

# Improvement Objectives

**IO6 - Improve the availability of private and public sector housing to reduce the number of residents who may become homeless.**

This improvement objective is concerned with improving the service we provide to vulnerable people, in public as well as private housing.

- We want to help residents to remain in their homes, with less people presenting themselves as homeless.
- We will provide an improved service to people presenting as homeless or potentially homeless and reduce the number of residents who become homeless.
- We will find solutions to the whole housing market, public and private as research suggests owner-occupiers are less likely to seek early financial/housing assistance from the local authority's housing department than those in the private rented and social sector.
- We will help people maintain their independence by making adaptations, enabling people to stay in their own homes.

A greener place to live, work and visit  
Man gwyrdach i fyw, gweithio ac ymweld



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## Quarter 2 Progress Summary

We are happy to report at the half-yearly stage that good, steady progress is being made against the actions contained with the Improvement Objective. In terms of overall performance the following applies:

- **Risks** – all risks have been reassessed. Two risks are assessed as being high and seven as being medium. No risks have been assessed as being low. None of the risks have increased or reduced since first being assessed.
- **Tasks/Actions** – the performance of each action has been reviewed. In total, there are twenty actions. Three actions have been completed and good progress is being made against the other seventeen actions. All of the remaining actions are on track to be completed by their target dates.
- **Performance Indicators** – There are eight performance indicators. All of the indicators bar one are monitored on a quarterly basis. These seven indicators are currently on track to meet their end of year targets.

In terms of the completed actions we have successfully:

- reconfigured the housing advice section to enhance the focus on homelessness prevention, including the recruitment of one (FTE) homelessness prevention officer. The reconfiguration will allow us to improve the level of service we provide to people who may be homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- amended the procurement practices in respect of minor works of adaptation. This will further reduce waiting times for clients.
- implemented a revised procedure for minor works of adaptation for housing association tenants. The revised procedure will increase the level of available funding for private sector clients.

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Period	Title	Risks					Likelihood of occurrence	Impact	Comment
		Original Date	Original RAG	Original Likelihood of occurrence	Original Impact	RAG			
Q2 13/14	01. Our ability to reduce waiting times for disabled facilities grants to target levels maybe affected by insufficient budgetary provision and conflicting staff priorities.		◆	3	3	◆	3	3	Medium Risk - 9. Our risks are scored using a multiplication of numbers between the ranges 1 to 5 and are then categorised, according to their total score: Low/Green (1-6), Medium/Amber (8-15), High/Red (16-25). Projected budget spend is on target and staff support has been maintained.
Q2 13/14	02. Our ability to reduce waiting times for minor works of adaptation to target levels maybe affected by insufficient budgetary provision and conflicting staff priorities.		◆	3	3	◆	3	3	Medium Risk - 9. Projected budget spend is on target and staff support has been maintained.
Q2 13/14	03. Conflicting staff priorities (both in Housing and corporately) and constraints on capital finance may affect our ability to meet the target for bringing long-term, empty homes back into beneficial use.		◆	2	4	◆	2	4	Medium Risk - 8. Performance on bringing council owned void properties back into beneficial use has improved, however, success in the private sector has been limited due to conflicting staff priorities.
Q2 13/14	04. An increase in the number of people becoming homeless due to an inability of the social lettings agency to obtain buy-in from private landlords, thereby securing access to a sufficient number of good quality, affordable accommodation of the right type, size and location.		◆	3	3	◆	3	3	Medium Risk - 9. Good progress is being made on the development of the social lettings agency. A report will be presented to members in due course. Relationships with landlords are being developed via the landlords forum.
Q2 13/14	05. Government changes to HB system means single people aged 25-34 renting from a private landlord are only entitled to the shared accommodation rate. Affordability and a lack of suitable accommodation (houses in multiple occupation) may result in an increase in homelessness.		◆	3	3	◆	3	3	Medium Risk - 9. We have noticed an increase in housing options advice for this group of people. Affordability and lack of suitable accommodation remains an issue.

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## Risks

Period	Title	Original Date	Original RAG	Original Likelihood of occurrence	Original Impact	RAG	Likelihood of occurrence	Impact	Comment
Q2 13/14	06. In response to changes to the welfare benefit system, people's access to social housing may be limited due to housing associations, which operate in the borough, seeking rent in advance. The council may struggle to discharge its homelessness duty into this sector because of this policy.		◆	4	4	◆	4	4	High Risk - 16. Housing services currently offering financial support if required to private rented sector tenants, e.g. bond scheme, payment of rent in advance.
Q2 13/14	07. An increase in homelessness due to people being unable to afford their housing costs as a result of the introduction of the benefit cap.		◆	4	5	◆	4	5	High Risk - 20. The council and other partners are providing additional support to sustain tenancies.
Q2 13/14	08. Increased bad debt reducing income levels which could result in a threat to the delivery of WHQS programme.		◆	3	4	◆	3	4	Medium Risk - 12. Bad debts have increased as a result of welfare reform, in line with the current business plan assumptions. At present, this has not affected delivery of the WHQS programme.
Q2 13/14	09. An increase in the level of evictions/abandonment leading to reduced tenancy sustainment and cohesive communities.		◆	3	3	◆	3	3	Medium Risk - 9. There have been no noticeable increase in evictions / abandonment to date.

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### Actions

Period	Title	Comment	Overall Status	% Complete	RAG
Q2 13/14	01. Maintaining the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants in line with demand and improving operational practices to continue the reduction in waiting times.	Waiting times in first half of 2013/14, 5.1% lower than in 2012/13 (283.7 days c.f. 299 days). Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	02a. Amendment to procurement practices in respect of Minor Works of Adaptation in an effort to further reduce waiting times for clients.	Amended practices piloted during Q1. Formally implemented in Q2. Completion date - September 2013.	Complete	100	✅
Q2 13/14	02b. Consider the redirection of recommendations for minor works of adaptation for RSL tenants to the RSL's themselves, thereby increasing available funding for private sector recipients.	Piloting a procedure for redirection of referrals relating to RSL tenants to be undertaken during Q1. Amended procedure fully implemented in Q2. RSLs now fund their own minor works of adaptation. Completion date - September 2013.	Complete	100	✅
Q2 13/14	03. Develop a Caerphilly landlords website to act as a one-stop-shop for local private landlords for support and information. It will bring together an array of information and will link in our existing council web based services to private landlords.	We are currently in the process of pulling together all relevant information for inclusion on the website and working with IT to develop the website. Completion date - 31st October 2013.	Partially Completed	75	⚠
Q2 13/14	04. Set up an in-house, social lettings agency to improve access to private rented accommodation for people in housing need.	Work ongoing. We have met with Camarthenshire Council SLA manager and have drafted proposals for staffing arrangements. SLA progression will be subject to members approval. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	30	⚠
Q2 13/14	05. Reconfigure the housing advice section to enhance its focus on homelessness prevention. Recruit a homelessness prevention officer (1 FTE).	Action completed. Physical office moves have taken place. A homeless prevention officer recruited and in post since March 2013. Housing pathways interviews have been set up to direct clients to more detailed case specific officers and take preventative homelessness actions. Completion date - April 2013.	Complete	100	✅
Q2 13/14	06. Improve the emergency accommodation planning for young homeless people (16/17yrs) by transferring the responsibility for the function from social services and partner agencies into one coordinated service hosted by the housing advice centre.	We are currently in the process of advertising for the post of a young persons accommodation officer. Completion date - December 2013.	Partially Completed	75	⚠

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Period	Title	Comment	Overall Status	% Complete	RAG
Q2 13/14	07. Offer housing grant assistance to vulnerable households to enable them to live safely and independently. (minor works grants)	315 applications received. 68 minor works grants approved up to Q2. Grants awarded in accordance with the private sector housing renewal strategy. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	08. Where required we will enforce legislation to encourage high standards of accommodation, repair and good management in the private rented sector where properties fall below minimum standards.	We responded to 116 service requests up to Q2. Where appropriate we take action to ensure that minimum standards are enforced. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	09. We will increase engagement with private sector landlords via continuous improvement of a vibrant landlord forum.	Landlord forum recently celebrated its 6th anniversary and continues to expand its knowledge on the local PRS scene in readiness for the changes due to be introduced by the Housing Bill. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	10. Implement an exit strategy for the renewal area in Llanbradach.	Exit strategy being implemented. Progress on strategy reported to the Llanbradach partnership board. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	11. Offer assistance to those people in threat of losing their home due to mortgage arrears by working with a range of partners under our mortgage rescue scheme.	Mortgage rescue partnership with Shelter, CAB and the two housing associations continues and we are now exploring a private rented model for certain mortgage rescue cases. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	12. Funding has been secured to assist an estimated 15 to 20 homeowners with mortgage arrears over the next 12 months; this will enable us to intervene with direct payments to prevent repossession.	£10k was obtained and one complete mortgage rescue case has been achieved to date. Whilst requests for assistance continue to be received many affected households are too late in applying for this type of help. A comprehensive mortgage rescue brochure has been developed and circulated to relevant teams and partners. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	13. Consider the impact of welfare reform on council housing tenants and work proactively with tenants affected by the reform, by providing advice and assistance, to minimise the risk of financial hardship and the threat of homelessness.	Reports on specific actions to mitigate the impact of the welfare reform changes on tenants will be presented to CHTG in January and March 2014. This will include: January - Tenancy review panel terms of reference and procedure, and financial assistance to assist tenants to move. March - Arrears processes and update on impacts of welfare reform. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	14. Continued support for the bond scheme to facilitate access into the private rented sector for people unable to find a deposit and advance rent.	The Caerphilly bond scheme continues to be an essential partner for us to work alongside and direct potentially homeless households into affordable accommodation. 46 bonds have been placed this year.  On the introduction of the Housing Bill and the discharge of homelessness duty to the PRS, there will be a greater than ever need to maintain this partnership.  Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠



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Period	Title	Comment	Overall Status	% Complete	RAG
Q2 13/14	15. Set up a working group to agree a new administration system for discretionary housing payments used to top up rent shortfalls. The group have agreed to award payments for a maximum time of 3 months, and assist claimants to secure more affordable accommodation.	The Working Group has been very effective in administering discretionary housing payments (DHP) based on the new criteria. The DHP allocation increased ten-fold during the year to accommodate the increase in potentially homeless households due to welfare reform. The group continues to meet and reviews its criteria. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	16. Secure the provision of more suitable emergency accommodation for people who find themselves homeless.	Ty'r Fesen, the short-term family scheme in Caerphilly town centre, opened in April 2013, providing 13 units of accommodation. Ty Croseo is currently undergoing refurbishment to provide supported emergency homeless accommodation for single people aged over 25 years. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	75	⚠
Q2 13/14	17. Contributing towards the alleviation of homelessness in the borough through the provision of new homes developed in partnership with our housing association partners, including supported / temporary accommodation.	There are currently three homeless projects in the pipeline, which will, once completed, provide 36 units of supported accommodation for young people (built to meet temporary accommodation standards).  The nomination agreement between the council and housing associations requires 50% of new developments to be allocated to homeless applicants. 13 homeless households have been rehoused in the first 2 quarters of this year via the agreement.  Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	18. Work regionally with local authorities in Gwent on "Houses into Homes" scheme to increase the number of long-term empty private sector properties returned to beneficial use. This will enable homeowners to renovate empty run-down residential properties and return them to beneficial use.	We are continuing to make use of the Houses Into Homes loans as a viable option for bringing empty properties back into use. We have currently paid out on 3 separate loans totalling £133,000 and which will provide 6 units of accommodation.  A further loan of £8,593.52 to provide 1 unit of accommodation is on the verge of completion at the time of writing. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	19. Improving the quality and availability of housing by returning more long-term (6 months and over) empty properties back into beneficial use.	Work is continuing to bring long-term empty properties back into use. This is being carried out via the use of loans, on-going grants, advice and guidance for owners and, if need be, the use of legislative powers to enforce sales or compulsory purchase properties.  We are also working in partnership with United Welsh Housing Association to offer support, advice and other help to owners of empty properties. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠
Q2 13/14	20. Improve the provision of good quality, affordable housing by working in collaboration with our housing association partners.	In 2013/14, our housing association partners will draw down funding from Welsh Government to commence work on the building of 140 units of affordable housing. Construction of these units is currently at different stages of development and expect some of these units will not be delivered until 2014/15. Completion date - March 2014.	Partially Completed	50	⚠

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### Evidence

Period	Title	Actual	Target	Intervention	RAG	Result 12 Months Ago	Comment
Q2 13/14	01. The number of council tenants affected by welfare reforms who were visited in their own homes and provided with advice and support to minimise the impact of the changes (IO6)	850.00	375.00	325.00	■	N/A	Annual Target = 1500. Face to face support has been provided to 850 tenants, the visit plan is on target.  583 tenants were assisted in completing a Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) application with a success rate of 88%.  183 referrals to CAB for money and debt advice appointments held in local offices with a very high attendance rate.  113 referrals for fast-track employment support to JCP.
Q2 13/14	02. The number of council tenants referred for money and debt advice as a direct result of face to face support on the impact of welfare reforms (IO6)	76.00	30.00	25.00	■	N/A	Annual Target = 120. 183 referrals to CAB for money and debt advice. Attendance rate of 57.5% at end of Q2.
Q2 13/14	03. The value of financial savings generated for tenants as a direct result of face to face support on the affect of welfare reforms (IO6)	98700.00	37500.00	30000.00	■	N/A	
Q2 13/14	04. The percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months (HHA/013)	100.00	85.00	75.00	■	75	Cumulative total = 99.5%. Target for 2013/14 is 85%.
Q2 13/14	05. The average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (PSR/002)	280.24	284.00	360.00	■	294	Quarter 2 average is 283.72 days.
Q2 13/14	06. The average number of calendar days taken to deliver low cost adaptation works in private dwellings where the Disabled Facilities Grant process is not used (PSR/006)	43.68	40.00	55.00	■	37	Quarter 2 average is 38.51 days.
Q2 13/14	07. Percentage private sector dwellings returned to occupation that had been unoccupied for more than 6 months due to direct action from CCBC (PSR/004)	1.97	1.80	1.50	■	1	Quarterly cumulative - target apportioned over each quarter. Quarter 2 cumulative total is 1.97%.
Q2 13/14	08. The number of new affordable housing units provided during the year as a percentage of all new housing units provided during the year (PLA/006)					42 in 2012/13	Annual Measure.