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For all enquiries relating to this agenda please contact Charlotte Evans
(Tel: 01443 864210 Email: evansca1@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Date: 8th May 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

A meeting of the **Caerphilly Homes Task Group** will be held in the **Sirhowy Room - Penallta House, Tredomen, Ystrad Mynach** on **Thursday, 16th May, 2019** at **5.00 pm** to consider the matters contained in the following agenda. Councillors and the public wishing to speak on any item can do so by making a request to the Chair. You are also welcome to use Welsh at the meeting, both these requests require a minimum notice period of 3 working days, and a simultaneous translation will be provided if requested.

All Committee meetings are open to the Press and Public, observers and participants are asked to conduct themselves with respect and consideration for others. Please note that failure to do so will result in you being asked to leave the meetings and you may be escorted from the premises.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chrissy'.

Christina Harrhy
INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

AGENDA

	Pages
1 To receive apologies for absence.	
2 Declarations of Interest.	

A greener place Man gwyrddach



Councillors and Officers are reminded of their personal responsibility to declare any personal and/or prejudicial interest(s) in respect of any item of business on this agenda in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000, the Council's Constitution and the Code of Conduct for both Councillors and Officers.

To approve and sign the following minutes: -

3 Caerphilly Homes Task Group held on 28th March 2019. 1 - 4

To receive and consider the following reports and make recommendations to Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet: -

4 Universal Credit - Housing Update. 5 - 16

To receive and note the following information items: -

5 Homelessness Update. 17 - 30

**If a member of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group wishes for the above information report(s) to be brought forward for discussion at the meeting, please contact Charlotte Evans on 01443 864210, by 10a.m. on Wednesday 15th May 2019.*

6 To receive any requests for an item to be included on the next available agenda.

Circulation:

Task Group Members: Ms L. Pewtner, Mrs D. Moore, Ms M. James, Ms R. Thompson, Mrs Y. Bryant, M. Davies, L. Harding, A. Hussey, Mrs B. A. Jones, Ms S. Jones, L. Phipps, Mrs D. Price (Chair), L.G. Whittle and Mr C. Davies (Vice Chair),

And Appropriate Officers

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP (WELSH HOUSING QUALITY STANDARD)

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE SIRHOWY ROOM, PENALLTA HOUSE, ON
THURSDAY, 28TH MARCH 2019 AT 5.00 P.M.**

PRESENT:

Mr C. Davies - Vice-Chair

Task Group Members:

M. Davies, L. Harding, D. Moore, L. Phipps and R. Thompson, L.G. Whittle

Officers:

S. Couzens (Chief Housing Officer), F. Wilkins (Housing Services Manager) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor B. Jones, D. Price, A. Hussey and Tenant Representatives Y. Bryant, L. Pewtner, M. James and S. Jones.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Tenant Representatives C. Davies, D. Moore, and R. Thompson declared a personal but not prejudicial interest in all agenda items as they are Council Tenants.

3. MINUTES – 14TH FEBRUARY 2019

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of the meeting held on the 14th February 2019 be agreed as a correct record and by a show of hands was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2019 (minute no. 1-7) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. STAFF TRAINING RELEVANT TO VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS

The report, which was requested by a Member of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (The Task Group), provided Members with an insight into the training being undertaken by Caerphilly Homes' staff that is relevant to improving their engagement with vulnerable tenants.

The report provided Members with detailed examples of formal training courses undertaken by a range of Caerphilly Homes' staff within the last five years that contributes to improving their engagement with service users, including those with particular vulnerabilities, when they are undertaking professional roles. It included examples of staff that have undertaken the various types of training. The Task Group were asked to note that the report does not include awareness raising and training provided through meetings, or professional qualifications such as NVQ's.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member sought further information on the training provided to Tenancy Enforcement Officers. Officers explained that there are a small number of Tenancy Enforcement Officers and as a result, all staff will receive training provided there is capacity and availability over time and the course is considered to be of sufficient value and quality.

Discussions took place around the Mental Health Training for relevant frontline staff. It was noted that the Housing Services Manager has been working with colleagues in Workforce Development Team to develop a 'tailor made' training course for Housing staff. The content and outcomes have been reviewed and as a result the course has been postponed in order to address and provide the most relevant training to staff. In addition, it was noted that the aim of this training is to provide staff with relevant skills and knowledge to provide support to tenants with Mental Health Issues, ensuring staff are safe at all times. The Task Group were reassured that additional training such as Lone Working, Personal Protection and Conflict Management are also provided to staff and an Employee Protection Register is also in place and regularly maintained in order to protect staff and make them aware of any potential risks prior to visits.

The Task Group discussed the organisation of the training and it was noted that there is not a dedicated training officer to arrange training, often it comes about as a result of conversations with Managers during PDR's or on recommendations from others.

Further information was sought around the training provided for Bereavement and Loss and its uptake. Officers explained that the training aims to provide staff with an understanding of the stages of bereavement, symptoms of grief and communication techniques to aid others. It was noted that this training is aimed to make staff aware should they find themselves in a situation, as opposed to staff making scheduled visits post bereavement.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

5. PROCUREMENT UPDATE REPORT

The report provided the Caerphilly Homes Task Group (The Task Group) with an update on the procurement programme, which is currently in place to support the delivery of the Wales Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme.

The report detailed the number of Procurements undertaken since the start of the WHQS Programme in October 2012. This included details of all tendering processes undertaken to date and arrangements which are currently out to the market as part of new procurement opportunities. Additionally, the report also included a list of upcoming works which when complete will conclude the WHQS programme.

The Task Group were asked to note that at present the Authority has undertaken, completed and awarded over 400 procurements via Contracts, Frameworks, Mini Competitions and Small Lots for WHQS works. These were detailed in the appendices of the report; Appendix A of the report detailed the Completed Procurement Processes, Appendix B detailed the Current Procurement Processes and Appendix C detailed Upcoming Future Work.

The Task Group thanked the Officer for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member sought clarification on the WHQS Contracts Awarded (Appendix A of the report) and whether these had been completed. The Officer agreed to update the appendix to include this information and forward onto the Task Group.

Clarification was sought on the terminology "Scoping Stage", as referred to in Appendix B of the report. Officers explained that this refers to the process in which we go to market and assess interest and scope of the work required and is at the early stages of the process.

Discussion took place around the Dynamic Purchasing System, which has successfully tendered a number of contracts and made the process more effective and efficient. Assurance was sought on whether the required contracts can be awarded and works achieved by the March 2020 deadline. Officers explained that, Appendix C outlines the upcoming future works and, based on historical performance, Officers are confident that all contracts and works will be completed within deadline.

A Task Group Member queried the process for determining customer satisfaction with the contractors. Officers explained that feedback is gathered post completion of works with the tenants, and regular meetings are undertaken with contractors and procurement in which any issues or concerns are raised and addressed.

The Task Group discussed Appendix B and sought clarification on the Contract Status "Legal Advice Being Sought". Officers explained that this was in relation to Leasehold Contracts, in which there are legal requirements in which the Council must adhere to and possible challenges.

A Task Group Member raised concerns for the work of the contractors at the end of the WHQS Programme, and the quality of work provided as the scheme comes to an end. Officers assured Members that the Council only pay for completed projects and works completed will be inspected to ensure consistency in quality at completion.

The Caerphilly Homes Task Group noted the report.

6. TO RECEIVE ANY REQUESTS FOR AN ITEM TO BE INCLUDED ON THE NEXT AVAILABLE AGENDA

There were no requests for items made at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 17:41pm.

Approved as a correct record subject to any amendments or corrections agreed and recorded in the minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2019.

CHAIR

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 16TH MAY 2019

SUBJECT: UNIVERSAL CREDIT – HOUSING UPDATE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report is seeking the views of members prior to its presentation to Regeneration and Housing Scrutiny Committee and thereafter Cabinet. The purpose of this report is to recommend to members that Cabinet agree to receive regular updates on the roll out of Universal Credit and its impacts and ratifies the approach being taken to manage the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) and the support being offered to tenants of Caerphilly Homes

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report focuses upon the impact of UC on both Council tenants and Caerphilly County Borough Council. The report explains how the roll out of UC operates and the issues this creates, resulting in an increase in rent arrears. The level of rent arrears is significantly higher than that of tenants not in receipt of UC and it is quite clear that many tenants struggle with the complexity of UC and are at risk of not receiving their full benefit entitlement.
- 2.2 In recognition of the issues being experienced as a consequence of the roll out of UC the report also explains the additional resource implications for Caerphilly Homes in delivering the extensive support mechanisms that are considered necessary for our tenants to sustain tenancies, maximise incomes, improve living conditions and also maintain our rental income.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet agree to a regular update on the roll out of UC and its impact.
- 3.2 Cabinet ratifies the approach being taken to manage the roll out of UC and the support being offered to tenants.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 Universal Credit is one of the biggest changes to the welfare system since its inception, bringing together six existing benefits. Members will note the growing impact of Universal Credit on Caerphilly's Housing service and its tenants.

5. THE REPORT

Universal Credit

- 5.1 Universal Credit (UC) was initially introduced in the Caerphilly County Borough in May 2015 for new claims by single persons who would previously have been eligible to claim job seekers allowance (JSA) only. Initially UC claims by Caerphilly tenants were slow with only around 3 to 5 per month believed to be making a claim. This "live" service remained in place

in Caerphilly until September 2018 and during this time 120 Caerphilly tenants were known to have made a successful UC claim.

5.2 In September 2018 roll out of the “full service” commenced in Caerphilly for single claimants, couples and families, combining six means tested benefits, the so called “legacy benefits”

- Job Seekers Allowance, income related
- Employment Support Allowance, income related
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support

5.3 The eligible tenant will directly receive one monthly combined lump sum payment covering each of the various benefits they are entitled to receive, which could include housing benefits to cover some or all of their rent. Previously housing benefit would have been paid by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) direct to the social landlord; during the period April 2018 to March 2019 we received £29 million in housing benefit payments directly to Caerphilly Council. As tenants move to UC this figure will reduce as payments are made directly to tenants, who become responsible for paying the rent to their landlord. Arrangements have to be made to collect these payments from tenants.

5.4 Tenants in receipt of UC will receive one lump sum payment which includes their personal allowance as well as their housing costs (rent). It is clear from our early experiences of roll out of UC that some tenants are using the housing costs element of their UC payment for other things and not paying their rent. At Christmas we noted an increase in rent arrears of tenants in receipt of UC.

5.5 Tenants move on to UC if they are a new claimant or if there is a change in their circumstances which triggers the changeover from the legacy benefits (detailed in 5.2). In practice this means a “change of benefits”. Examples of changes in benefits include:

Universal Credit claim required	A tenant who has come out of work or has reduced their hours and doesn't have an existing housing benefit claim would be required to claim UC
	A person moves from a neighbouring borough and had a live housing benefit claim would need to make a claim for UC once they move to Caerphilly County Borough
	A single person working part time and claiming working tax credits who moves in with a partner would have to claim UC.
Universal Credit claim not required	A tenant currently claiming housing benefits moves within the County Borough to another property would not be required to make a claim for UC
	A couple working part time and claiming working tax credit who have their first child would not need to make a claim for UC for the child element

5.6 There are further exceptions and the following groups would still continue to claim the legacy benefits (detailed in 5.2) above.

Universal Credit exemptions	Anyone who has reached the qualifying age for state Pension Credit. Pensioners will claim Pension Credit from the DWP and Housing Benefit from the Council.
	Anyone living in supported accommodation (such as sheltered accommodation). People in supported accommodation who have not reached the age for state Pension Credit will claim UC to meet their personal costs and Housing Benefit from the Council to meet their housing costs
	Anyone placed in temporary accommodation by the Council. People in temporary accommodation will claim UC to meet their personal costs and Housing Benefit from the Council to meet their housing costs
	Anyone who is already claiming the Severe Disability Premium. People who qualify for Severe Disability Premium will continue to claim the legacy benefits listed in 5.2.

- 5.7 Full service UC is digital by default with the initial application being made online and once in place all further interactions with UC are carried out via the claimants “digital journal.” This means any instructions or requirements for additional information from the DWP are notified to the claimant via the journal “to do” list.
- 5.8 Any changes in circumstances experienced by the claimant also need to be communicated digitally using the online journal. UC uses a texting service to advise claimants when a new request has been added to their journal. It is therefore vital that tenants inform the DWP, using the online journal, whenever they change their telephone number.
- 5.9 Once a claim has been completed claimants have to verify their identity either online using photo identification (passport or driving licence) or, as is often the case, if photo identification is not available by making an appointment at the local Job Centre. Once the claimant’s identity is verified then the UC claim enters a 5 week assessment period. The claimant should at this time make a separate application to the Council for Council tax Reduction as this process is completely separate to UC. Tenants not in receipt of UC and claiming Housing Benefit only need to complete one application used for both rent and Council tax reduction.
- 5.10 Generally, payments of UC are made each calendar month in arrears to one member of a couple, into the claimant’s bank account. If a claimant doesn’t think they will have enough to live on while they wait for their first payment (during 5 week assessment period) they are able to request an advanced payment of UC. The advanced payment is a loan and it has to be paid back within one year as a deduction out of their UC payments but no interest is charged.
- 5.11 An additional two week payment of Housing Benefit is paid during the assessment period, this is additional benefit and not repaid by the tenant. The DWP have recently announced that from July 2020 an additional 2 weeks non repayable legacy benefits (detailed in 5.2) will also be paid during the assessment period.
- 5.12 Alternative payment arrangements are available for claimants who can’t manage their monthly payment. The landlord or claimant can apply for an Alternative Payment Arrangement (APA) Managed Payment to Landlord (MPTL) at any time, which will be considered by the DWP on a case by case basis. An APA can also include more frequent than monthly payments or a split payment of an award between partners. The decision whether to award an APA takes account of numerous factors and using the Tier 1 and Tier 2 guidance detailed below

Tier 1 factors – Highly likely/probable need for Alternative Payment Arrangements
Drug/alcohol and/or other addiction problems, such as gambling
Learning difficulties including problems with literacy and/or numeracy
Severe/multiple debt problems

Homeless
Domestic violence and abuse
Mental health condition
Currently in rent arrears/threat of eviction/repossession
Claimant is a 16 or 17 year old and/or a care leaver
Families with multiple and complex needs

Tier 2 factors – Less likely/possible need for Alternative Payment Arrangements

Third party deductions in place (such as for fines or utility arrears)
Claimant is a refugee/asylum seeker
History of rent arrears
Previously homeless and/or in temporary or supported accommodation:
Other disability (such as physical disability or sensory impairment)
Claimant has just left prison
Claimant has just left hospital
Recently bereaved

The DWP intends the change of payment to the landlord to be a short term and temporary arrangement and subject to review. Experience to date has demonstrated that this process is not straight forward for the landlord and is particularly problematic when there is a change in claimants' circumstances.

- 5.13 A significant issue is the delays that can be experienced in processing requests for MPTLs (i.e. when the landlord requests for the housing costs (rent) and arrears to be paid directly to the landlord). For information purposes the payment schedule received from the DWP dated 16/04/19 included £95,000 worth of housing costs and arrears deducted from tenants and paid to the Council directly. This schedule showed that some of the payments included had been deducted from claimants UC accounts as long ago as February 2019. This means a tenant's rent account will show they are in arrears but the DWP have deducted the monies but not yet paid it over to their rent account.
- 5.14 At 23/04/19 25% of Caerphilly council tenants in receipt of UC have a managed payment i.e. the housing costs are paid directly to the Council. UC is an in work and out of work benefit. A tenant could gain employment and, dependant on their level of income, their entitlement to UC may cease or reduce. Landlords are not made aware of this and would assume their normal payment from their UC will be deducted by the DWP and paid to the landlord direct. As shown in 5.1.11 the delay in payments being direct to rent accounts by the DWP adds further complications for both the tenant and the Council.

Impacts of UC on the Housing Service

- 5.15 As at 23/04/19, 933 Council tenants were recorded as being in receipt of UC for housing costs, equating to 8% of all Council tenancies. Of these 933 cases, 783 were showing arrears at this date, amounting to a total debt due of £569,490. Of the 783 tenants in arrears 35% owed more than 8 weeks rent.
- 5.16 A geographical split of the 933 Council tenants claiming UC is shown by housing area below:-
- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Upper Rhymney Valley housing area | - 46% |
| Eastern Valley housing area | - 32% |
| Lansbury Park neighbourhood | - 11% |
| Graig Y Rhacca neighbourhood | - 11% |
- 5.17 The average level of arrears for tenants on UC on this date amounted to £609.73. In context the average rent arrears for all Council tenants at this date was £375.15. Due to the nature of Universal Credit, with claimants receiving payments on differing dates depending on when their claim was accepted, and in four weekly schedules for receiving managed payments, it should be noted that these figures can only represent a snapshot of the position at the relevant date in question.

5.18 UC has been designed specifically with system change in mind – and many of the areas that are causing difficulties for Council tenants are those that are explicitly deliberate in the design of UC. These include:

- It is digital by default and therefore applications must be made online and once accepted, the customer must actively maintain their online journal
- Applicants must budget monthly to prepare them for the world of work
- Requirement for ID to make an initial claim although appointments can be made at the job centre to verify
- Requirement for monies to be paid into a bank account
- No payment for one calendar month (plus up to a week for payment to transfer) after a claim is made
- Ending of system referred to as 'implied consent' which enabled advisors to discuss clients cases with the DWP without the client being present.
- Tenants receive their Housing Costs (rent) direct and are responsible for paying rent to landlord

5.19 Support to new and existing council tenants affected by UC is provided by Tenancy Support Officers. The underlying economic climate and the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 which brought about wholesale reform of the benefits system, including the development of UC, led to the creation in 2012 of a tenancy support team within the Rents section. This team (5FTE), together with the Specialist Benefits Advisor, provide invaluable assistance to tenants in sustaining their tenancies, including:

- Supporting tenants with new and existing benefit claims (including UC)
- Providing budgeting and basic debt advice
- Warm home Discount scheme applications
- Subsidised water tariffs (Help U)
- Applications to relevant charitable trusts and Discretionary Assistance Fund
- Energy advice (staff trained to level 3 City and Guilds)
- Personal Independence Payment applications
- Food parcels
- Benefit better off calculations
- Referrals to employability programmes.

5.20 During the period April 2018 to March 2019, the tenancy support staff made 2035 home visits to council tenants which resulted in an additional £628,000 additional income for those tenants. This came from a variety of sources including additional benefits, preferential water tariffs, written off utility debts, and grants. In addition to the financial savings the staffs were successful in applying for 92 free white goods items for tenants (e.g. cookers, fridge freezers and washing machines) from the Discretionary Assistance Fund. The support staff ensure the service is as accessible as possible by visiting tenants in their own homes and offering appointments at Council Offices and premises e.g. Hafod Deg and community spaces. Assistance is often provided at short notice, ensuring crisis situations can be avoided and tenants are able to sustain their tenancies.

5.21 The established tenancy support team at Caerphilly has been integral in supporting tenants moving onto and maintaining UC claims. The staff have received in depth UC training and the broader knowledge they have gained since 2012 is enabling them to provide focused support to tenants. The team also work in partnership with other teams within Housing who also support tenants e.g. Floating Support, and the Community Regeneration Team for tenants who require ongoing digital or employment support.

5.22 During February to April 2019 the Housing Service undertook a survey of council tenants who had recently moved to UC and made a claim directly with the DWP, to seek their views of the whole claim process. Although the sample was small the following highlights the key results from the survey:

- 48% did not find it easy to make a claim for Universal Credit
- 80% were informed by the DWP they could apply for an advance or more frequent payments
- 85% felt they could cope with managing their online journal (with possible assistance from families)

5.23 Comments from tenants about their claims included:

“I didn’t understand how to make claim, would have liked 1 to 1 support at home. Not confident to challenge how much the DWP gave me. I had help from the Council to check calculation”

“Had issues setting up the account but had help from JCP staff”

“Initial claim was easy but very little support after claim. DWP staff not helpful”

“Had support from daughter as do not have internet. Unable to use computer due to epilepsy. Daughter helps manage claim”

“Verification a problem due to no photo ID, advised of advance but not more frequent payments”

5.24 Appendix 1 details four case studies where the support staff have given assistance to tenants in relation to UC. In some instances it can financially benefit tenants to move to UC however due to the highlighted issues e.g. digital by default and monthly budgeting, many of our tenants are reluctant to move to this benefit which means they are losing out on additional income.

5.25 From September 2018 to March 2019 Caerphilly County Borough Council Rent Section received funding from the DWP to provide budgeting and digital support to tenants. During this period £7750 was received. From April 2019 the DWP announced that this funding is to be provided nationwide to Citizen Advice and removed from local authorities. The estimated cost of the actual provision of this support to Caerphilly Homes tenants for this period was considerably higher i.e. £50k.

5.26 Demand for the Tenancy Support Service continues to grow and we are constantly monitoring and reviewing resource and capacity levels.

5.27 Central Government recently announced that the roll out of UC was to be slowed down. It is not anticipated that this will reduce the numbers of new claims being submitted each week as a UC claim will still be made when there is a change of circumstances (as detailed in 5.1.3). The roll out being slowed down relates only to the migration of long term claimants of legacy benefits from their existing benefit to UC.

5.28 The Welsh Government has recently commissioned a study to assess the impact of UC on the Council Tax reduction scheme and rent arrears in Wales. They want to understand how UC is affecting families in Wales. Findings are not expected to be available until early next year.

5.29 **Conclusion**

The impact of UC is a strategic risk that, although mitigated by the advice and support we provide, remains a high risk to the Housing Service with critical impact. Mitigating the impact of UC comes at a significant additional cost to the Service but the alternative would be an even greater impact on tenants and their ability to sustain their tenancies, leading to an increase in homelessness and tenancy turnover, and rent arrears.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in proposing the recommendations in the report.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

7.1 Corporate Plan 2018-2023

The report content contributes towards or impacts the Corporate Well-being Objectives within The Caerphilly We Want (2018-2023) Well Being Plan which are:

Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all - by supporting the improvement of digital skills for tenants

Objective 2 - Enabling employment through providing relevant support and the enhancement of knowledge and skills of Housing staff and tenants thereby supporting better employment prospects.

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 – by helping to reduce fuel poverty and preventing tenancies from failing by providing a range of housing related support to tenants, including those affected by financial hardship

Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being – by supporting tenants to help themselves by providing comprehensive advice and information, including signposting to other services, and having meaningful conversations to help people identify what matters to them. Providing support to reduce the need for statutory interventions.

7.2 Caerphilly Homes Service Plan (2018-2023)

Priority Objective 6 – Prevent homelessness and tackle rough sleeping - by providing tenants threatened with homelessness advice to mitigate the impact of UC.

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

- Providing help to tenants to enable them to budget effectively, to claim the correct welfare benefits and to mitigate the impact of welfare reforms.
- Referring council tenants in need of money and debt advice to the right agencies.
- Providing advice to tenants on energy usage and other measures to help save money.
- Providing assistance to tenants requiring help with benefit claims and appeals including Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment.
- Closely monitoring the impact of the full role out of Universal Credit on tenants, resources and homelessness.
- Raising awareness amongst elected members and staff of the full role out of Universal Credit and the potential impacts.

8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

- 8.1 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
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A globally responsible Wales

- 8.2 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 of the Act in that:

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

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

Integration – improved standards of housing support which contribute to stable community environments.

Collaboration – The service focuses on internal collaboration and wider partnerships. Joined up working arrangements within the organisation and with outside agencies support tenant engagement and tenancy sustainment.

Involvement –The engagement of tenants, residents and support agencies in relation to sustainment of tenancies.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An EIA screening has previously been completed in accordance with the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and supplementary guidance. No potential for unlawful discrimination and/or low level or minor negative impact was identified therefore a full EIA has not been carried out to date.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 In 2012 additional resource was necessary to support tenants with Welfare Reform Changes, and 5 additional posts were created within the tenancy support team at a cost of £190k.
- 10.2 Despite the positive impact of this increase in support provision over the last 3 years the level of tenant arrears has increased sharply from 2.67% in 2016/17 to 7.52% in 2018/19. Although these arrears include all charges to tenants (e.g. rent, service charges, water and fuel charges) officers are confident that the increase is as a direct result of the introduction of Welfare Reform.
- 10.3 Furthermore, due to the increase of tenants' arrears, it is necessary to ensure sufficient Bad Debt Provision is accounted for within the HRA. This is a reserve for future recognition of certain accounts being uncollectable and is an accounting requirement within the HRA. This level of provision has also risen over the past 3 years from 3.58% in 2016/17 to 10.73% in 2018/19. The current level of Bad Debt Provision is £1.6m which equates to 2.99% of the rent debit.
- 10.4 The level of write offs have also increased from £267k in 2016/17 to £283k in 2018/19 although the percentage of this against the total rent charges has remained around about 0.5%.
- 10.5 The above are clearly significant costs to the HRA resulting from Welfare Reform.
- 10.6 There is a Welfare Reform Provision that has been set up within the HRA of some £398k over the past few years. The Chief Housing Officer reports to PDM on a quarterly basis due to concerns over UC linked to rent arrears, tenancy support and the potential for increasing homelessness. Whilst resources have increased there will probably be a need to increase further, with the unknown impact of Brexit adding to concerns, along with the likelihood of increased fuel poverty, foodbank use, and living costs generally. We are already seeing increased levels of persons presenting as homeless and we are obviously keen to avoid evictions which will only add to the homeless problem. The Welfare Reform Provision has therefore been set up to assist with this.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The roll out of UC is ongoing with an average of 15 tenants per week moving over to this benefit. If we are to be able to offer the same level of support to future tenants moving on to UC it may be necessary to increase the number of support staff.

12. CONSULTATIONS

- 12.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees.

13. STATUTORY POWER

- 13.1 Not applicable.

Author: Sandra Isaacs, Rents Manager
(Tel: 01443 811409, Email: issacs@caerphilly.gov.uk)

Consultees: Cllr Dave Poole - Leader of the Council
Cllr Lisa Phipps - Cabinet Member for Homes and Places
Cllr Sean Morgan - Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Economy,
Infrastructure, Sustainability & Wellbeing of Future
Generations Champion

Christina Harrhy - Interim Chief Executive
David Street - Corporate Director of Social Services and Housing
Shaun Couzens - Chief Housing Officer
Robert Tranter - Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Steven Harris - Interim Head of Business Improvement Services
Fiona Wilkins - Housing Services Manager
Lesley Allen - Principal Accountant
Amanda Main - Benefits Manager
Mark Jennings - Housing Strategy Officer

Appendices:
Appendix 1 Universal Credit case studies

Case Study 1

Single tenant and non-dependant daughter both made a claim for Universal Credit the same day. Tenant wasn't able to access the online journal as she had forgotten her email address and rang to request a TSO visit to assist as she had used the service previously.

- Completed a discretionary housing payment application as tenant and daughter were in a 3 bedroom house and affected by the bedroom tax. **This additional income was granted**
- Completed a water tariff reduction form with tenant **reduced by £6.50 per week**
- Assisted tenant to set up a new email and added it to the Universal Credit claim to enable tenant to manage claim online. **Tenant could now manage her claim online with the assistance of her daughter**
- Tenant receiving incorrect amount of housing costs, contacted the Universal Credit service centre and resolved this. **Backdate received of correct housing costs**

Case Study 2

Single tenant, with mental health issues, not digitally literate and with no access to online/internet services. Tenant had contacted the Universal Credit service centre who told her to go to her local Job Centre Plus to make a claim. She was advised by the Job Centre Plus that due to her vulnerabilities and lack of digital skills she could make a claim by telephone. At this time her phone had been disconnected

TSO visited – contacted Universal Credit and a claim was made using the TSO's telephone. Request made for the DWP to carry out a home visit to verify ID **Universal credit now in payment**

Case Study 3

Tenant claiming Job Seekers Allowance found not fit for work and informed he should claim Universal Credit. Tenant attempted to complete his own claim but did not finalise this as he did not complete the verification process

Support officer visited to assist tenant to claim Personal Independence Payments and found he was not in receipt of UC. Tenant had selected he preferred to be contacted by email but was not digitally literate

Tenant assisted to make a new claim for Universal Credit and contact was made to book a verification interview. A request was made for a backdate of UC due to vulnerabilities and a request was made for the tenant to manage his UC manually and not online – **Universal credit now in payment and tenant manages claim manually. Backdate of universal credit successful. The tenant was signposted for digital support at their local library**

Case Study 4

Tenant in receipt of job seekers allowance two working non dependants living with her. Struggling to cover rent as was not entitled to Housing Benefits due to the amount that the non-dependants were earning. Non dependants were not contributing towards rent which led to rent arrears on account.

The tenancy support officer visited and carried out a "better off" calculation which showed she would be £60.00 per week better off on Universal Credit. The nondependent flat rate charge entitled her to help opposed to the Housing Benefit non dependant charge that disqualified her. Tenant was supported to make a Universal Credit claim

Tenancy support officer followed up this initial visit a month later to see how the tenant was coping with her new benefit claim and she advised me that she was unable to manage her money monthly and was left with nothing by the end of the month, she had attended a budgeting class with the Job Centre but this had done very little in helping her. **Tenancy support officer applied for more frequent payment which amended her payment from monthly to fortnightly**

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CAERPHILLY HOMES TASK GROUP – 16TH MAY 2019

SUBJECT: HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES AND HOUSING

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 12th 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

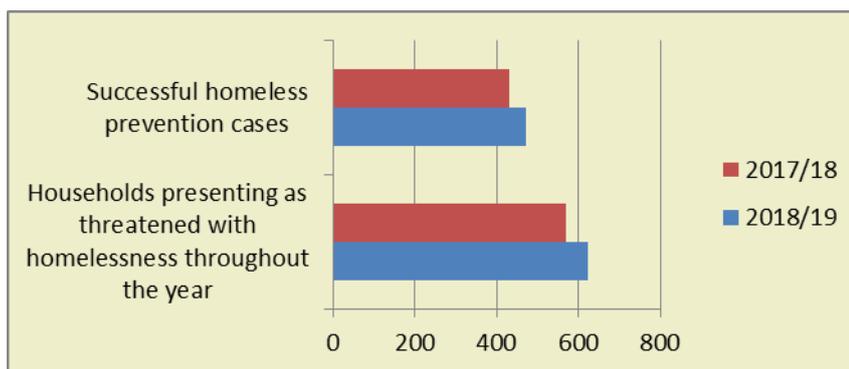
- 4.1 The report provides a progress update following a request from a member of the Caerphilly Homes Task Group and therefore is for information only.

5. THE REPORT

- 5.1 The Gwent Regional Homeless Strategy was approved by Cabinet on December 12th 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:

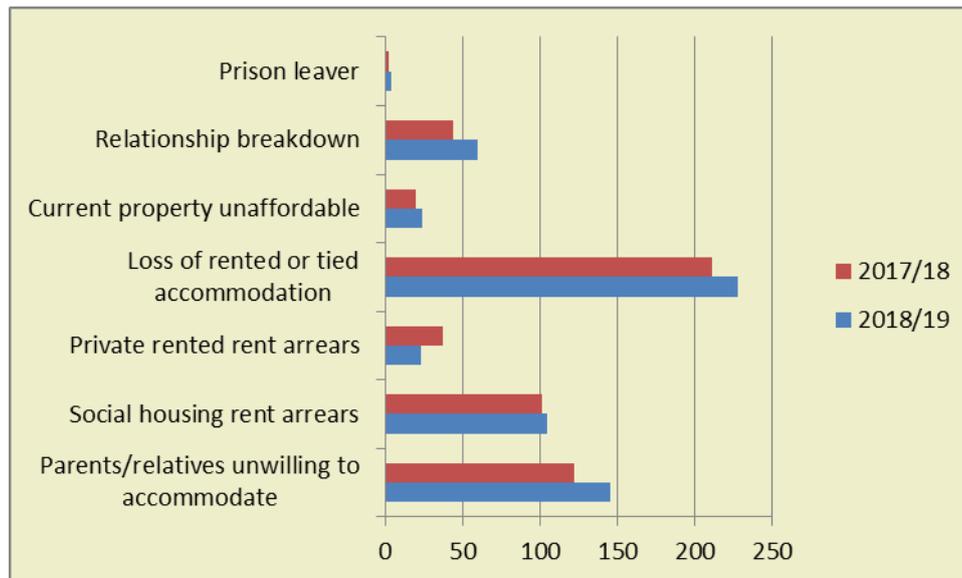
- In 2018/19 Caerphilly accepted 624 new households as requiring homelessness prevention assistance. These households were cases where we had a duty to prevent homelessness occurring, an increase of 53 cases from the previous year (8.49% increase).
- 471 cases were prevented from becoming homeless during 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 12th 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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Consultees: David Street - Corporate Director of Social Services and Housing
Cllr Lisa Phipps - Cabinet Member for Homes and Places
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.				
WORK WITH SOCAIL AND PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR LANDLORDS TO SUSTAIN TENANCIES AND INCREASE ACCESS TO AND SUPPLY OF HOUSING				
Actions	Tasks	Lead Officer	By When	Comments
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.