



## CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 16TH MAY 2019

**SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS UPDATE**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 Provide a progress report on the initial actions set out in the Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 Action Plan. Provide a summary of homeless causes and our homeless prevention activities 2018/19, compared to 2017/18.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 was approved by Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The strategic priorities and actions are contained in a regional action plan; however, each of the five Gwent authorities has specific local actions to deliver alongside the regional tasks. This report provides an update on the progress towards delivery of the action plan and shows that whilst good progress has been made locally more progress needs to be made regionally.
- 2.2 When comparing performance for 2017/18 against 2018/19, the report shows that despite an increase in homelessness presentations, our success in preventing homelessness has only slightly reduced in 2018/19. The main reasons for households being threatened with homelessness are also contained within the report.
- 2.3 Actions taken to date to mitigate the increase in homelessness have also been provided, which include use of the private rented sector, churches night shelter project, emergency temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast facilities. There has been a slight increase in the use of B&B facilities during 2018/19 and action is currently being considered to address this.
- 2.4 Caerphilly's homeless prevention service is being used as a benchmark standard against which our Gwent neighbouring authorities will compare their performance.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Members are requested to note the progress made.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

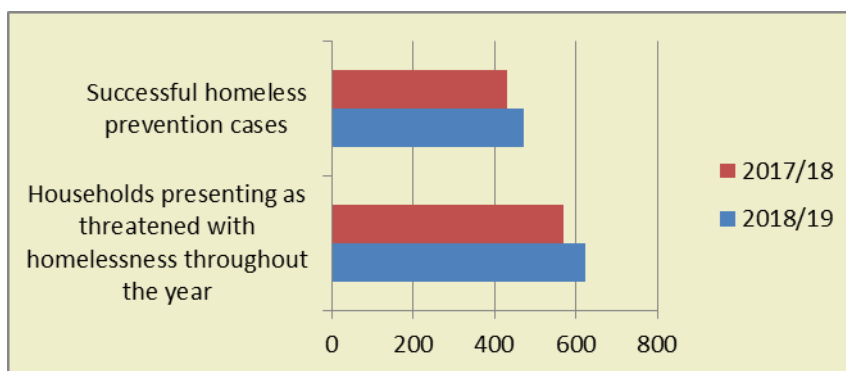
- 4.1 The report provides a progress update following a request from a member of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and therefore is for information only.

## 5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Gwent Regional Homeless Strategy was approved by Cabinet on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2018. The four year action plan that underpins the strategy consists of four priorities and ten objectives. There are a wide range of actions, some regional and some local to Caerphilly planned out over this lengthy period to enable partnerships to develop and allow regional activities to be considered and implemented where needed. In the first few months of the strategy term, some actions have already been achieved although many remain in development. Notwithstanding, the work of the homelessness service continues as is required by legislation and we have maintained a good level of service to our clients.
- 5.2 An excerpt of the four year action plan has been provided in Appendix 1. Whilst the excerpt only includes actions required for completion in 2019, much of the practical homeless prevention and partnership work is already in place in Caerphilly, and many local actions have been progressing well. As a region however, few of the actions relevant to the wider Gwent homelessness issues have been satisfactorily progressed to date.
- 5.3 One of the initial tasks of the regional homeless lead officer group is to benchmark the homeless prevention services across the region. This initial exercise, whilst incomplete as a regional task, will use Caerphilly's Homeless Prevention service as the benchmark standard against which Newport, Monmouthshire, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent will compare their performance. To provide members with a summary of the Caerphilly Prevention Service the following data has been collated and compared to our performance for the previous 12 months:

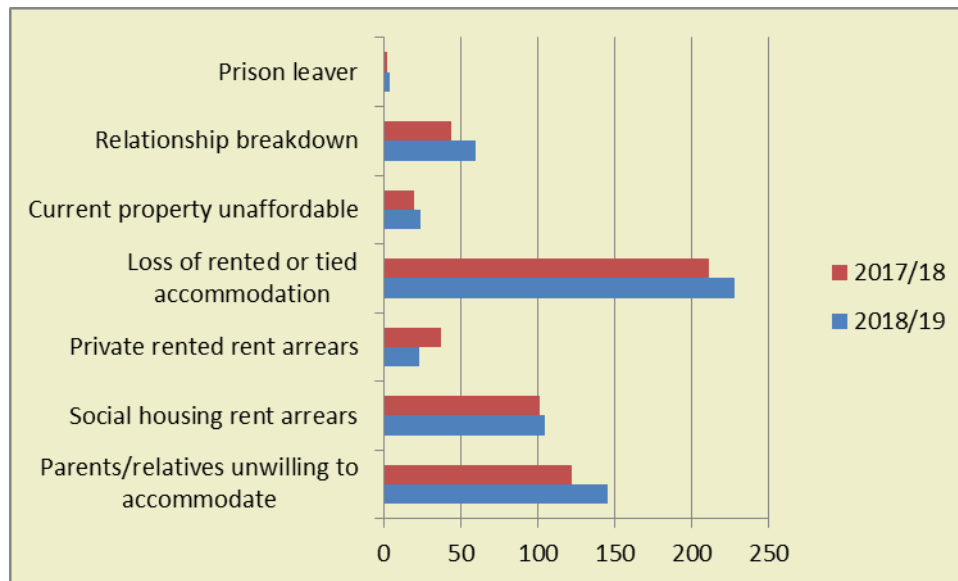
- In 2018/19 Caerphilly accepted 624 new households as requiring homelessness prevention assistance. These households were cases where we had a duty to prevent homelessness occurring, an increase of 53 cases from the previous year (8.49% increase).
- 471 cases were prevented from becoming homeless during 2018/19 therefore a 75.48% success rate.
- 2017/18 our homelessness prevention success rate was 75.6%.

Homelessness prevention assistance comparison for 2018/19 and 2017/18



- The main reasons for the threat of homelessness are recorded against a set data collection criteria for Welsh Government purposes. 'Loss of rented or tied accommodation' remains the lead reason followed by 'family/friends no longer willing to accommodate'. Overall there are no notable changes to the data collected in the last two years.

## Lead reasons for requiring homelessness prevention assistance 2018/19 and 2017/18



- Our homeless prevention team consist of five full time officers, although since August 2018, one of these officers has been successfully developing additional housing options in the private rented sector.
- To date we have secured access to 29 private rented properties by working with reputable landlords who accept that some households need additional tenancy support following their homelessness crisis.
- We have successfully worked with the Caerphilly Borough Churches Night Shelters again this year in partnership with Rev. Sue Phillips of Elim Baptist Church, Pontllanfraith and Cornerstone Support Services Ltd. Churches and centres across the county borough opened their doors and provided their facilities and support. Welsh Government provided an additional fund this year to enable us additional financial access to secure housing for this group. Cornerstone Support Services Ltd and our in-house team secured rental properties for 4 of the 15 clients who accessed the shelters over the three month period utilising the additional funding. Other rough sleepers benefited through support to access housing though our homeless prevention fund.
- The use of emergency accommodation has not changed significantly, although the number of families with children requiring emergency accommodation in the last 12 months has increased from 31 in 2017/18 to 41 in 2018/19.
- The use of bed and breakfast for emergency accommodation needs remains a concern and is contrary to the Welsh Government’s aim to end the use of bed and breakfast for this purpose. In 2018/19 we placed 15 households in B&B, including one family with children. In 2017/18 we placed 11 households in B&B and this did not include families with children.

## 6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Gwent Homelessness Strategy is now operational and work towards local actions and targets are progressing well. The actions requiring a regional input are less well progressed however, and this new approach to homelessness on a regional basis needs time to become embedded. Overall, the Caerphilly Homeless prevention service has performed well despite an increase in the numbers of households requiring assistance to prevent or relieve their homelessness crisis.

- 6.2 Although Caerphilly's homelessness service continues to perform well, due to the increase in presentations there is a requirement to increase the availability of accommodation, which includes emergency temporary accommodation and suitable 'move on' accommodation. This is currently being considered and progress has been made in re-designating some small units of Caerphilly Homes' older persons' accommodation to general needs for allocation through the Common Allocations Policy and a pilot scheme is being progressed to convert a small number of Caerphilly Homes' low demand three bedroom properties to two bed. Further reports will be submitted in the future to advise on other actions that are proposed to be taken.

## 7. ASSUMPTIONS

- 7.1 The above actions are being progressed in line with the agreed Homelessness Strategy and to address the increasing number of presentations Caerphilly Homes are receiving for homelessness services. With no further changes to homelessness legislation planned currently and taking into account the roll out of Universal Credit and the uncertainty over Brexit, this increasing trend is assumed to continue.

## 8. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

- 8.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires all Welsh local authorities to undertake a homelessness review and produce a four year homelessness strategy

Improving Lives and Communities: Homes in Wales 2010 which sets out the national context on meeting housing need, homelessness and housing related support services.

### Caerphilly Homes Service Plan (2018-2023)

Priority Objective 6 – Prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping

Priority Objective 7 - Sustaining tenancies by providing a range of housing related services:

**Caerphilly CBC Equalities and Welsh Language Objectives and Action Plan 2016-2020:**  
Objectives 1,3,4,5,6,7,8 and 9

- 8.2 ***Corporate Plan (CCBC, 2018-2023): Well-being Objective 3:*** “Address the availability, condition and sustainability of homes throughout the county borough and provide advice, assistance or support to help improve people’s well-being.”

Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

## 9. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 9.1 Housing Services and our outlined priorities, contribute to a minimum of 6 out of the 7 well-being goals within the *Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015*, including:

*A prosperous Wales\* P2:* Improve standards of housing and communities, giving appropriate access to services across the county borough

- *A resilient Wales*
- *A more equal Wales*
- *A Wales of cohesive communities*
- *A globally responsible Wales*
- *A healthier Wales*

- 9.2 This report contributes to the Well-being Goals as set out in Links to Strategy above. It is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Act in that:

**Long Term** – supports the sustainability of cohesive communities for tenants and residents; providing a fair and transparent service for tenancy sustainment.

**Prevention** – supports tenants and assists in the prevention of eviction and homelessness. It supports the well-being of tenants and residents.

**Integration** – improved standards of housing and stable community environments.

**Collaboration** – joined up working arrangements within the organisation and with outside agencies to support tenancy sustainment.

**Involvement** – Engages tenants, residents and support agencies in relation to sustainment of tenancies.

## 10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Equality Impact Assessment for the strategy was been undertaken for the Homelessness Strategy report approved by Cabinet on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

## 11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Funding commitments for preventing homelessness are already in place by way of the Revenue Support Grant. In addition a new grant funding system has been announced by Welsh Government. The Housing Support Grant will encompass Supporting People, Homeless Prevention and Rent Smart Wales. For the 2019/20 financial year, within the Housing Support Grant, both Supporting People and Homelessness will continue to require separate delivery plans, while discussion continue across the sector to put in place the new governance, planning and reporting arrangements for the new grant to be fully implemented by 2020/21.

## 12. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no personnel implications for Housing.

## 13. CONSULTATIONS

- 13.1 Consultation responses have been reflected in this report.

## 14. STATUTORY POWER

- 14.1 Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

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Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer  
Steve Harris - Interim Head of Business Improvement Services  
Fiona Wilkins - Housing Services Manager  
Lesley Allen - Principle Accountant  
Shelly Jones - Supporting People Manager  
Claire Davies - Private Sector Housing Manager

Background Papers:  
Equalities Impact Assessment for the Homelessness Strategy

Appendices:  
Appendix 1 Excerpt from the Homeless Strategy four year Action Plan

## Appendix 1

Excerpt from the Homeless Strategy four year Action Plan

### INTERIM ACTIONS

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
Establish a project group to steer and move forward the homeless strategy and actions, ensuring that monitoring mechanisms are in place and that links are sustained with key strategic groups and forums across each area and the region as a whole.	Establishment of regional steering group	All Homeless Leads	January 2019	Regional lead officer group established and a schedule of meetings arranged.
	Secure appropriate chair in order to raise profile of groups	All Homeless Leads	January 2019	
	Establishment of local steering groups	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	January 2019	Gwent Strategy now incorporated into the reporting mechanisms of the Supporting people Regional Collaborative Committee.
	Establish reporting mechanisms and links with relevant groups including PSB	All Homeless Leads	March 2019	Caerphilly Reporting mechanism through the Quarterly Homelessness group, Service Plan and HMT as requested.

### INCREASE PREVENTION WORK TO OBTAIN SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
Undertake a review and benchmarking exercise of individual homeless services to compare approaches, identify opportunities to improve, increase consistency and replicate good practice	Agree key areas to be considered from the review	All Homeless Leads (Regional)	March 2019	Homeless Prevention services across Gwent identified as first area to target and review. A benchmark exercise is planned comparing Gwent to Caerphilly's Prevention Service
	Set work plans based on key areas to be delivered	All Homeless Leads (regional)	May 2019 & Ongoing review	
To increase the level of engagement of service users in	Consider the information as to why people disengage from services	All Homeless Leads (Regional)	June 2019	No Gwent wide progress to date

addressing homelessness	Review existing process/procedure in light of revised code of guidance issued by Welsh Government and information around disengagement.	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Sept 2019	WG Homeless code of guidance due for revision. Date of this target is likely to put back.
Benchmark and compare prevention approaches by each local authority and identify good practice focusing on relationship breakdown, rent arrears and tied accommodation.	Analyse information and identify opportunities for improvement	All Homeless Leads (Regional)	June 2019	No Gwent wide progress to date.
To actively seek to ensure that there is appropriate provisions for households with disabilities.	Analyse current provision and demand for adapted temporary and permanent accommodation	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Dec 2019	No local progress to date.
Benchmark and compare financial assistance approaches in each local authority used for homeless prevention.	Benchmark and compare DHP approach  Explore common themes, best practice and take forward recommendations around DHP use  Benchmark and compare Prevention Fund and Supporting People Grant programme	All Homeless Leads (Regional)  All Homeless Leads (Regional)  All Homeless Leads (Regional)	June 2019  Dec 2019  June 2019	No Gwent progress to date
Benchmark and compare early intervention, advice and support by each local authority and to identify good practice.	Analyse information and identify opportunities for improvement.	All Homeless Leads (Regional)	Sept 2019	No Gwent progress to date.

**RAISE AWARENESS OF HOMELESSNESS AND SERVICES ENCOURAGING SELF HELP AND RESILIENCE**

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
<p>To provide clear information on homelessness, homeless prevention, access to accommodation and access to services.</p>	<p>Consult with service users/former services users and partners over the information provided and review information</p>	<p>Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)</p>	<p>July 2019</p>	<p>Shelter 'Take Notice' report conducted specific to Caerphilly. Recommendations to be considered within a work plan.</p> <p>Homeless Rough Sleeper Support Worker has reviewed service user access to information. Recommendations to be considered within a work plan.</p> <p>Shelter PhD researcher engaged to examine communication systems with homeless clients. Independent research recommendations will be considered.</p>
<p>To ensure that front line services are responsive and co-ordinated to meet the needs of service users</p> <p>Operating effective 'triage' type systems in providing homeless services and also securing as many successful Section 66 outcomes as possible to prevent escalation</p>	<p>Review existing provision within Caerphilly across Council services, involving service users where appropriate.</p> <p>Explore available options and provide recommendations for implementation of changes as appropriate with key services</p>	<p>Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)</p>	<p>July 2019</p> <p>October 2019</p>	<p>Training needs identified with front line officers. Suitable and appropriate training opportunities to be implemented improve customer experience. Action in progress.</p> <p>No local progress to date.</p>



to Section 73 and 75 duties is going to be increasingly essential.				
<b>WORK WITH SOCAIL AND PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR LANDLORDS TO SUSTAIN TENANCIES AND INCREASE ACCESS TO AND SUPPLY OF HOUSING</b>				
<b>Actions</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>By When</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Develop effective mechanisms to maximise the access to affordable housing schemes for households either homeless or faced with homelessness.	Review existing provision in each local area	Local Strategic Planning, Development and Enabling teams. Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	October 2019	No local progress to date.
Co-ordinating access to more temporary accommodation in the region.	Review existing provision in each local area	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Ongoing – Annual Review in January	No Gwent wide progress to date
	Consider local and regional requirements based on review	All Homeless Leads (Regional)	Ongoing – Annual Review in January	No Gwent progress to date
	Develop alternative and additional options locally and regionally based on requirements	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Ongoing – Annual Review in January	No local progress to date
To increase the supply of good quality affordable private rented sector accommodation.	Review existing work with PRS across Caerphilly	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	April 2019	Additional PRS properties have been accessed and used to provide homes for homeless clients. New WG funding has been confirmed to increase the property portfolio throughout 2019/20.
	Consider findings and develop options available tailored to Caerphilly area	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	June 2019	

To provide appropriate accommodation options for homeless households with physical disabilities.	Review current emergency accommodation provisions and assess likely needs based on trends and demands	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	May 2019	No local progress to date
	Review provision across the region and consider options for shared resources to meet needs across Gwent	All Homeless Leads (Regional)	Dec 2019	
To seek to widen housing options and choices for all single people seeking accommodation across a range of tenures, both emergency and temporary	Examine review findings and extract options presently available to identify gaps	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	May 2019	No local progress to date
	Consider the gaps and explore the options available to address these gaps		Oct 2019	

#### REDUCE THE NUMBERS OF REPEATE PRESENTERS AND ROUGH SLEEPING

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
To improve the availability and access to emergency accommodation provision to address rough sleeping in each local area and across the region as a whole.	Review the existing emergency provision across each Local Authority area and identify shortfalls/demand.	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	April 2019	No Gwent wide progress to date.
	Explore options available for expanding services to meet the demands in each Local Authority area.	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	July 2019	
To ensure Extreme Weather Plans are reviewed and are fit for purpose.	Review local extreme weather plans in partnership with key stakeholders.	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	June 2019 and annually thereafter	Extreme Weather plan 2018/19 was reviewed and implemented, with a rough sleeper service in place from January to March 2019.
To develop independent accommodation based projects aimed	To establish a regional working group on developing projects based on the key principles of Housing First linked to the	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	February 2019	Housing First grant application has been made through POBL.

at addressing the needs of chaotic clients and those rough sleeping	Housing First Network.  Develop and deliver models across each region in partnership with RSL partners to deliver "Housing First" projects.	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	April 2019	No indication of WG decision to date.
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### REDUCE HOMELESSNESS FOR YOUNGER PEOPLE AND SUPPORT THEIR WELL-BEING

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
Develop education packages and information for young people around housing and homelessness.	Review existing provision across each Local Authority area.  Develop an education package and engage with education services over implementing this within schools and other educational settings in each local authority area.	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)  Social Services leads and SP commissioned services Caerphilly CBC Sue Cousins	March 2019  June 2019 & Review in June 2020	16+ team and Llamau Mediation service for young people actively working with this cohort. Mediation Officer visits the borough's secondary schools. An information awareness leaflet has been developed by 16+
Develop effective pre-tenancy training for young people in order to prepare young people for independent living.	Review existing pre-tenancy training available in local area  Consider options available for reviewing existing provision and in partnership, implement revised programme across Caerphilly area.	Social Services leads and SP commissioned services Caerphilly CBC Sue Cousins	March 2019  June 2019 & annual review	We have positive partnerships with Caerphilly Youth Service, NYAS and GOFAL . Supported lodgings providers provide pre-tenancy training in preparation to move-on.
Develop clear pathways for young people leaving care.	Review existing process and procedure, considering guidance, best practice, service user input and relevant legislation	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Sept 2019	A new Young Persons Accommodation officer has been employed in Children's services to work collaboratively with Housing for the benefit of young person's housing needs.

				The Young Person's Housing Protocol with 16+ is in place and is to be reviewed by the Sept. target. Every young person has a NYAS youth advocacy service available to them.
Ensure that appropriate support and interventions are in place to help young people to remain in appropriate accommodation.	Review current support and intervention provisions across each Local Authority area	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	Sept 2019	Supporting People floating support services are in place. Llamau mediation officer is based in the Homeless Service team for all young people's homelessness intervention support needs.

**INCREASE JOINT PLANNING, COMMISSIONING AND DELIVERY OF SERVICES**

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
To deliver joint training around homelessness, homeless prevention and related services across a range of partner agencies.	Establish Gwent wide training programme for key services and stakeholders	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	March 2019	No Gwent wide progress to date
	Deliver training on homeless process across region and locally as required	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	June 2019 and ongoing	No local progress to date
	Deliver specific training in Caerphilly area on process, service access and signposting	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	June 2019 and ongoing	
To develop greater co-operation arrangements under Section 95 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.	To develop local agreements with partner RSLs.	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	June 2019 and ongoing	Actioned within the Quarterly Homeless meeting with social housing landlords.

To review and develop working practices and processes with key partner agencies – Health, Probation, Social Services, RSL's.	Develop agreements with RSL partners around homeless prevention and associated activities linked to securing accommodation	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Sept 2019	No progress to date
	Develop agreements with Probation around homeless prevention, assessment and interventions for individuals leaving the secure estate in line with the National Offender Pathway	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Sept 2019	National Prison Leaver Pathway is operational in Caerphilly. Caerphilly held to be a good example of positive partnerships with probation.
	Review and revise local working arrangements with Social Services	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Sept 2019	No local progress to date

#### MAXIMISE ACCESS TO A RANGE OF SUPPORT

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
To enhance the work of voluntary groups and services across Gwent that is provided to vulnerable households.	Develop a greater understanding of all local services provided for vulnerable households, what services are delivered and how they are funded.	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Dec 2019	No local progress to date.
To seek to manage and mitigate against the impacts of Universal Credit	Ensure homelessness is raised as a key issue in Anti-Poverty work in each Local Authority	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	Dec 2019 & ongoing	No Gwent wide progress to date
To seek to further integrate Supporting People services at the heart of homeless prevention provision	Develop specific training around homeless prevention for support workers in each local authority area	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	July 2019 & ongoing	No local progress to date
	Seek to develop local information sharing arrangements in line with GDPR in order to aid the facilitation of greater joint working and integration of services/outcomes	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	May 2019	

To provide easy access to debt and money management services	Review current provision and access arrangements	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	Dec 2019	Partnership with CAB in place and used to positive effect by Homeless Prevention Team.
To ensure homelessness services are aligned with the expectations of the Gwent Safeguarding Board	Review existing safeguarding procedures within each Local Authority and Gwent protocols.	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	Aug 2019	No Gwent wide progress to date
	Ensure staff are provided with appropriate training	All Homelessness Leads (Regional)	Aug 2019 and ongoing	

**RECORDING AND SHARING INFORMATION BETWEEN PARTNERS AS APPROPRIATE TO HELP SERVICE USERS**

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
To ensure that services comply with the requirements of GDPR in day to day service delivery	Review existing arrangements in place under WASPI and make appropriate changes to ensure compliance	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	May 2019	Homeless Service Privacy notice development in partnership with Information Governance Unit completed. WASPI review in progress.

**MODERNISE SERVICES TO EMBRACE NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND WAYS OF WORKING**

Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
To ensure services are responsive and effective in addressing local needs through embracing new working practices and technology	To develop agile working processes and implement this across the Housing Solutions service	Housing Solutions Manager Caerphilly CBC (local)	April 2019	No progress to date.