Homelessness: How we Provide for the Future

Mark Wade / Steve Porter Housing Options



The Housing Options Service – An Overview

- Role of Housing Options
- Causes of Homelessness / Dispelling the Myths
- Preventing Homelessness
- What Options?
- Housing Assessment and Allocations
- Assessment Myths
- Key Issues for 15/16 and beyond



Role of Housing Options

- Provide advice and assistance to any person(s) threatened with homelessness (some figures)
- Assess Housing Need in accordance with the Housing Allocations Policy 2009 (applicants and tenants) and manage the Housing Needs list
- Provide affordable options for housing
- Make appropriate referrals for support on assessment of needs
- Work in Partnership with various Agencies & Departments e.g. Barnado's / Social Services / Probation / Police (MAPPA)
- Work in partnership with the Voluntary Sector e.g. 'Move-On' Scheme



Causes of Homelessness

- Relationship breakdown
- Domestic Violence
- Private Rented Notice to Quit / too expensive
- Leaving Institution Prison / Care / Armed Forces
- Rough Sleeping / Substance Misuse
- Mortgage Repossessions
- Evictions through Anti-Social behaviour / Rent Arrears
- Emergency e.g. fire / flood
- Refugee Status
- Property unsuitable E.g. Medical grounds / condition of property



Homelessness Myths

- I should only go to Housing Options if I'm street homeless
- I'm entitled to a Council house if I'm homeless
- The Council will put me in Bed & Breakfast if I have nowhere to go
- If I lose my accommodation I will go straight to the top of the Housing Needs Register
- If I'm from a particular area in Swansea the Council will re-house me back in that area
- If I was an Asylum Seeker/Eastern European I would get housed



Preventing homelessness

- Is it better to stay where you are?
- Mediation & negotiation (Parents/Landlords/Courts etc.)
- Money advice / Financial help
- Support & Advice
- Improving the security of a home
- Help with moving into a new home (bond, rent in advance etc.)



Options for moving into permanent housing

- Council
- Housing Association nominations / direct application
- Private Rented Sector
- Long term supported housing
- Move-on Strategy
- Adapted Housing (LA/ Gwalia /Coastal /Family Housing)
- Sheltered Accommodation
- Purchasing a Home



Housing Options & The Voluntary Sector

- Important linkages
- Adds value and increases housing options, gives flexibility in service delivery
- Voluntary Sector Grant Shelter Cymru, Barnado's BAYS, Swansea Bond Board, Rough Sleepers Intervention Team funded.
- Joint Homelessness and Supporting People Collaborative Provider Forum – determines strategic direction for homelessness services



Assessment Team

- There are just under 4000 households on the Housing Needs Register
- Points based Policy for both Applicants / Tenants;
- Looks at cumulative housing need;
- Points awarded for; Insecurity of tenure/Condition of Property/Medical Needs/Social Needs/time spent on the list;
- Review of every application carried out annually
- Not just about Waiting List but about providing appropriate advice and assistance for individual needs
- How to apply by application form or over the telephone

Assessment Myths

- I will keep going up the list over time
- My support worker / GP has sent a letter of support in so I will get more points
- I have seen an empty property so can I have it
- You must have something you can offer me? (Choice Advisor/Website)
- My daughter (15) is sharing with my 6 year old boy so you have to move us legally
- I have access to children so I need a house



Key Issues

- Continual Pressure on Service (demand outstripping supply, realistic expectations)
- Housing Act (Wales) 2014 Implementation date 27TH April 2015. Significant change. Much greater emphasis on prevention of homelessness, increased use of private rented sector for homeless households and those in housing need, prisoners no longer automatically in 'priority need'. WG providing short term funding to Council's to help meet new duties
- Private Rented Sector Lettings Team



Key Issues (cont'd)

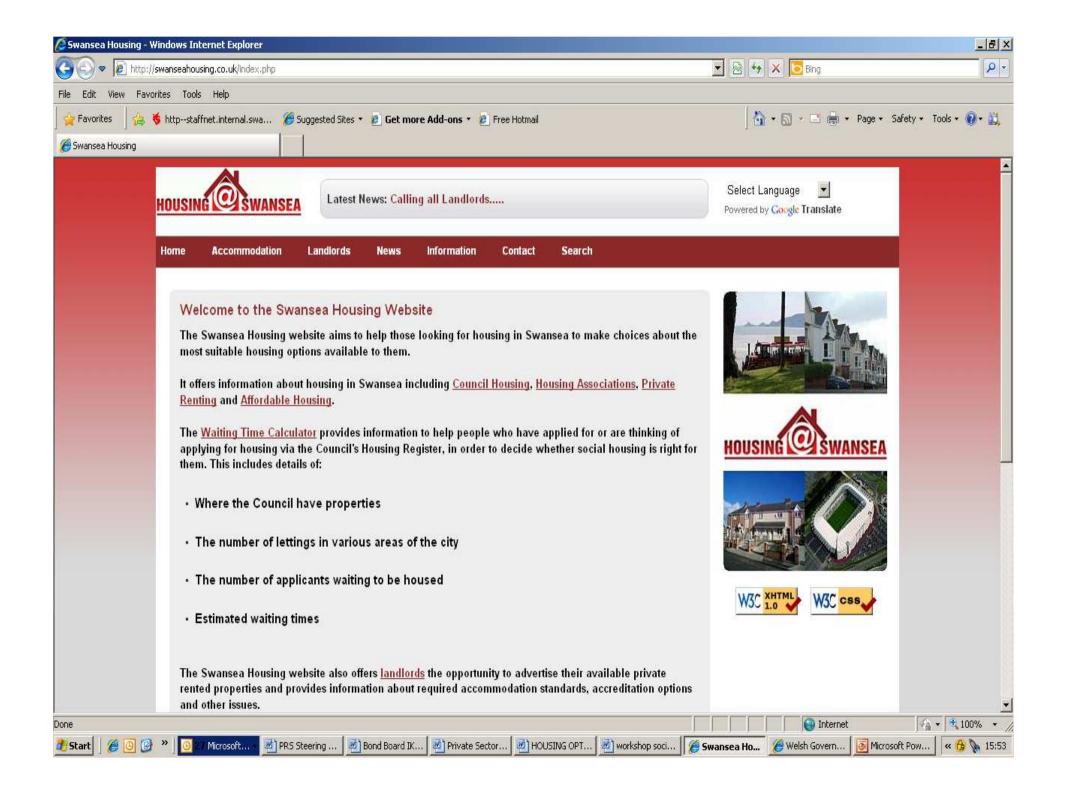
- Welfare Reform
 - Universal Credit
 - Under Occupation Charge (Bedroom Tax)
 - Shared accommodation rates for U-35's
- Challenging Client Group Increase in substance misuse / mental health etc.

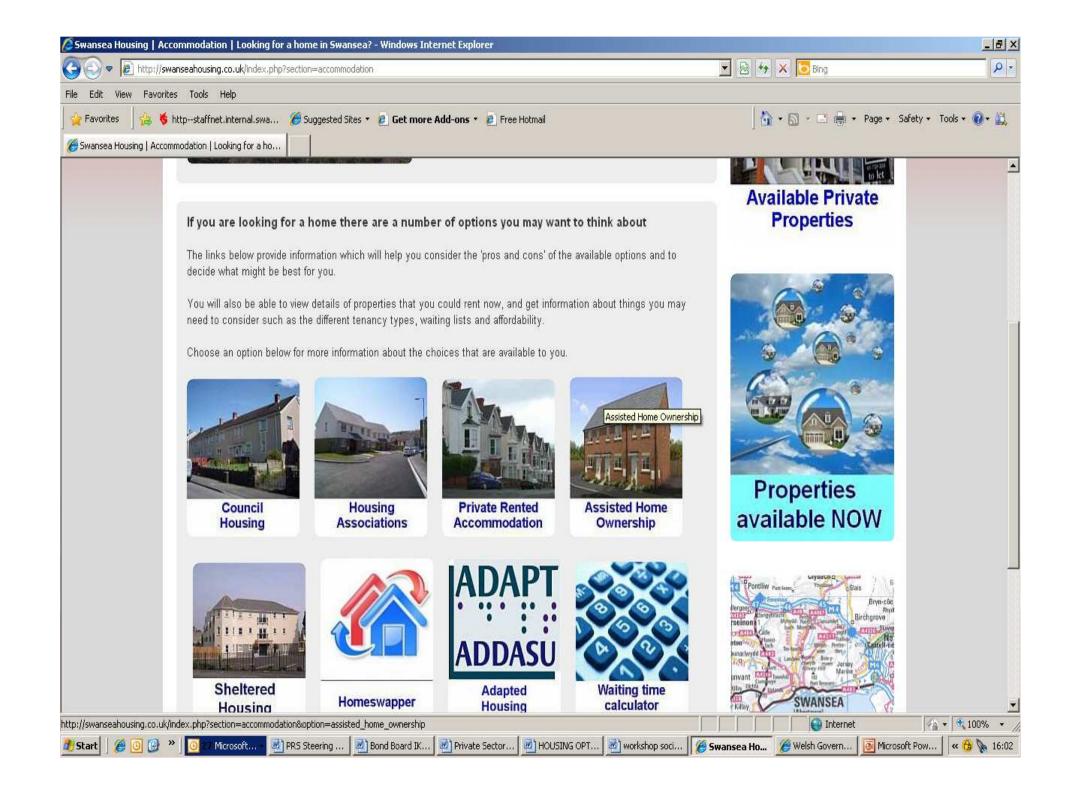


Key Issues (cont'd)

- Closer links with Housing Associations e.g. Move towards shared referral process, sharing of information and open communication
- Continued emphasis on reducing the need for use of Bed & Breakfast and tackling Rough Sleeping
- Increased use of Technology e.g. Housing Options Webpage - launched in 2012 – swanseahousing.co.uk







Questions?

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