

# Improvement Objectives

**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 End of Year Progress Summary** -

We assess this objective to be **partially successful** because:

**What have we done well over the last 12 months?**

- The Housing Advice and Homelessness Teams have been re-structured and re-located to provide an holistic person centred casework service.
- Additionally, specialist support has been introduced to the team, which dealt with 128 new requests for support from households at risk of becoming homeless.

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

- Need to revise pre-release prison protocol to empower prisoners to plan for their accommodation needs on release from prison. This is being progressed at a national level.
- Increase the level of affordable accommodation available through the development of social lettings agency. Welsh Government grant funding will assist to progress this, with more cost effective option being to utilise the service of an existing social lettings agency.



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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	This action was completed on time and within budget. This included the relocation of several officers to form a Homelessness Prevention team, located at Ty Gilfach. As a result of the reorganization, the service is better equipped to deal with the challenges presented by the recent change in homelessness legislation. We plan to undertake a second phase of restructuring during 2015/16 using Welsh Government transitional homelessness funding.	➔	Complete	100
2. Provide mediation/early intervention support to households at risk of becoming homeless to remain in their homes	Staff have worked proactively throughout the year with tenants and landlords to assist people to maintain their tenancies. We have noted that this approach has resulted in increased confidence for landlords to work closely with the council to prevent instances of homelessness from occurring. In relation to the both actions numbered 2 and 3, during the year, we received 128 new requests for support.	➔	Complete	100
3. Provide support to households to sustain new tenancies accessed through the Housing Allocations and Advice Centre	We appointed two specialist officers in quarter 1, to assist people sustain new tenancies. In relation to the both actions numbered 2 and 3, during the year, we received 128 new requests for support.	➔	Complete	100
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.	Even though preparatory work was undertaken in the first quarter of the year with the drafting of business case to P&R Scrutiny, we deferred this action for 12 months pending the availability of transitional homelessness funding from Welsh Government in April 2015. We are now considering outsourcing the running of the social lettings agency to Cartrefi Hafod because of the experience they have in running a social lettings agency.	➔	Partially Completed	50
5. Review and, where necessary, revise the existing pre-release prison protocol to empower prisoners to plan for their accommodation needs on release	Initially this task was going to be undertaken on a local level but, because of the complexity of the task, a decision was taken by the homelessness network to escalate this to a national issue. Although the action was consequently closed down as an Improvement Objective action, the council continues to play an active role in the completion of this task. The council has subsequently participated in an all-Wales review of homelessness prison leavers and an assessment of the impact of the removal of the priority need status due to be removed from legislation in 2015. Welsh Government commissioned research, undertaken by the WLGA is currently being considered and an all-Wales prison leaver pathway document will be published this autumn. In addition, local authorities in Gwent, the Police and National Probation Service have drafted a protocol to ensure we respond to the release of prolific offenders to our area and Welsh Government have made some funding available to meet short term accommodation needs and support.	➔	Partially Completed	25
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	This action was completed within time and on budget. The guidance has been published and circulated, and training for landlords has been completed.	➔	Complete	100

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Title	Comment	RAG	Overall Status	% Complete
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	Hosting commenced in Q4 and is now fully operational. This is a 2-year arrangement with Llamau Women's Service, with an option to extend for a further 12 months. It is now providing much needed support to those people who may be homeless or threatened with homeless due to domestic abuse.		Complete	100
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	This is linked to item 5 above. Due to the complexity at the national level, Welsh Government took over the planning of prisoner release arrangements and reconfigured the resettlement process by employing a new Community Rehabilitation Company which is now in place.		Partially Completed	30

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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	0.00	30.00	0.00	⊖	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.
2. Produce and publicise guidance on Equalities Act 2010 in housing	1.00	1.00	0.00	⊖	N/A	The Equalities guidance was produced and publicised in Q3, with training provided to Landlords.
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	69.00	100.00	50.00	⊖	N/A	Q1=54, Q2=3, Q3=2 and Q4=10 It should be noted that CCBC does not have total control and influence over this activity as far as take-up is concerned. However, we are in a position to 'promote' and 'encourage' the use of this facility. Even though we did not reach the target, any increase in numbers is a benefit to our citizens, by enabling them to better manage their finances.
4. Reduction in the number of repeat homeless presentations	12.00	15.00	5.00	⊖	N/A	We introduced performance indicators 4-7 in advance of the new duties brought about by the change in homelessness legislations (Housing (Wales) Act 2104 – to take all reasonable steps to prevent homelessness). We restructured the service and introduced a tenancy sustainment service in preparation for the introduction of the new duties. Officers regard the outcomes as a positive step towards the acceptance of people remaining in their private rented sector accommodation or accepting an offer of accommodation in this sector with tenancy support, as an alternative to social housing which is in very high demand. Ambitious targets for the year were set not really knowing the extent of demand on the homeless services as a result of the change in legislation. This creates the impression that we have underperformed, which in each of the 4 indicators is not the case. Changes to the way we provide the homelessness prevention service means that we are in a good position to meet the new duties going forward. The success of this, is measured on the number of tenancies sustained for at least 6 months.

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### 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	36.68	50.00	30.00	☐-	N/A	Total cases 1,093 of which 401 cases prevented. Refer also, to the first paragraph reported in Q4 of 2014/15 against the measure: Reduction in the number of repeat homeless presentations.
6. % of cases who have had their risk of homelessness prevented by accessing alternative accommodation available to them for a min of 6 months	37.69	50.00	30.00	☐-	N/A	Total cases 1,093 of which 412 cases were prevented by providing alternative forms of accommodation. Refer also, to the first paragraph reported in Q4 of 2014/15 against the measure: Reduction in the number of repeat homeless presentations.
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	37.14	50.00	30.00	☐-	N/A	Total cases 35 of which 13 cases secured accommodation. Refer also, to the first paragraph reported in Q4 of 2014/15 against the measure: Reduction in the number of repeat homeless presentations.