the ‘cost of living’ crises and poverty in the County. 2. A reduction and working towards an end to homelessness. 3. Availability to good quality and energy efficient affordable homes in the County. 4. Recognise and seek to limit the disproportionate barriers faced by marginalised groups in accessing services and support which allow them to live and age well. 5. Improved preventative services to meet the demands of an ageing population. 6. Improved opportunities for all residents in literacy, numeracy and digital skills to upskill for employment.	1. People feel empowered to lead active and healthy lives through access to fit for purpose services and provision.	1. Make better use of digital technology to further transform our services into smarter, efficient service processes and to deliver a better experience for customers. 2. Ensuring the Council is using its resources economically, efficiently and effectively. 3. Increased public engagement through engagement, participation and consultation.



Corporate Strategy

Our Economic Recovery and Delivery Plan sets clear goals and actions for the next two years that will support the recovery of the County’s economy from the social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit.

Our Plan sets out the short-term priorities and immediate actions that will protect jobs, safeguard businesses, and build strong, sustainable, resilient communities.

The actions in the plan are focused on supporting:

- **Businesses** – safeguarding existing businesses, supporting new start-ups and growing businesses in the foundational and growth sectors to become more productive and competitive, including the green economy.
- **People** – protecting jobs, responding to the expected increases in unemployment, helping people gain the skills needed for the jobs that will become available, and creating new and better-skilled employment opportunities.
- **Places** – ensuring a fair distribution of opportunities through investing in the infrastructure and adaptation of our strategic growth areas, town centres, the rural economy and regenerating our most deprived communities.

Increasing the supply of homes and meeting housing need will help support some of the immediate priorities identified in the economic recovery plan, including:

- **The need to build strong communities** – by creating over 2,000 homes we will help ensure that we deliver the right homes in the right places. This will include providing affordable homes for young and working age people in both rural and urban areas, helping them remain in the County, increasing footfall in our primary towns and protecting the Welsh language and culture in rural areas;
- **Replacing and safeguarding jobs** – the investment associated with this plan exceeds £300million. This will support local businesses and the supply chain, creating and safeguarding jobs, helping to replace the 3,000 jobs that have already been lost.

- **Growing the green economy** – developing energy-efficient new homes, with the latest renewable technology and the delivery our commitments outlined in the Housing Decarbonisation and Affordable Warmth Strategy will help support the Council’s Net Zero Carbon targets and the circular economy. These new build and retrofit programmes will support the development of the green economy, the construction industry and build local skills.

Increasing the supply of homes is recognised in the plan as a key driver of economic recovery and growth.

Well-being Plan

Our Well-being Plan draws from the Assessment of Local Well-being which identified a number of challenges that individuals face throughout their lives, including deteriorating physical and mental health, the breakdown of social networks and relationships, changing economic circumstances and becoming trapped in a cycle of poverty. The longer-term implications for the wellbeing of individuals, their families and their communities, can be immense when they don't get help or support at the right time, particularly in the early years of life. The key goal in the Well-being Plan that impacts on this Strategy is: 'to make sure that people have the right help at the right time; as and when they need it'

This is to be achieved in the short, medium and long term:

Short term:

Changing the Model of Delivery

The plan aspires to transform service delivery to enable individuals, families and communities to take early preventative measures for the benefit of their own well-being. This included raising awareness, establishing a single point of contact to access information, and the development of a common training programme for staff across organisations based on the Make Every Contact Count (MECC) approach.

Medium Term:

Information Sharing

Building on the short-term action, establish procedures and systems to continue to support the change of service provision and enable service users to take personal preventative measures. This included the development of a mechanism for organisations to coordinate and share key information to enhance the capacity and capability of public service partners to support individuals to take early preventative action.

Longer Term:

Ambition

Enhanced collaboration of services to ensure that people get the right help at the right time, as and when they need it. This may be innovative county-wide and local responses such as mobile or co-location of services.

The key goal in the Well-being Plan that impacts on this Strategy is: 'to make sure that people have the right help at the right time; as and when they need it'.

**West Wales
Population Assessment**

The West Wales Care Partnership Population Assessment provides a high-level strategic analysis of care and support needs of citizens and support needs of carers across the West Wales region.

The overarching recommendations of the Population Assessment are:

Voice and control

Ensure that maintaining people’s dignity and protecting individuals from neglect and abuse must lie at the heart of all services. Ensure all services are available in Welsh for those who require them.

Ensure that people needing care and support and carers are involved meaningfully at all stages in the planning, delivery and review of services. This needs to happen at strategic level, engaging with citizens over the future shape of care and support and expectations on individuals to promote their own wellbeing and operationally, ensuring that assessment and care planning allows people to express personal outcomes and influence decisions regarding the support needed to attain them.

Prevention and early intervention

Build on the considerable foundations in place across the service areas covered in the assessment to ensure appropriate services are available to prevent or delay the need for ongoing care and support and that the prevention ethos underpins all levels and types of care. Specifically, opportunities should be taken to develop consistent preventative frameworks across services, which build on existing good practice, facilitate transition between children and adult’s services and demonstrably reduce the need for ongoing care and support. This includes investing in the development of community-based preventative services, including social enterprise, cooperatives, user-led and third sector provision thus building the resilience of communities and, thereby, of people needing care and support.

Wellbeing

Prioritise support for carers and families, enabling them and those they care for to live fulfilled and independent lives for as long as possible. Further improve transition services to facilitate effective planning across services and ensure that young people continue to receive appropriate care and support into early adulthood.

Co-operation, partnership and integration

Create an environment which permits radical change and encourages innovation rather than trying to do more of the same with less. Develop consistent delivery models across service areas and the region, based on a shared strategic vision and the principles within the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014; ensuring common standards to all residents in West Wales.

Approach to homelessness across the region

Regional working forms an important part of improving our service delivery. We work with neighbouring authorities to form the Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group (RHSCG) co-terminus with Hywel Dda and Powys Health Boards. The RHSCG does not play a governance role within HSG, instead their role is to provide a forum for collaborative working. Individual authorities are not accountable to RHSCGs.

The Regional Partnership Board (RPB) provides the mechanism through which collaborative working, between Health, Social Care and Housing is developed and is the mechanism through which the RHSCG builds a close working relationship so that services can be jointly commissioned, designed or focused to optimise the complementary purposes of supported Housing, Health and Social Care. The RPB is continuing to develop their role, structures and approach to securing better outcomes through collaboration. This means that we are operating in an evolving and dynamic environment and the ways of working with RPBs will need to be developed over time.



National Context

Welsh Government has maintained a consistent focus on tackling homelessness in the context of broader UK Government policy such as austerity and welfare reform.

The impact of other non-devolved policy areas such as policing and prisons on homelessness is also monitored and responded to as appropriate. Under Part 2 of the **Housing (Wales) Act 2014**, Local authorities have a strengthened duty to prevent and relieve homelessness which has led to a strengthening of local partnership arrangements.

The guiding principle remains one of preventing homelessness, but where this is not possible, ensuring it is brief and non-repeated. There is a renewed commitment to reform homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing. Understanding what works, what is promising, and what isn't effective will be crucial to Welsh Government in delivering its policy goals.

More detail on how the national context has developed since the Housing (Wales) Act came into being can be found in Appendix 1.

A person-centred, multi-agency approach to homelessness requires a contribution from, and alignment with other services. These service areas are themselves subject to specific legislation and policy, all broadly coalescing around the principles of prevention/ early intervention, person-centred support, promoting independence and providing sustainable solutions. Relevant legislation and policy are summarised below.

The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act seeks to strengthen existing governance arrangements for improving the social, economic and cultural wellbeing of Wales to ensure that present needs are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Public bodies listed in the Act need to think about the long term, work better with people, communities and each other and look to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

The Act emphasises the focus on prevention and partnership approaches to working with VWDASV.

Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

The Act makes provision for improving the well-being outcomes for people who need care and support, and carers who need support and co-ordination and partnership by public authorities with a view to improving the well-being of people.

The Act recognises the increase in the number of people accessing social services. In order to help meet and reduce the demand it outlines the need for increased comprehensive early intervention and intensive support services.

Substance Misuse Delivery Plan: 2019 to 2022 (Wales)

This sets out the Welsh Government's key policy and operational priorities and has been reviewed to consider where it needs to be updated in light of COVID-19.

Equality Act 2010

This Act covers the whole of the UK and provides protection for people discriminated against because they are perceived to have, or are associated with someone who has, a protected characteristic. Protection applies to the provision of services and public functions. In addition, a new Socio-Economic Duty was introduced in Wales in 2020 which requires public bodies, when making strategic decisions such as deciding priorities and setting objectives, to consider how their decisions might help reduce the inequalities associated with socio-economic disadvantage.

The Future Programme for Government

The Programme for Government outlines key commitments to legislate in line with the key recommendations in the documents below in relation to homelessness and care experienced young people.

Specifically Welsh Government has committed to:

1. Explore radical reform of current services for looked after children and care leavers;
2. Fundamentally reform homelessness services to focus on prevention, rapid rehousing and;
3. Support innovative housing developments to meet care needs
4. Improve joint working across housing and social services, utilising corporate parenting responsibilities

Needs Assessment

Needs Assessment process

A Needs Assessment has been undertaken by the Council and from this a Statement of Need has been produced that uses the findings from the Needs Assessment to identify the key issues for the Housing Support Programme Strategy, our statutory duties to prevent and alleviate homelessness and in the context of our wider strategic objectives. The Statement of Need is summarised below.

Preventing Homelessness

Housing Support services exist to help prevent homelessness, social exclusion, isolation and institutionalisation. The Welsh legal and policy framework makes it clear that early intervention reduces undue escalation and avoids a crisis, with knock-on impacts to health, inclusion and independence. The Needs Assessment shows clearly that demand for housing outstrips supply, despite our best efforts to create new options for temporary accommodation, supported accommodation and permanent housing. This makes the role of prevention even more urgent and the need to support people to maintain their existing accommodation. Our success at preventing homelessness has been maintained over the Covid period but it is below both the Welsh and regional average. We have identified a number of key actions to improve positive prevention outcomes, some of this change is already taking place with the development of the Housing Hwb Service.

Independence Skills

The Carmarthenshire Wellbeing Plan sets out activity to make sure that people have the right help at the right time; as and when they need it. In the short term this includes transforming models of delivery to empower people via raising awareness, establishing a single point of contact to access information, and the development of a common training programme for staff across Public Service Board organisations based on the Make Every Contact Count (MECC) approach. People at risk of homeless will be a key target group for this approach.

There are significant numbers of young people presenting as homeless in Carmarthenshire and being referred into supported accommodation and floating support services. The needs of young people include training and skills development to live independently. There are a number of challenges that relate to young people transitioning to adulthood when and young adults need help to advocate for themselves.

HSG funded Supported Accommodation for Young People provides training flats to develop the skills and confidence in young people to manage their own accommodation. More could be done to provide training for people in basic skills needed to live independently.

Support to prevent homelessness

Our Homelessness Team have made a range of changes in how they work to meet increased demand. There are a range of floating support services provided by HSG funding that work with people in their own accommodation to help develop skills and address issues that could lead to homelessness. Flexible models of support that work with people in temporary accommodation and follows them into settled accommodation should be further developed.

Most people supported have multiple needs and support should adapt and flex up and down according to need. Support capacity will shift its focus from managing crises to prevention and multi-agency support, specially tailored to individual's needs is required for complex cases.

It is recognised that there is no universal support needs assessment in place to ensure a more accurate and consistent assessment is undertaken for those who require support services. As a result, it is difficult to plan effective services to focus advice and assistance for people to help them move on and sustain their accommodation in the longer term.

Data sharing enhances prevention planning

Understanding the activity of system partners such as Health, Probation and Education and having access to the information they have on people's needs is vital to effectively plan services and provide support early, before crises develop.

The Carmarthenshire Wellbeing Plan includes the development of a mechanism for Public Service Board organisations to coordinate and share key information, to enhance the capacity and capability of public service partners to support individuals to take early preventative action.

Strengths in good joint working with organisations such as Probation needs to be built upon, particularly in relation to NHS mental health and substance misuse services.

Most people supported have multiple needs and support should adapt and flex up and down according to need.

Accommodation

There has been a significant increase in single people being homeless and requiring permanent one bedroom accommodation. There is a marked shortfall between the current demand for one-bedroom properties and the supply of available housing. There is a plan to develop over 2000 more homes of mixed size and tenure across all parts of Carmarthenshire by 2026, however this was prepared prior to the pandemic. Other development plans have ambitious targets to build new housing, especially social housing, but this will be over a number of years and there will continue to be a shortfall in accommodation to meet the scale of homelessness presentations since the pandemic.

We have seen a very recent surge in homeless presentations this has led us to have to manage reactively to meet immediate pressing need.

The very recent surge in presentations is caused by a number of external factors that have caused an increase in demand and a decrease in the supply of properties for rent:

- The renting Homes Act has created concern for some landlords. WG’s delay in implementing the Renting Homes Act from July to December 2022 created uncertainty for landlords and increased the numbers of Section 21 Notices (no-fault evictions) being served on private rented sector (PRS) tenants. (These require only a two-month notice period as per the ‘Housing Act 1988’);
- Loss of landlords and their properties from the Private Rented sector resulting in an inability to prevent homelessness and discharge our duty via this route;
- The lack of supply has increased market rents. Market rents local to Carmarthenshire are now substantially higher than Local Housing Allowance (LHA) making the market unaffordable for many applicants;
- Some evidence of landlords serving Section 21 notices so they can secure a higher rent as the market soars; and
- Some landlords cashing in on recent rises in property prices and exiting the rental market.

More than

2000



projected as presenting homeless (section 62) by the end of the year

Of the households in Temporary accommodation

75%



require a one-bedroom property

In addition, recent immigration and Asylum Policy is beginning to place further pressure on the housing sector. In particular:

- Applicants with no recourse to public funds (NRPF) having to be accommodated in TA indefinitely under WG’s ‘no-one left out’ approach whilst their application to remain is being considered by the Home Office;
- Unquantified demand for homes from Asylum & Protection Transformation full dispersal regional shares; and
- Increasing and unquantified demand for homes from Ukraine households- this is projected to rise substantially.

Whilst the system has, with some difficulty coped to date the signs are now that we are seeing severe stress in the system. This includes:

- In mid-2022 more than 2000 people projected as presenting homeless (section 62) by the end of the year this was more than 20% higher than pre pandemic levels.
- That of these that presented for whom we have a full duty (section 75) we are housing more households than ever before and were projected to be a third higher in 2022 than in pre pandemic levels at 440 households. This was achieved by direct matching to social housing at greater levels than ever before.

- Despite this improved performance the number waiting for housing for whom we had a full duty rose from 180 households in 2021 to 327 at the end of June 2022.
- The current accommodation needs of people in a Section 75 Duty highlights the impact of the lack of supply of 1-bedroom and shared accommodation options for single people and couples. 68% require a 1-bedroom home.
- Of the households in temporary accommodation 75% require a one-bedroom property with the average length of stay in temporary accommodation now at 18 weeks.
- Whilst we have increased supply of temporary accommodation from a pre pandemic level of 99 to 132 units availability of properties has not enabled us to keep up with demand.
- There is a consistent demand for Temporary Accommodation. The increase in demand from households served with a Section 21 Notice has been dramatic with notices being served on a broad range of households who would not have previously presented as homeless. This is explored in more detail in the next section.

The number of section 21 notices being issued is unprecedented. We are seeing Landlords issuing 50 a month up from a pre-April 2022 level of 1-2 a month. Whilst we are meeting some of the most urgent demand through direct allocations into social housing, we are struggling to meet demand.

As a result of this dramatic increase the number of Section 21 (no fault) eviction notices being served we have seen the demographics of people presenting as homeless changing. This cohort of people are unlikely to be able to sustain or obtain accommodation in the private rented sector due to both the implementation of the Renting Homes Act and overall cost of rentals.

We have Homelessness Caseworkers investigate the reasons as to why landlords are serving Section 21 Notices and try to negotiate for tenants to remain, however, primarily landlords are indicating that they wish to leave the sector as they no longer want the responsibilities that the new Act will bring. It is felt that the publicity caused by the suspension of implementation of the act served to alert landlords to the coming change and brought forward landlords wishing to exit from the rental market altogether.

The following size properties are required by Section 21 Notice applicants alone (age calculations and household compositions analysed):

	No. of Households
1 bedroom Need Under 55's	49
1-2 bedroom Need Over 55's	31
2-bedroom Need	74
3-bedroom Need	34
3 - 4-bedroom Need	2
4-bedroom Need	4
5-bedroom Need	1
Total	195

Almost 60% of households (115) with a Section 21 Notice require family type accommodation of between 2-5 bedrooms. We also hold data of the breakdown by area within Carmarthenshire where households are looking to settle.

An average at least 10 households per week present as homeless or are threatened with homelessness because of being served with a Section 21 Notice. We anticipated this continuing until the implementation of the Renting Homes Act in December 2022. Therefore, an additional 200 households were likely to present in this period. Based on the current split of single/families who have presented this could result in a further 120 families, 50 single households, and 30 single households over the age of 55 presenting due to a Section 21 Notice.

We have engaged in detail with landlords and 60% of landlords giving notice to their tenants so they can sell the property and only 9% because of rent arrears. This information has been gathered as part of the homeless investigation process. Caseworkers have tried to really understand the reasons why landlords have been issuing so many notices and have tried to give options to remain letting in the sector.

We have:

- negotiated to clear rent accounts or top up rents;
- offered to refer for additional support to assist people with managing tenancies; and
- promoted our in-house Social Lettings Agency and the benefits of the scheme so they no longer have to manage the tenancy day to day.

Landlords are repeatedly turning down this assistance and are continuing to state that they want to leave the sector. The reasons they are giving for turning down Social Lettings is because they would only get Local Housing Allowance (LHA) Rent and they can sell their property and get more money that way. This has also been confirmed by Shelter Cymru in our regular monthly meetings.

The level of demand this is creating is becoming very difficult to meet with limited temporary accommodation offers for families. This is resulting in a rise in the number of complaints and Councillor enquiries coming through in relation to applicants who are being served with Notices.

These enquiries, in a lot of circumstances, are going straight to officers who are trying to deal with multiple challenges. This creates an added pressure and is becoming increasingly unsustainable.

In our Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan, we will set out how we will move towards providing more sustainable models of accommodation and support that meets the needs of everyone currently in emergency provision and future demand.

Making sure people reach settled housing as quickly as possible rather than staying in temporary accommodation for extended periods will be the goal.

Temporary Accommodation

Twice as many people have been housed by homelessness services than pre-pandemic levels, and the overwhelming majority of those are single people. An analysis in February 2021 found of the 109 people in temporary accommodation around half of people were suitable for Rapid Rehousing with low levels of floating support and half requiring a Housing First based model of medium to high support.

There is an insufficient supply of supported accommodation for young people. Stakeholders raised a range of concerns regarding temporary accommodation.

“young people being placed in temporary accommodation and exposed to substance misuse and mental health issues”

“It is hard to access accommodation, particularly for people who are well known to the system and return a number of times. Although there are some successes through intensive work with individuals”.

“The right accommodation is key, putting a lot of people with multiple, complex needs in temporary accommodation is a challenge. For example, there are those who are trying to break from peer pressure from people who are having to share with people not yet ready to manage their mental health or substance misuse.”

There is a need to review the balance of provision between temporary accommodation, supported accommodation, Housing First and Rapid rehousing. Stakeholders feel that Housing First does not work as effectively in Carmarthenshire as it does in neighbouring counties.

We need to work with our colleagues and with key partners such as health, social care, housing providers and the criminal justice sector in order to develop, resource and implement a fit-for-purpose housing support plan for both temporary and settled accommodation including a shared understanding of referral pathways and of service eligibility criteria.

Private Rented Sector

The Private Rented Sector provides an outlet for the Council to discharge its homelessness duty. The Council has a well-established Social Lettings Agency with a portfolio of 160 houses (March 2022) which proved to be an extremely valuable resource during the pandemic.

Rising house values in Carmarthenshire have meant that some private landlords set rents significantly higher than the Local Housing Allowance meaning they are no longer accessible to the Council and tenants are not able to make up the difference. This is a particular problem in Carmarthen Town.

The Council will need to evolve the Agency and improve the offer to landlords and prospective tenants from the register to ensure that it continues to grow and meet the needs of the service and its stakeholders. The Private Rented Sector Leasing Scheme, introduced in April 2022, where private property owners are encouraged to lease their properties to the Council in return for a rent guarantee and additional funding to improve the condition of their property, is being promoted and may assist securing accommodation in the PRS.

We are actively encouraging applicants to look in the Private Sector however we have seen the number of properties available to rent drop and those that are available are clearly unaffordable to our clients coming through the system.

We subscribe to an independent service ‘Hometrack’. Hometrack obtain their data by regular contact with letting agents around the UK. They provide a rolling average, and the data below covers the period from 15 months ago to 3 months ago. The data shows that in many areas there have been no lets of a particular size property in that ward in the 12 months to March 2022.

Those properties that are available to rent are unaffordable to many people. When coupled with cost-of-living pressures this on food, fuel and travel these gaps are not bridgeable for most of the families being served notices and are being outbid in any case by households who are able to spend a greater proportion of their income on rent.

Making sure people reach settled housing as quickly as possible rather than staying in temporary accommodation for extended periods will be the goal.

Support

Services work in eleven agreed localities across Carmarthenshire to ensure coherence of service to people in each locality. There are a range of local referral mechanisms which are inconsistent and it is currently challenging to obtain a single, consistent dataset of referrals and outcomes for housing related support.

As part of developing our Rapid Rehousing Transitional Plan we will analyse available support needs data on people accessing homelessness services; developing our plans based on people's levels of need; planning seamless services for presentations likely on an annual basis in the future. We will ensure our support needs assessments provide the necessary information for us to focus our advice and assistance for people to help them move on and sustain their accommodation in the longer term.

Support providers have indicated that recruitment and retention of staff is becoming an issue. There are few people presenting for interview when support staff opportunities are advertised leading to a workforce that is less capable of providing support to citizens whose needs are becoming ever more complex.

Services work in eleven agreed localities across Carmarthenshire to ensure coherence of service to people in each locality.



Complexity and significant life changes

Improvements are needed in the support for people facing significant change for example leaving hospital, prison, school or care settings. Information sharing is an important starting point to help partner organisations target support at the point where an individual's needs change.

Our partners and stakeholders highlight they are receiving referrals for people with increasingly complex needs. Accommodation and support options both on a temporary and long term basis need to be planned and tailored to support these needs. Improvements for services for people with co-occurring mental health and substance misuse issues are needed.

Improvements in our multiagency approach and commitment to sharing intelligence and joint solutions are needed to avoid people falling through gaps in services, and removing silo-working will help address barriers to independent living that some of our clients face.

We will develop a Local Rapid Rehousing Partnership group to overcome some of these barriers. This partnership group will work together to develop the Plan and highlight opportunities where partners can better align their resources. Third sector homelessness and housing support providers will be critical partners during the transition to rapid rehousing.

Most stakeholders agreed mental wellbeing is a significant issue and that the pandemic has further increased the scale of need and entrenched inequalities relating to mental health.

There are high numbers of referrals to services for Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). Stakeholders felt that current refuges are not suitable as they are shared accommodation and so not appropriate for all women and their families and none provide 24/7 on-site support, and there are no refuges for men.

More suitable refuges are required that can accept people with high needs as well as improved floating support services for people still in their own homes – where appropriate and safe. There needs to be range of support 24/7 and dispersed accommodation. A clear pathway for move-on to settled accommodation, and improved options are needed.

Strategic Priorities

Three high level, strategic priorities have been established for this Strategy derived from:

- Conclusions of the needs assessment undertaken to inform this strategy.
- Duties on us under the Housing Act and subsequent policy drivers.
- The core aim of preventing homelessness and supporting people to have the capability, independence, skills and confidence to access and/or maintain a stable and suitable home and the suggested mechanisms for achieving this as stated in the Welsh Government's HSG Guidance.
- Assessment of existing regional and local priorities for preventing homelessness and supporting people under the HSG.
- Evidence of the impact of emergency response provision brought in during the pandemic, many of which should be maintained and consolidated if long-term demand is to be met effectively.

Actions are set out in Annex A under each of the priorities. A number of these are by their nature long-term; whilst tangible impact is expected as implementation progresses, full benefits will often take longer to be realised. This needs to be reflected when allocating funding and monitoring impact. Relevant priorities and supporting actions will also be reflected within the forthcoming Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan which will be prepared by September 2022.

Work will be undertaken to ensure full alignment of the strategic priorities with other commitments across a range of Council services, for example but not exclusively, care and support and youth services and thereby provide for holistic, joined up services for all sections of the population. As well as optimising outcomes for the individual, this will help ensure best use of available resources.

Strategic Priority 1: Preventing Homelessness

In line with the national mission, we will, identify priorities with our partners, and commission an appropriate range of support services to ensure that in future homelessness is prevented, or where it occurs it is rare, brief and unrepeated.

Housing support services exist to help prevent homelessness, social exclusion, isolation and institutionalisation. Prevention is core business in homelessness services and fundamental to our approach is to return to business as usual with a focus on homeless prevention and a return to, and improvement on pre-pandemic performance levels. Early intervention aims to reduce undue escalation to avoid a crisis situation, with knock-on impact to health, inclusion and independence.

We will focus on the following areas to strengthen our approach to prevention. We will:

- 1a) Provide a seamless service for people threatened with Homelessness;
- 1b) Develop an early intervention Housing Hwb offer for people threatened with Homelessness;
- 1c) Empower people with the skills needed to maintain their accommodation;
- 1d) Strengthen our corporate parenting approach in relation to the future accommodation needs of care experienced young people;
- 1e) Ensure support enables people to maintain their accommodation and prevent homelessness.
- 1f) Ensure internal data and data from system partners is used effectively to plan services.

Strategic Priority 2:

The right accommodation for people who become homeless

Fundamental to the Housing Support Programme is to help people live independently in the community. This includes not just access but assessing and influencing supply and suitable accommodation. Housing supply, particularly single bedroom units is in particularly high demand. We will aim to learn from our experience of delivering the Housing First model in developing Rapid Rehousing and a refreshed approach to supporting people to find the right accommodation with the right support from the outset.

We will continue to innovate our offer as more becomes known of user needs.

Our focus will be on ensuring people can move to settled accommodation quickly, with the use of temporary accommodation being limited. We will:

- 2a) Use the data we capture from Support Needs Assessments to ensure where it is needed, we provide the right, good quality temporary accommodation;
- 2b) We will review our ongoing capital build programme together with those of our RSL Partners to ensure that there is consistency between homelessness data and our Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), Social Housing Grant (SHG) Programme, and Local Development Plans;
- 2c) Explore options for shared settled accommodation, particularly for younger people. Taking account of the individual's circumstances and preferences;
- 2d) Engage with private landlords to develop options for temporary and settled accommodation, ensuring the necessary pre-tenancy and ongoing support is available to them and their tenants; and
- 2e) Develop a Local Rapid Rehousing Partnership Group to improve joint planning and commissioning arrangements with key partners e.g. social services, Probation and the Local Health Board (LHB).

Strategic Priority 3:

The right support for people who become homeless

We know that timeliness and suitability of support is something that our service users depend upon. We will continue to innovate our offer as more becomes known of user needs. We recognise we need to build a single consistent system of referral, assessment and support that is simple to use both for service users and provider agencies.

We need to ensure that all our services (in house or commissioned) are bilingual and that a genuine, active offer of being assessed and supported through the medium of Welsh is enshrined in all of our commissioning arrangements.

We also recognise we need to work with partners to build the model of support for people with complex needs including prison leavers and people with mental health and substance misuse challenges. To focus on providing improved support we will:

- 3a) Ensure that assessment of support needs are carried out and that relevant and timely support is available at the first point of contact;
- 3b) Develop a 'Housing Support Gateway Service' to ensure consistent referral, assessment and delivery processes;
- Through the Local Rapid Rehousing Partnership Group develop specialist Support for people experiencing significant life change – leaving hospital, prison, school, care settings; and survivors of domestic violence and abuse
- Develop protocols for assessments to be carried out alongside partners who provide specialist support, to ensure a more accurate and consistent assessment is undertaken for those who require those support services for crises and complex needs.

Stakeholder Engagement

A range of local stakeholders were involved in developing this needs assessment.

Stakeholders included council departments, statutory partners such as the NHS and Probation, along with representatives from Registered Social Landlords and HSG providers. Stakeholders were engaged via online workshops, one to one interviews and via questionnaire.



A list of stakeholders who participated is set out below:

- Strategic Housing, CCC
- Regional Coordinator Homelessness, CCC
- Housing Solutions CCC
- Carmarthenshire Homelessness
- Forum members
- Llanelli Mind
- The Wallich
- Youth service homelessness service
- Nacro
- Consensus Support
- Threshold
- Caredig (previously Family Housing)
- 16-25 youth support service
- Llamau
- Members of Co-occurring mental health and substance misuse health board

The key themes arising from stakeholder engagement are summarised below:

- People need the skills and understanding to maintain their tenancies, for young people this should commence in schools and colleges.
- Many people do not have basic skills due to the way they've been brought up, foster care, parents with substance abuse, learning difficulties, even busy working parents etc.
- It was felt the boundaries of the HSG should be pushed to provide more 'skilling-up' options.

- Having more, accessible information about what current services exist is important.
- The Council could develop a one stop shop, café, information sharing centre and provide workshops.
- Early intervention prevention work with 16-25 year olds and NEETs have services in schools – there needs to be better corporate approach to how these use contribute to homelessness prevention.
- Identification, support and tracking of people at risk of potential homelessness could be further improved by linking up intelligence from both internal and external sources.

Having more, accessible information about what current services exist is important.

The right accommodation

- Young people can at times be placed in temporary accommodation and be exposed to substance misuse and mental health issues.
- It is hard to access accommodation, particularly for people who are well known to the system and return a number of times. However, stakeholders highlighted that because they have had to work with people intensively, they have had success with some cases that initially it seemed they wouldn't.
- The right accommodation is key, putting a lot of chaotic people in the same accommodation is problematic. One service user stated he felt his opportunity to improve his wellbeing was being sabotaged by others, especially through peer pressure.

- Housing First does not work as effectively in Carmarthenshire as it does in neighbouring counties. This was partly because it was felt the Carmarthenshire approach doesn't follow the model as closely, and that there is also a lack of accommodation for Housing First.
- A key challenge is the lack of accommodation for Housing First and move on from temporary accommodation.
- It is very difficult to access the Private Rented Sector especially in Carmarthen as there is a £200 shortfall between rents and the Local Housing Allowance.

The right support

- Support should adapt and flex up and down according to need
- Most people have multiple needs
- People with multiple needs have multiple agencies supporting them. Some even stop when they know another agency is involved as their roles overlap.
- Good assessments are needed from the beginning, the current referral processes into HSG services was described as 'clunky' and that it comprised of ticking boxes of needs.
- There needs to be a streamlined assessment hub or Gateway for all requests for HSG and homelessness referrals/presentations.

- When people are conducting assessments they need to consider real life living
 - Life skills
 - Good role models
 - Basic cooking skills
 - Budgeting and paying utilities
 - The benefits of what you eat, fresh versus frozen
 - Basic hygiene
 - How to make a bed
 - How to use a washing machine
- Support to claim universal credit and financial hardships funds
- There is an overly bureaucratic expectation that everyone has an assessment, risk assessment and support plan, but sometimes people just need signposting.
- Joint working between the Housing Department and Probation needs to improve.
- Joint working with the NHS mental health or substance misuse services is required and an improvement in information sharing from them to HSG funded support services.



Mental health

- The mental health crisis which had already existed was further compounded by the pandemic. The scale and complexity of mental health challenges have increased and are more entrenched.
- Most stakeholders agreed mental wellbeing is a significant issue, and that better joint responses from statutory and third sector partners are required.

Young people

- Accessing the right support for young people transitioning to adulthood can be challenging.
- Care experienced young people need an improved corporate parenting approach to planning for their future accommodation needs.
- Overall levels of need amongst young people have increased and become more complex.

Complex needs

- Access to short term accommodation for complex issues needs to be improved and better planning for longer term accommodation options is required.
- As mental health and substance misuse co-occur so frequently it should assumed in the commissioning of services and wider partnership arrangements.
- NHS stakeholders highlighted a desire for better training in this area.
- Having a multi-agency planned approach for individuals who regularly ‘fall through the gaps’ in services is required.

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

- Refuge services for complex needs need to be developed.
- Some current Refuges are not suitable in design. For example, there is some shared accommodation which wouldn’t be appropriate for women with older male children. None are 24/7 support, have on call but not on site.
- More move on options are required.
- There is a need for gender specific services due to family trauma and for those who are survivors, also need services for men who have experienced trauma.



Overall levels of need amongst young people **have increased and become more complex.**

Impact Assessments

Impact Assessment Process

A comprehensive impact assessment exercise has been carried by the housing service to assess the impact of the 3 strategic priority areas. The assessments were conducted by members of the HSG service, using templates from Carmarthenshire County Council and Welsh Government. Carmarthenshire County Council have developed an integrated Impact Assessment that takes into consideration the impact that a particular project or proposal

will have on the ability of the council to fulfil its wider legislative requirements, including the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and the Equalities Act 2010 (Wales). The Children’s Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA) was conducted using a Welsh Government template, which looked at the impact of the priorities on children’s rights and how the strategy can support and promote these rights.



Key Findings

Equality Impact Assessment

The impact assessment considered the 3 strategic priority areas of the HSP strategy against each of the protected characters contained in the Equality Act. In each case, the assessment identified that the priorities would bring positive impacts to individual with these characteristics, especially individuals who are considered vulnerable due to their age or sexual orientation, where specific services are currently being provided to address their needs.

An area where implementation of the strategy may also bring some significant improvements is in relation to the availability of suitable accommodation. The needs assessment has highlighted that accommodation in general remains a priority in Carmarthenshire and the delivery of more accommodation has been identified as a strategic priority. Through positive partnership working, Carmarthenshire will work to provide more housing solutions, which will include options for individuals with a disability, bringing a number of positive impacts. The impact assessment did consider whether residents may be indirectly affected due to race, with some residents of different races also having different cultural or language requirements, which may pose a barrier to accessing services. However, the Housing service continues to make provision to address these issues wherever possible, through the use of translation services and the availability of information in alternative languages or formats. This will continue to be monitored through the life of the strategy, to ensure that services adapt to any changes in provision that may impact on a particular group.

Impact Assessments Welsh Language Assessment

The assessment considered whether the strategic priorities and delivery of the HSP strategy would impact on a person’s ability to access and use services through the medium of Welsh. The assessment concluded that there is currently sufficient provision in place across the local authority and its partners to enable service users to access services in their preferred language and the implementation of this strategy will not negatively impact on the Welsh Language Measure.

Children’s Rights Impact Assessment (CRIA)

The HSP strategy will bring several positive impacts for children:

- Reduced time in temporary accommodation.
- Improved accommodation options for households.
- Raising awareness of the support available for households that are struggling.
- Improved support provision for households.

Whilst the HSP programme does not directly support children, the priorities identified in this strategy will results in a number of positive impacts for households, which will improve the experiences of children contained within them.

Implementing, Monitoring and Reviewing the Strategy

Working with Partners

As the Public Policy Institute for Wales summarises in its Tackling Homelessness, A Rapid Evidence Review 2015 report:

‘The evidence shows that homelessness is a complex problem. It often has multiple causes that interact with one another in ways that vary at the individual level and require engagement with multiple policy areas’.

The root causes that lead to homelessness and/or evident housing support needs among vulnerable individuals and households are profoundly interconnected. Therefore, the successful implementation of this strategy fundamentally depends on co-ordination, joint planning, commissioning and delivery of services (by both internal local authority departments, statutory partners and the housing sector).

In practice, this collaborative approach is played in Carmarthenshire through participation in the Mid and West Wales RHSCG which covers the Powys and Hywel Dda University Health Board areas. Whilst the

County Council is not directly accountable to the RHSCG, the regional structures provide a forum for practice sharing, spreading proven effective practice and addressing common opportunities and challenges. This has included joint working on the development of local HSP strategies across the region and the RHSCG will also oversee delivery of regional priorities emerging from local plans.

Similarly, the Regional Partnership Board (RPB) provides an obvious mechanism for engaging with health, social care and other partners responsible for the delivery of care and support in the County. It provides an ideal forum for collaboration, for example in the commissioning of services which promote wellbeing of citizens through the provision of appropriate housing and related support. Current strengthening of RPBs in response to the recent White Paper ‘Rebalancing Care and Support’ (2021) presents an opportunity for further development of these links, ensuring that health and care services align with housing support and supporting a person-centred approach. This is reflected in the identified strategic priorities supporting actions.

Existing links will also continue with the Area Planning Board for Substance Misuse Services and the VAWDASV Strategic and Delivery Groups, to ensure alignment of services and approaches to support as well as optimisation of available resources.

Funding Sources

Implementation of this Strategy and delivery against the identified strategic priorities will require significant investment.

This comes from a variety of sources, including:

- The HSG allocation for County, which totalled £8.8m in 2021/22. Indicative allocations of the same amount are in place until end March 2025.
- The Council’s Housing Revenue Account
- The Social Housing Grant
- Phase 1 and 2 of the Economic Resilience Fund and the Hardship Fund, both established in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic

Allocation of resources to support specific actions will be finalised at implementation stage and, for Housing Support Services, reflected in the forthcoming HSG Delivery Plan.

Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluation Arrangements

The HSP Strategy is framed over a 4-year period and implementation will be subject to ongoing review, including a formal mid-point review after 2 years.

Implementation will be overseen by the CCG & HSG Board, which has responsibility for delivery of the HSG programme and associated resources within the wider housing and homelessness context. The Board will monitor delivery of the priorities and receive reports on outcomes and impact. It meets quarterly and is chaired by the Director of Community Services and Director of Education & Children.

Regular interaction also takes place with the HSG National Advisory Board, on which all local authorities across Wales are represented. The Housing Information Network is another important forum, which promotes cross-Wales approaches to homelessness and enables sharing of experiences and information as well as arranging training and development for relevant staff.

Appendix 1

Housing and homelessness policy and practice has continued to evolve in the period since the Housing Act came into force. This evolving landscape has included:

- Publication in 2016 of **‘Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence’** – essentially a pathway to economic independence for young people through housing advice, options and homelessness prevention.
- Publication in 2016 by Barnardo’s of the **Care Leaver Accommodation and Support Framework** aimed at supporting effective planning and provision of housing and support for young people and care leavers.
- Introduction by Welsh Government of the **‘Housing First’** recovery-orientated 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.
- A series of focused campaigns including the **End Youth Homelessness Cymru Campaign 2018**, focusing on the needs of the LGBT+ community, supporting those with mental health issues and reducing links between homelessness and educational disengagement and the care system.

- Significant additional investment by Welsh Government, notably **£10m in 2019-20 to tackle youth homelessness** through enhancing current provision and developing new services; and launch of a **£4.8m innovation fund** in 2019-20 supporting 26 projects across Wales to new and innovative approaches to housing support.
- Welsh Government’s consultation document, **‘Ending homelessness: A high-level action plan: 2021-2026’**, building on Phase 2 planning guidance and produced in response to earlier work undertaken by the Homelessness Action Group in 2020.
- A requirement on Local Authorities to finalise a **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan** by the end of September 2022.
- A renewed emphasis, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic on reducing street homelessness by providing temporary accommodation solutions, leading to publication by Welsh Government of **Phase 2 planning guidance** requiring local authorities and their partners to plan to ensure that all those brought into temporary accommodation are supported into long term accommodation, that the emphasis remains on prevention and keeping homelessness a rare, brief and non-repeated experience.
- **Phase 3 planning guidance (2020)** supporting the design and development of resilient, sustainable services for the future.

Specific strategic commitments within Welsh Labour’s Programme for Government (2021), including:

1. To fundamentally reform homelessness services to focus on prevention and rapid rehousing.
2. Building of 20,000 new low carbon social homes for rent over the period 2021 to 2026.
3. Support for co-operative housing, community-led initiatives, and community land trusts.
4. Development of a national scheme restricting rent to local housing allowance levels for families and young people who are homeless or are at risk homelessness.
5. Ensuring Rent Smart Wales landlords respond quickly to complaints of racism and hate crime and offer anything appropriate support.

Further commitments within the Labour/Plaid Cymru Cooperation Agreement (November 2021), including:

1. Taking immediate and radical action to address the proliferation of second homes and unaffordable housing, using the planning, property and taxation systems
2. Establishment of Unnos, a national construction company, to support councils and social landlords to improve the supply of social and affordable housing.
3. Publication of a White Paper to include proposals for a right to adequate housing, the role a system of fair rents (rent control) could have in making the private rental market affordable for local people on local incomes and new approaches to making homes affordable.
4. Ending homelessness through reform of housing law, enacting the Renting Homes Act to give renters greater security and implementing the Homeless Action Group recommendations.

Further significant changes will be introduced in December 2022 when the Welsh Government enacts the provisions of its **Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016**. Key changes, which strengthen the rights and protections of tenants include:

- Replacement of current tenancies and licences, including assured shorthold, assured and secure tenancies with secure occupation contracts (generally issued by community landlords – local authorities and housing associations) and standard occupation contracts (generally issued by private landlords).
- Increased duties on landlords to set out respective duties of the landlord and contract holder (tenant).
- Minimum notice period for termination of a contract where there is no fault to 6 months and requirement for at least 6 months to have elapsed since the start of a contract before any such notice is issued.
- Increased protection for contract holders from break clauses, which can only be issued by landlords where certain conditions are met.

- Requirement that all rented properties are fit for human habitation and that landlords keep the structure and exterior of the property in good repair.
- Protection for remaining tenants subject to a joint contract where one contract-holder leaves the property.
- Enhanced contract succession rights for certain groups, including some carers.

These changes will have obvious implications for local authorities and other agencies with duties to prevent and relieving homelessness, in terms of existing tenants or contract holders having enhanced protection from the risk of becoming homeless, but also potentially on the availability of suitable properties in an area and private landlords willing to rent.

Annex A: Action Plan

Strategic Priority 1 – Preventing Homelessness

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
1a) Provide a seamless service for people threatened with Homelessness	Develop a resource plan for the Housing Hwb Service to provide housing related support services from first point of contact through to settled accommodation.	September 2022	Housing Hwb Manager	Support Needs assessments carried out at first point of contact to ensure people receive targeted support at the earliest opportunity. Improve Homelessness Prevention outcomes and break the cycle of repeat Homeless presentations. Gathering Needs Assessment data to inform Rapid Rehousing transition Plan and future commissioning and service delivery.
1b) Develop an early intervention Housing Hwb offer for people threatened with Homelessness	Pilot the delivery of front-line Homelessness Services and Pre-Tenancy Support in 3 of the Councils main Town Hwb's, Llanelli, Carmarthen and Ammanford.	April 2022 – 23	Housing Hwb Manager	Increase the offer to people threatened with Homelessness. Increase options to People who are unable to communicate via telephone or email. Evaluation of Pilot to determine need for longer term provision, and impact on homelessness prevention.

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
1c) Empower people with skills needed to maintain their accommodation.	Review provision of training for both support providers and service users. Implement a minimum training benchmark for support staff in line with Welsh Government's guidance and regional agreement.	December 2022	RHSCG/ RDC HSG lead	Improve the quality and effectiveness of support to people receiving a service. Increased training may also contribute to the development and retention of staff into the sector.
	Increase the resources available to the pre-tenancy team to provide training to individuals entering the PRS.	September 2022	Housing Hwb Manager/ Pre-tenancy lead/ HSG Development Lead	Increase in the number of people who are able to sustain settled accommodation Increase in the number of people who take up the offer of settled accommodation in the PRS. Improve sustainability skills, and reduction in the number of evictions.
	Deliver basic homelessness training and pre-Tenancy advice to Comprehensive Schools.	Ongoing	Youth Support Services/ Pre-Tenancy Support Lead	Young people will have an understanding of the responsibilities that come with managing a tenancy including budgeting. Young people will be made aware of the issues that contribute to homelessness and where to seek support. Reduction in the number of young people presenting as homeless.

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
1d) Strengthen our corporate parenting approach in relation to the future accommodation needs of care experienced young people	Ensure an improved corporate parenting approach to development of skills including the development of the youth support service.	September 2022	Development Lead	Young people in training flats and shared accommodation will receive floating support from the youth service. Young people will be supported to become independent. Using an internal support provider will ensure collaborative working with key agencies for better outcomes.
	Review partnership working with Early Intervention and Prevention with Youth Services and schools.	December 2022	HSG Lead/ Youth Support Service Lead	Targeted approach to young people at risk of homelessness. Outcomes will be seen through WHO12 data.
1e) Ensure support enables people to maintain their accommodation and prevent homelessness.	Submit Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.	September 2022	Housing Hwb Manager	Corporate approval and submission of Plan to Welsh Government.
	Review commissioning of low level support.	January 2023	Housing Hwb Manager/ HSG	Complete Support Needs Mapping Assessment of people accessing front-line homelessness services.
	Support Rent Smart Wales agenda in particular energy efficiency and fuel poverty.	Ongoing	HSG/ Development lead	Continue to appropriately support people who remain rough sleeping, are in temporary accommodation and those recently moved into settled accommodation. Make available enough of the right support to assist people to secure and sustain settled accommodation.

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
1e) Ensure support enables people to maintain their accommodation and prevent homelessness.	Full evaluation of floating support to ensure support is relevant to changing needs and meets the aims of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.	January 2023	HSG/ Development Lead/ Housing Hwb Manager	Support is appropriate to changing needs and is flexible enough to provide effective support to those that need it to prevent homelessness.
1f) Ensure internal data and data from system partners is used effectively to plan services.	Work with the PSB to support activity around better data sharing.	January 2023	RHSCG/ RDC HSG lead	To ensure that comprehensive data is available and can be used to effectively plan future services.

Strategic Priority 2 – The right accommodation for people who become homeless or at risk of homelessness

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
2a) Use the data we capture from Support Needs Assessments to ensure where it is needed, we provide the right, good quality temporary accommodation	Review existing temporary accommodation placements to determine if applicants are suitable to be offered settled accommodation	September 2022	HSG/ Development Lead/ Housing Hwb Manager	To ensure that people have the opportunity of settled accommodation as quickly as possible – with the necessary support to sustain their tenancies.
	Continue an open dialogue with RSL partners, review existing Social Housing Allocations Policy and look at assistance with TA.	March 2023	Housing Hwb Manager	To ensure that the allocation policy meets the aims of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and that in the short-term good quality temporary accommodation is available to those that need it.
2b) We will review our ongoing capital build programme together with those of our RSL Partners	Review the Four-Year Housing Regeneration and Development Delivery Programme to support the delivery of over 2,000 homes for rent and sale. Develop a plan for gaps in accommodation identified in the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan.	September 2022	Housing Hwb Manager/ Investment and Development Services	To ensure that there is consistency between homelessness data and our Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), Social Housing Grant (SHG) Programme, and Local Development Plans; and that the aims of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is met.
2c) Explore options for shared settled accommodation, particularly for younger people. Taking account of the individual's circumstances and preferences;	Develop robust corporate parenting approach to joint working and commissioning accommodation for care experienced young people and young people 16-18.	Ongoing	HSG Lead Homeless Services	Recommendations are made on the right accommodation options for young people and the plan needed to commission them.

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
2d) Engage with private landlords to develop options for temporary and settled accommodation, ensuring the necessary pre-tenancy and ongoing support is available to them and their tenants	Further develop the Private Rented Sector Leasing Scheme	March 2023	Housing Hwb / Pre-Tenancy Advice Service	Increased availability of good quality, affordable accommodation in the PRS. Improved security for tenants who will be offered minimum terms.
	Review and further develop the options available to bring empty homes into occupation. Where appropriate, encourage use of Simple Lettings/ Private Rented Sector Leasing scheme.	March 2023	Home Improvement Services	Increased number of properties available for rent.
2e) Develop a Local Rapid Rehousing Partnership Group to improve joint planning and commissioning arrangements with key partners e.g. social services, Probation and the Local Housing Board (LHB).	Review Housing First model of support programme	September 2022	HSG/ Development Lead / Homeless Services	Recommendations made for Housing First and Rapid Rehousing.
	Develop the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan	September 2022	Housing Hwb Manager	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan developed.
3a) Ensure that assessment of support needs are carried out and that relevant and timely support is available at the first point of contact	Improve marketing and promotion of support services and referral system through website and social media pages.	January 2022	HSG/ Development Lead	Publicising the availability and accessibility of support services will encourage individuals and other services to refer at an earlier stage, allowing focus on prevention.
	Increase the capacity of support in B&B accommodation.	March 2022	HSG/ Systems lead	Individuals who are in B&B will be able to access support when they need it, not just between 9-5.

Strategic Priority 3 – The right support for people who become homeless

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
3b) Develop a 'Housing Support Gateway Service' to ensure consistent referral, assessment and delivery processes	Review of referral and assessment processes	March 2023	Housing Hwb Manager/ HSG	People will receive the right level of support to meet their needs, reviewed regularly to enable them to sustain settled accommodation.
	Review single point of access for HSG funded services.			
3b) Through the Local Rapid Rehousing Partnership Group develop specialist Support for people experiencing significant life change – leaving hospital, prison, school, care settings	Co-design commissioned services with service users, providers, Council departments, and Health, Probation and Education partners.	March 2023	Housing Hwb Manager/ HSG	Services will be designed with multi-agency and service user input to ensure they are fit for purpose and provide the right support.

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
3b) Develop protocols for assessments to be carried out alongside partners who provide specialist support, to ensure a more accurate and consistent assessment is undertaken for those who require those support services for crises and complex needs	Develop a proactive and responsive inclusions panel 'Gateway' of supported accommodation and hostel providers along with substance misuse and mental health practitioners to minimise the risk of eviction or exclusion from services for people with complex needs co-occurring mental health and substance misuse challenges	September 2022	Housing Hwb Manager	Evictions from TA for people experiencing complex needs will be reduced. This will reduce the number of people found 'intentionally homeless' and the number of repeat applications from this group.
	Continue with Plans to improve services for VAWDASV including those with complex needs. Develop closer working relationships with our Domestic Abuse partners and fully engage with the VAWDASV delivery group to Develop a training plan for frontline staff.	July 2022	HSG Lead	Identify all services available for those experiencing domestic abuse to increase options for them to remain in their home safely. To increase confidence in dealing with clients experiencing domestic abuse and to raise awareness of all services available.

Priority	Action required to deliver the priority	Timescales / By when	Lead Person	Outcome / Outputs
3b) Develop protocols for assessments to be carried out alongside partners who provide specialist support, to ensure a more accurate and consistent assessment is undertaken for those who require those support services for crises and complex needs	Review partnership working opportunities to improve strategic working with system partners, particularly Hywel Dda Health Board. Work closely with the HB around funding for complex needs and where HSG can compliment this. Review multiagency working and case conferencing arrangements to support HSG providers giving holistic support.	March 2023	HSG/ Development lead / Housing Hwb Manager	Joint working will improve outcomes for individuals with complex needs who are often passed between services.
	Continue to provide support drop-in service at Temporary Accommodation including DDAS. Continue co-location of CTAP support service within the B&B	Ongoing while using B&B as temporary accommodation	HSG lead/ Homeless Services	Individuals able to access multiple support from within TA, improved outcomes and joint working between services



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