

Improvement Objectives

APPENDIX 1

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.



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End of Year Summary

In terms of overall performance made throughout the year against IO6 we consider this Improvement Objective to be **successful**:

- **Risks** – Nine risks were identified and assessed in accordance with corporate guidance. Eight risks have been closed and one risk (04) remains open. This risk relates to the introduction of a social letting agency and has been assessed as a medium risk.
- **Tasks/Actions** – Twenty actions were identified. The performance of each action has been reviewed. Nineteen actions have been successfully completed and one action has been partially completed (04 – set up an in-house social letting agency). A report on the progress of this action is due to be presented to P&R Scrutiny Committee in the next few months.
- **Performance Indicators** – Eight performance indicators were identified. Of these eight indicators, 6 performed above expectation, one below and, on the remaining one, the data is still not available. The indicator that performed below expectation was 05 – the average number of days taken to deliver a disabled facilities grant. Although the target for this year was not met, we did actually record a 2.27% increase in our performance when compared to 2012/13.

In terms of the actions completed, 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.
- developed a website to provide additional advice and support to private landlords. We also increased the level of engagement with private landlords via the landlord forum.
- recruited an officer to improve access to emergency accommodation for young homeless people.
- provided grant assistance to vulnerable households to enable them to live safely and independently.
- we took action, where appropriate, to ensure that minimum standards of accommodation in the private sector were enforced.
- implemented an exit strategy for the renewal area in Llanbradach.
- assisted people in threat of losing their home due to mortgage arrears
- provided a range of advice and assistance to people affected by welfare reform.
- facilitated access into the private rented sector through continued support of the bond scheme.
- agreed new assessment criteria for the allocation of discretionary housing payments.
- secured the additional provision of emergency homelessness accommodation by providing a new short-term, family hostel in Caerphilly and the refurbishment of Ty Croeso.
- worked closely with our housing association partners to develop new, affordable homes. Funding for the development of 140 homes was drawn down from Welsh Government.
- paid out 5 loans totalling £231,894, under the Houses into Homes scheme, to provide 13 additional units of accommodation. We also worked closely with United Welsh Housing Association to offer support, advice and other help to owners of empty properties, in order to return them into use.

Improvement Objectives

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Risks

Period	Title	Original Date	Original RAG	Original Likelihood of occurrence	Original Impact	RAG	Likelihood of occurrence	Impact	Comment
Q4 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 The actions taken in 2013/14 have been successfully completed to manage this risk. For 2014/15 new actions are being identified and therefore new risk will be identified. This risk can now be closed.
Q4 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 The actions taken in 2013/14 have been successfully completed to manage this risk. For 2014/15 new actions are being identified and therefore new risk will be identified. This risk can now be closed.
Q4 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 The actions taken in 2013/14 have been successfully completed to manage this risk. For 2014/15 new actions are being identified and therefore new risk will be identified. This risk can now be closed.
Q4 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.
Q4 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	5	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. This risk can now be closed.

Improvement Objectives

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Risks

Period	Title	Original Date	Original RAG	Original Likelihood of occurrence	Original Impact	RAG	Likelihood of occurrence	Impact	Comment
Q4 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. This risk can now be closed.
Q4 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. This risk can now be closed.
Q4 13/14	08. Increased bad debt reducing income levels which could result in a threat to the delivery of WHQS programme.		◆	3	4	◆	4	3	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. Although the risk can be closed due to the completion of the action, efforts to reduce the impact of welfare reform on our tenants will continue in 2014/15. This risk can now be closed.
Q4 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. Risk terminated. The number of evictions for 2013/14 was 37; this is the same total as in 2012/13. The position will be reviewed in 2014/15, as there is a possibility that the number of eviction could start to increase during 2014/15. This risk can now be closed.

Improvement Objectives

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Actions

Period	Title	Comment	Overall Status	% Complete	RAG
Q4 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.	Action completed. Waiting time in first half of 2013/14, 5.1% lower than in 2012/13 (283.7 days c.f. 299 days). Waiting time for 2013/14 to end of Q4 is 292.22 days, 2.27% lower than in 2012/13. Annual target 284 – see evidence table, indicator number 5. Completion date Mar 2014.	Complete	100	🟢
Q4 13/14	02a. Amendment to procurement practices in respect of Minor Works of Adaptation in an effort to further reduce waiting times for clients.	Action completed. Amended practices piloted during Q1. Formally implemented in Q2. Completed Sept 2013.	Complete	100	🟢
Q4 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.	Action completed. Piloting a procedure for redirection of referrals relating to RSL tenants to be undertaken during Q1. Amended procedure fully implemented in Q2. Completed Sept 2013.	Complete	100	🟢
Q4 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.	Action completed. Website launched on 21st October 2013 - http://caerphillyprivatelandlords.co.uk/about-us/	Complete	100	🟢
Q4 13/14	04. Set up an in-house, social lettings agency to improve access to private rented accommodation for people in housing need.	Action partially completed. Work on-going. We have met with Carmarthenshire CC SLA manager and have drafted proposals for staffing arrangements. SLA progression will be subject to members' approval. Completion date Mar 2014. A report is expected to go to Policy & Resources scrutiny committee in early 2014/15.	Partially Completed	40	🟡
Q4 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	🟢
Q4 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.	Action completed. Officer in post as of Oct 2013. Responsibility for the emergency accommodation planning for young homeless people (16/17yrs) has successfully been transferred from social services and partner agencies into one coordinated service hosted by the housing advice centre.	Complete	100	🟢

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Period	Title	Comment	Overall Status	% Complete	RAG
Q4 13/14	07. Offer housing grant assistance to vulnerable households to enable them to live safely and independently. (minor works grants)	Action completed. Grants awarded in accordance with the private sector housing renewal strategy. At the end of Q4, we had received 731 enquiries, with 135 Minor Works Grant applications approved. Completion date March 2014.	Complete	100	⊖
Q4 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.	Action completed. Where appropriate we take action to ensure that minimum standards are enforced. At the end of Q4, we had responded to 432 service requests. Completion date March 2014.	Complete	100	⊖
Q4 13/14	09. We will increase engagement with private sector landlords via continuous improvement of a vibrant landlord forum.	Action completed. 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. Caerphilly private sector landlord website launched on 21st October 2013 - http://caerphillyprivatelandlords.co.uk/about-us/ Completion date Mar 2014.	Complete	100	⊖
Q4 13/14	10. Implement an exit strategy for the renewal area in Llanbradach.	Action completed. The exit strategy at Llanbradach has worked to plan to meet the formal termination date of 20th April, when the renewal area status terminates.	Complete	100	⊖
Q4 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.	Action completed. 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. In terms of the model, we are developing independent financial advice and a mechanism to manage properties through the social lettings agency – see C4. Independent mortgage adviser appointed on a case-by-case basis to visit and examine in detail the possibility of a mortgage rescue option for 8 clients. In the majority of cases, the level of mortgage arrears and value of the property excludes the option for mortgage rescue. Completion date Mar 2014.	Complete	100	⊖
Q4 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.	Action completed. £10k was obtained to assist mortgage rescue cases. We have used this money to assist 8 households this year. Whilst requests for assistance continue to be received, many affected households are applying too late for this type of help. A comprehensive mortgage rescue brochure has been developed and circulated to relevant teams and partners to mitigate this. Completion date Mar 2014.	Complete	100	⊖

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Period	Title	Comment	Overall Status	% Complete	RAG
Q4 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.	Action completed. 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. The rents team is making good progress on the target to visit tenants in their homes who are affected by welfare reform. The amount of additional income generated for tenants because of these visits has exceeded its quarterly target. Funding for the support posts, however, has only been secured until March 2015. Although this action has been completed, the visits to tenants will continue during 2014/15. Completion date - March 2014.	Complete	100	➔
Q4 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.	Action completed. The Caerphilly bond scheme continues to be an essential partner for us to work alongside and direct potentially homeless households into affordable accommodation. 66 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. We have further developed the homelessness prevention service by appointing a admin/clerical officer and a tenancy sustainability officer, both FTE. Completion date Mar 2014.	Complete	100	➔
Q4 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.	Action completed. The working group has been very effective in administering discretionary housing payments (DHP) based on new the criteria. The DHP allocation increased ten-fold during the year to accommodate the increase in potentially homeless households due to welfare reform. Housing associations now attended meetings, which take place quarterly.	Complete	100	➔
Q4 13/14	16. Secure the provision of more suitable emergency accommodation for people who find themselves homeless.	Action completed. Ty'r Fesen, the short-term family scheme in Caerphilly town centre, opened in April 2013, providing 13 units of accommodation. Ty Croeso is has been refurbished to provide a 10 bed emergency homeless supported accommodation for single people aged over 25 years. Ty Croeso handover to the appointed support provider (The Wallich) planned for May/June 2014.	Complete	100	➔

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Actions

Period	Title	Comment	Overall Status	% Complete	RAG
Q4 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.	Action completed. 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). Planning has been approved for the Maes y Derwen scheme, which will provide 18 units of supported accommodation. United Welsh Housing Association is currently working with the contractor appointed to deliver the project. The project will take between 12 and 18 months to complete. The nomination agreement between the council and the housing association requires 50% of new developments to be allocated to homeless applicants. Completion date March 2014.	Complete	100	🟢
Q4 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.	Action completed. 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 5 separate loans valuing in total £291,893.52 and which will provide 13 units of accommodation. Further loan funding totalling £34,549.02 has been drawn down from the central pot in anticipation of the completion of 2 further loans, which will provide 2 further units of accommodation.	Complete	100	🟢
Q4 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.	Action completed. Although this action is an annually recurring action. Work will continue to bring back long term empty properties into use. This will be 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 will continue to work in partnership with United Welsh Housing Association to offer support, advice and other help to owners of empty properties. In conjunction with Empty Homes Wales, we took part in a scheme "#loveyoureemptyhome" which provided advice to owners of empty homes, highlighted problems that occur due to properties being left empty and promoted the services we may be able to provide to assist in bringing the properties back into use. Completion date Mar 2014.	Complete	100	🟢
Q4 13/14	20. Improve the provision of good quality, affordable housing by working in collaboration with our housing association partners.	Action completed. 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 we expect some of these units will not be delivered until 2014/15. Completion date - March 2014. Affordable housing returns will be submitted to Welsh Government in May 2014.	Complete	100	🟢

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Evidence

Period	Title	Actual	Target	Intervention	RAG	Result 12 Months Ago	Comment
Q4 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)	476.00	375.00	325.00	↑	N/A	The total amount of tenants visited and engaged with during April 2013 to March 2014 amounted to 1666 this does not include any no answers purely tenants who were supported. Face-to-face support has been provided to tenants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in completing Discretionary Housing Payment Applications; • Referrals to CAB for money and debt advice appointments; and • Referrals for fast-track employment support to Job Centre Plus
Q4 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)	79.00	30.00	25.00	−	N/A	Annual Total = 335 Annual Target = 120. A partnership model for provision of money and debt advice is being piloted with the Caerphilly County CAB and key data of the pilot is being collected. The demand for the CAB debt clinics continues to increase. A full review and outcome report has been undertaken of the debt clinic provision.
Q4 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)	131519.88	37500.00	3000.00	−	N/A	The total value of savings generated for tenants as a direct result of face to face visits for the year amounted to £458,709.27 This does not include savings generated for tenants as a direct result of signposting only savings that can be quantified.
Q4 13/14	04. The percentage of all potentially homeless households for whom homelessness was prevented for at least 6 months (HHA/013)	84.78	85.00	75.00	↓	82.22	Qtr 4 figure. Cumulative figure for year is 90.73%, which exceeds the target of 85%. The drop in performance in Q4, can be explained by the fact that there were more cases in Q4 where homelessness was not preventable and those clients were in priority need and requiring immediate emergency accommodation. This is reflected in our B&B figures which are in the low 40s now - the highest they've ever been. In addition, the welfare reform cuts for housing benefit to under 35s has started having effect and affordability of accommodation in the private rented sector.
Q4 13/14	05. The average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant (PSR/002)	302.80	284.00	360.00	↓	296	Qtr 4 figure - a number of complex DFGs were completed in Q4 which take longer to undertake. Also, several adaptations that had been delayed by clients were also completed, which also increased the average time taken. This years cumulative figure for year is 292.22 Last years cumulative figure for the year was 299, so although we did not reach our target for this year, we have achieved a 2.27% increase in our performance compared to 2012/13.

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Evidence

Period	Title	Actual	Target	Intervention	RAG	Result 12 Months Ago	Comment
Q4 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)	38.17	40.00	55.00	↑	39	Qtr 4 figure. Cumulative figure for year is 39.37 days.
Q4 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)	3.83	3.60	3.00	↑	3.10	Quarterly cumulative - target apportioned over each quarter.
2013/14	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	Not available until June/July 2014.