

Improvement Objectives

APPENDIX 1

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

Outcomes:

Traditionally, those approaching the council for help and advice relating to a homelessness or a potential homelessness situation have been households and individuals considered more vulnerable or with greater needs than the average household. However, due to the many and varied external pressures for example unemployment, home owners in negative equity, higher levels of household debt, ease of access to credit and high interest loans, we now find that a range of households find themselves at risk of losing their home. The stresses brought on by such external factors also have wider effects, e.g. relationship breakdown and increased levels of domestic abuse. Housing and health are intrinsically linked to the quality of housing provided, as does a household's ability to reside in a settled home. Access to good quality, affordable housing and sustainable tenancies positively impacts on a household's health and well-being and helps to develop a sense of community.

We plan to introduce a person centred approach to the Housing Options and Homelessness Advice service in which customers will engage with one caseworker who will assess the their housing needs and their ability to either maintain an existing tenancy or access alternative suitable, affordable and sustainable accommodation and wherever possible, prevent homelessness.



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2013-14 End of Year Progress Summary - We assessed this objective and judged it to be **successful** for the year 2013/14.

2014-15 Six Month Progress Summary - We assess this objective to be **partially successful** at 6 months.

What have we done well over the last 6 months?

Successfully completed a restructuring of the Housing Options & Homelessness Advice team to form a Homelessness Prevention team. The restructure will allow the council to respond to the impending changes in homelessness legislation, which will pose a significant challenge to the way the Council deals with people who either threatened with, or are actually homeless. The formation of the Homelessness Prevention team will enable the Council to provide a person centred casework approach, which will significantly improve the way it handles homeless cases.

We continue to provide essential support through our mediation and intervention services to ensure that households at risk of homelessness are able to remain in their own homes, thereby preventing homelessness. To date we have handled 77 cases and at the year-end, we will be able to measure how successful we have been in preventing homelessness in each case.

Two officers continue to provide support to households to help them maintain their new tenancy, which can be critically important in the first few months of a tenancy. To date we have handled 21 cases and at the year-end, we will be able to measure how successful we have been in preventing homelessness in each case.

All the introduction of the social lettings agency has been deferred pending the availability of external funding, we have completed the necessary preparatory work to ensure that once the funding is available we are able to introduce the agency without any further delay.

We contributed towards the all-Wales review of homeless prison leavers and continue to work closely with the all-Wales homelessness network to develop a national pre-release prison protocol.

We have worked closely with the corporate Equalities team to develop a useful guide for landlords in the public and private sectors to enable them to comply with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010, and thereby promoting non-discriminatory practices.

Having identified a need for specialist support to deal with people made homeless or potentially homeless through domestic abuse, we have successfully completed a procurement process. The contract to provide the support will be awarded in Q3 and in Q4 the support will be delivered.

What areas do we need to improve on, and how are we going to do it?

Only partial progress has been made in working with the prison accommodation service to improve the process whereby prisoners are prepared for release. We will be refocusing our efforts in the last two quarters of the year to ensure the successful completion of this action.

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Actions

Title	Comment	RAG	Overall Status	% Complete
1. Restructure the Housing Options and Homelessness Advice team functions to offer a person centred casework service	<p>Action completed. Physical restructure has been completed with a relocation of several officers to form a Homelessness Prevention team. We have assessed the ability of our IT to ensure we can report the required data to comply with the new legislation.</p> <p>Further restructuring of the team to take place in 2015/16 on receipt of Welsh Government transitional homelessness funding.</p>	➔	Complete	100
2. Provide mediation/early intervention support to households at risk of becoming homeless to remain in their homes	The success of this action is measured on the number of tenancies sustained for at least 6 months. To date we have handled 77 cases, providing a range of support to enable people to remain in their homes. This action is linked to PI 5 and will be reported on at the end of Q4.	➔	In Progress	50
3. Provide support to households to sustain new tenancies accessed through the Housing Allocations and Advice Centre	Two specialist support officers are in post and have succeeded in a number of cases to prevent a homelessness presentation being made. To date we have handled 21 cases, providing a range of support to enable people to sustain their new tenancies. This action is related to PI 6 and will be reported on at the end of Q4.	➔	In Progress	50
4. Work with private sector landlords to increase the level of affordable accommodation available through the development of a social lettings agency, accessible to any household regardless of benefit dependency.	The report went to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee on 30th September and will be considered by Cabinet in Q3 (1st October 2014). A draft business case has been produced and consideration of suitable office space has commenced. We can now progress receipt of transitional funding awarded to the authority from Welsh Government for homeless prevention measures.	➔	Not Started	50
5. Review and, where necessary, revise the existing pre-release prison protocol to empower prisoners to plan for their accommodation needs on release	Participated in an all-Wales review of homelessness prison leavers and assessment of the impact of the change in priority need status due to be removed from legislation in 2015. Initially this task was going to be undertaken on a local level but has since become a national issue. Therefore, progress is dictated by the homelessness network, which is now leading on this task. Some research, commissioned by Welsh Government, has been undertaken by the WLGA and is due to be considered. We will continue to play an active role in the completion of this task.	➔	Complete	100
6. Produce guidance for all landlords (public and private) on the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010 to promote non-discriminatory practice by all housing providers	Draft guidance produced, report going to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee in October 2014. Draft guidance will be considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group prior to going to Policy & Resources Scrutiny in October 2014.	➔	In Progress	90
7. Host a specialist domestic abuse support worker to provide early intervention support, target hardening services and person centred support to prevent homelessness in relation to domestic abuse victims and their families	Advice from procurement Services requires that a tender process must be completed to progress this task. Tender process documents to be completed and submitted in Q2. Procurement process has been completed. We expect contract to be awarded in Q3 and commence in Q4.	➔	In Progress	80
8. Improve both the working relations with prison accommodation services to prepare prisoners for their release and the level of assistance provided to prison leavers by support agencies on their release	In response to changes in legislation, we have established contact with prisons in the South Wales region in an attempt to improve pre-planning on release.	➔	In Progress	10

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How much did we do and how well did we do it?

Title	Actual	Target	Intervention	RAG	Result 12 Months Ago	Comment
1. Increase the number of PRS accommodation units accessed by our service users through our social lettings agency which will be introduced within the current year					N/A	SLA will now not be introduced until 2015 when transitional funding will be available. Therefore, the number of PRS accommodation units accessed by our service users through our social lettings agency during 2014/15 will be nil. The annual target was 30.
2. Produce and publicise guidance on Equalities Act 2010 in housing					N/A	Draft guidance will be considered by the Caerphilly Homes Task Group in Q3 prior to going to Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee in the same quarter.
3. Number of credit union rent accounts opened with Smart Money credit union which promotes access to the PRS by service users in receipt of benefits	57.00	50.00	40.00	–	N/A	The annual target is 100. Performance in Q1 was 54 which was exceptional. Only 3 in Q2 which is lower than expected and we are working with the Credit Union to increase the take-up in Q3.
4. Reduction in the number of repeat homeless presentations					N/A	The annual target is 15. The success of this action is measured on the number of tenancies sustained for at least 6 months. Performance data will be reported from Q4 onwards.

Is anyone better off?

Title	Actual	Target	Intervention	RAG	Result 12 Months Ago	Comment
5. % of cases who have had their risk of homelessness prevented by assistance to remain in their existing accommodation					N/A	The annual target is 50%. Performance data will be reported from Q4 onwards.
6. % of cases who have had their risk of homelessness prevented by accessing alternative accommodation available to them for a min of 6 months					N/A	The annual target is 50%. Performance data will be reported from Q4 onwards.
7. % of non-priority, intentionally homeless cases not owed any duty, where they have become homeless and we have relieved this homelessness by securing accommodation for a minimum of 6 months					N/A	The annual target is 50%. The success of this action is measured on the number of tenancies sustained for at least 6 months. Performance data will be reported from Q4 onwards.