

## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.1 Homelessness

**The One Swansea Plan**

Children have a good start in life

People are healthy, safe and independent

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### The Current Situation

**How services are currently provided**

The Authority's Housing Options service provides a range of services including a team of caseworkers focused on the prevention of homelessness, a money adviser who can help home owners faced by repossession through court representation and an ex-offender resettlement officer who works directly in prisons with clients prior to their release.

The Housing Options service also provides advice and help to anyone who is homeless including the provision of temporary accommodation for any household found to be homeless and in priority need. The Authority has developed a range of temporary accommodation options for homeless households.

Youth Homelessness services are provided at the BAYS project, a partnership between Barnardos and the Authority. The BAYS project provides a "one stop shop" approach for young people. The service is focused on supporting people to stay with their parents or relatives whenever possible. The partnership has developed and evolved a range of temporary and permanent accommodation options for young people including a flexible number of units of supported lodgings, emergency accommodation and accommodation for people with complex needs. Floating support for those ready to live independently is also provided.

There are a range of services and initiatives for rough sleepers in Swansea including;

- A street outreach and breakfast run
- One emergency bed that can be accessed on a night by night and weekend only basis
- 52 direct access beds
- A rough sleeping resource card, which gives key information for rough sleepers

- Partnership with Swansea Hope to assist rough sleepers into housing during the coldest months of the year
- Swansea Rough Sleepers Helpline which helps identify new locations where rough can be found
- Multi Agency Team Co-ordinator for Homelessness (MATCH) helps complex homeless individuals who need a multi-agency team response to resolve or prevent their homelessness

The Local Authority leads the coordinated response to tackling and reducing the impact of rough sleeping through a well-established Rough Sleeper Task Group. The group membership includes Local Authority staff from a number of departments, voluntary sector partners, Health Authority staff, Police, local church representatives and representatives from neighbouring authorities.

Homelessness prevention in Swansea include 700 units of floating support targeted at a range of client groups, 300 supported housing spaces and the “Sanctuary” scheme ( a scheme that funds property security improvements to help households who are experiencing domestic abuse to feel safe in their homes).

The “Move On” Strategy in Swansea is a long term partnership between the City & County of Swansea’s Housing Service, local Housing Associations and various statutory and voluntary agencies throughout the City. The Move On group aims to assist people who are ready to move-on from temporary, supported accommodation into an independent tenancy. This helps to prevent “bed blocking” in the city. The scheme has been operating since the early 1990’s, but as a snapshot has housed over 200 people in the last five years alone, with approximately 85% of the tenancies maintained to a satisfactory standard.

### **Permanent accommodation**

As of April 2013 there were over 5000 households registered on the Council waiting list. The current total Authority owned housing stock is 13,600. In 2012/13, 558 homeless households were accommodated in council tenancies. This accounted for approximately 34% of the new tenancies that year.

There are also approximately 9,000 social housing tenancies provided by housing associations across the city. Swansea is also looking to provide a replacement Social Lettings Agency for the now decommissioned Ikon Lettings. The new service should be operational from 2014 / 2015.

### **Financial Support**

In 2013/14, Supporting People Programme Grant funding for Swansea totalled £14,628,115. This money is used for a range of services to prevent homelessness and to support households in their accommodation. The money also supports mental health, older person and learning disability provision. This money is frozen for 2014/15 and will be reduced to £14,498,656.18 for 2015/16.

The Welsh Government currently funds a number of services directly through S180 Homelessness Grant Funding. Approximately £300k of s180 grant funding is

invested in third sector organisations providing homelessness services in Swansea with the majority focused on rough sleepers with additional nationally funded schemes which operate across Wales.

### **A Summary and Analysis of Demand**

Swansea has a relatively high number of homelessness decisions, 3,419 in 2012/13. This reflects, in part, the proactive approach to all homeless people i.e. priority and non-priority. For example, households are actively encouraged to approach the Authority as soon as they become at risk of homelessness so that work can begin at an early stage in an attempt to prevent homelessness and the use of temporary accommodation.

This proactive approach to homelessness is demonstrated by the fact that consistently, Swansea has one of the lowest numbers of people in temporary accommodation across the whole of Wales. For example, during the whole of 2013/14 the Authority accommodated four families in B&B and then for an average of only six days.

The Housing Options service consistently receives between 2500 and 3000 homelessness applicants every year. Approximately 40% were accepted as homeless during 2013/14. During 2013/14, 847 households were accepted as priority need, which represents a 20% decline in statutory homeless acceptances from 2010/11 despite there being an increase in presentations of approximately 10%.

The average length of time households spent in temporary accommodation during 2013/14 was 48 days. The average time spent in Bed & Breakfast increased from 19 in 12/13 to 25 in 13/14 and in other forms of temporary accommodation from 64 in 12/13 to 73 in 2013/14. The Authority provides temporary accommodation for approximately 400 households every year.

Consistently, the main causes of homelessness are as a result of either leaving prison, loss of rented accommodation, relationship breakdown (particularly involving domestic abuse). These account for about 70-80% of all the homelessness acceptances in Swansea.

<b>Cause of homelessness</b>	<b>2012/13</b>
<b>Domestic Abuse</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Other violence</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Parents not willing to accommodate</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Loss of rented accommodation /NTQ</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Mortgage arrears</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Rent arrears</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Leaving Institution / Care (including prison)</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Other (including emergency / refugee)</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Relationship breakdown – non violent</b>	<b>66</b>

<b>Other relatives not willing to accommodate</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>843</b>

### **Homelessness Planning Arrangements**

The Homelessness Strategy Planning Team (HSPT) has been established with the aim of providing a planning framework to meet the long term accommodation, health and support needs of all people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.

The HSPT meets quarterly. Membership is open to any organisation providing services to homeless people and includes representatives from statutory and third sector organisations including Social Landlords, Support providers, Advice agencies and Tenancy Support Services.

The HSPT is responsible for developing a business plan that provides the framework for planning homelessness services and acts as a reference point for making recommendations to the Supporting People Commissioning group. It will also be used to inform decisions in relation to WG funding e.g. s180 and other Local Authority funding.

The HSPT commissions working groups to undertake specific pieces of work in relation to priority areas. Current working groups include:

- Rough Sleeping Task Group
- Move On Strategy Group
- Private Sector Development Group
- Gateway User Group
- Youth Homelessness Provider Group
- Join In Steering and Community Groups

The HSPT receive progress reports from working group leads and is able to advise, make recommendations or raise concerns in relation to the work of the group.

The HSPT review homelessness in the local area on an annual basis. The priorities are reflected in the Supporting People Planning documents and submissions to Welsh Government.

It also recognises that responses to homelessness are not just a housing issue, and that successful solutions are often based on sharing responsibility with Health, Probation and Social care.

### **Service User involvement**

The “Join In” strategy is the framework for service user consultation in Swansea in relation to Homelessness and Supporting People issues. It was initially established in 2004 and its membership includes voluntary, independent and statutory sector organisations. It also includes Service Users affiliated to these organisations. By actively involving Service Users, the people who commission, plan and provide services can gain accurate information about Service Users’ views of their needs, service delivery, deficiencies, changes & improvement, barriers faced, etc.

Therefore, the planning, design, delivery, evaluation and monitoring of services can be based on Service Users’ actual needs and views, potentially enhanced by the fresh perspectives and new ideas that Service users can contribute. The local arrangements have now been rolled out to the Western Bay Region. Annual consultation and feedback events are being hosted on a regional basis for service users across the area.

## **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

Since 2007 a number of important developments have occurred in homelessness services including the following;

### **Focus on Prevention**

The Housing Options Service has undergone two major reviews over the last five years. The reviews have concentrated on ensuring that the customer is at the centre of service provision and that prevention of homelessness is the main focus. The reviews have helped ensure that the service is able to continue meeting key performance indicators and measures, e.g. numbers in B&B, average stays in temporary accommodation, etc, despite an increase in demand for the service.

### **Housing First**

Swansea has piloted the “Housing First” approach to dealing with Rough Sleepers which involves housing the most vulnerable and using individualised budgets to encourage long term rough sleepers to engage with services. The principle of the work is currently on-going under the Multi Agency Team Coordinator for Homelessness (MATCH) worker to ensure a multi-agency response is provided for complex and multiple needs individuals who are homeless or at risk of losing their accommodation without a multi-agency approach. The success of the Individual Budgets work has been evaluated and is being explored for possible inclusion in this work.

### **B&B reduction**

The use of B&B has significantly decreased over the last five years. During 2012/13, 280 households were booked into B&B, which is an average of 23 per month.

### **Rough Sleepers Winter Plan**

The Authority has funded an annual rough sleeper's winter plan since 2008. This ensures that all rough sleepers are offered temporary accommodation during cold weather. This was extended in 2011/12 to allow the Swansea Nigh Shelter project to open during the coldest months of the year. The Night Shelter is a partnership between local churches and rough sleeper stakeholders to provide emergency overnight accommodation and move on options for street homeless individuals in Swansea.

### **Gateway**

In early 2009 the Homelessness Strategy Planning Team commissioned the 'Homeless Journeys' work to map the access to services for long term homeless individuals. One of the very clear messages coming out of this work was that homeless people are required to complete multiple applications and re-tell their story numerous times in order to register and access hostel or supported housing. Funding was secured from the Welsh Government in 2010 to improve access to temporary housing and "Gateway" was developed as an online referral system using a 'tell it once' approach. It was launched in April 2011 and during 2012/13 459 referrals were made for temporary and supported housing.

### **Future Developments**

A number of significant issues will affect homelessness services over the next five years including welfare reform, proposed changes to legislation, changes to Supporting People arrangements and the potential for local authority reorganisation.

These issues will shape priorities and future developments over the coming years.

### **Welfare Reform**

Significant changes to the Housing Benefit and Local Housing Allowance are being implemented as part of the Government's Welfare Reform.

The headline changes include:

- Universal Credit to replace most benefits (including housing benefit)
- Reduction in Local Housing Allowance for:
  - § people with non-dependent children
  - § the 5 bed rate
  - § people of working age who are under occupying
- Reduction in the total amount of benefit paid
- Introduction of the social housing size criteria (bedroom tax)

The changes have the potential to increase homelessness as reductions in household finances may mean that people's current accommodation may become

unaffordable. It may result in some households becoming more overcrowded which can also lead to tensions and strains on existing relationships.

Priorities will include working with landlords across all sectors to offer housing options that meet the needs of households affected by the changes including shared housing and the greater use of credit unions.

### **Housing (Wales) Act**

The key elements of the changes to homelessness legislation are:

- A new duty for Local Authorities to corporately “take reasonable steps to achieve a suitable housing solution for all households which are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days”
- Statutory guidance on the minimum set of prevention services an Authority will need to have in place
- Requirement for Authorities to undertake a basic support needs assessment for anyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Priority need, intentionality and local connection tests to still apply if no ‘housing solution’ can be found, but with possible changes to some definitions and the inclusion of ‘verified rough sleepers’ and young people under 25
- Local Authorities to have the power to discharge their homelessness duty by providing access to suitable private rented sector accommodation
- The intentionality test for homeless families to be removed by 2019 and other identified groups in due course
- Vulnerability test to be applied to former prisoners who are threatened with homelessness when being discharged from custody

The issues to consider are therefore:

- Ensuring prevention services are strengthened
- Ensuring there is an adequate supply of interim/temporary accommodation
- Ensuring that accommodation remains financially viable in light of DWP funding restrictions
- Increasing the supply of good quality, affordable housing across the social and private sectors

### **Supporting People**

Supporting People funding in Swansea was reduced in 2011/12 by 1.1% and in 2012/13 there was a further reduction of 2.1%, although no additional reductions for 2014/5 there is a reduction of 5.4% in 2015/16.

The Supporting People Programme Grant which came into place in August 2012 means that the Authority is responsible for commissioning services formerly administered via the Welsh Government. This enables the Authority to have greater control over the design of services and ensure that they are responsive and flexible to the needs of homeless and vulnerable people in Swansea.

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

- Reduce homelessness as a result of domestic abuse and improve accessibility, support and move-on options
- Ensure an even greater emphasis on preventing homelessness by strengthening the role of prevention in the duties owed to people threatened with homelessness
- Work closely with the private rented sector to enable a discharge of duty by the offer of secure, private sector accommodation to people who are owed a full re-housing duty
- Increase the capacity of the private rented sector and ensuring that accommodation is well managed, affordable and of a high quality
  - Ensure that the tenants of private landlords have access to housing related tenancy support
- Deal with the impact of welfare reform
- Develop and improving responses to rough sleeping
- Tackle youth homelessness including eliminating the use of B&B and improving move on options
- Develop short and long term support options for people with complex needs including older people with substance and alcohol misuse
- Develop creative support packages for people within shared housing
- Develop additional supported accommodation for adults with mental health issues
- Review Extra Care provision
- Explore options to support prison leavers in temporary accommodation and bed and breakfast
- Explore options to reduce the impact of under occupation of social housing and provide additional housing units for single bedroom occupancy





## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.2 Supporting People Programme

**The One Swansea Plan**

Children have a good start in life  
People are healthy and independent

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### Introduction

The Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) is aimed at preventing people becoming homeless or requiring residential or institutional services, through the provision of 'housing related support'. The programme is a key tool in addressing the prevention and anti-poverty agenda. Housing related support enables people to develop and maintain the skills and confidence necessary to maximise their ability to live independently.

The City & County of Swansea's 2015/16 allocation of £13.8 million is ring-fenced and helps fund short and long term temporary supported housing, permanent supported accommodation and a range of floating support services. Examples of short term temporary accommodation include homeless hostels and refuges for those who have suffered domestic abuse. Examples of longer term temporary supported accommodation include projects such as The Foyer, supported lodgings and shared supported housing. Permanent supported housing is provided for people with mental health problems, learning disabilities or learning difficulties and the programme also supports sheltered housing. Floating support services help to sustain people living in their own home and floats off once and individual no longer requires the support. Older people and other individuals with low ongoing needs may require longer term support. At any point during the year, there are more than 4000 individuals in receipt of housing related support from the programme in Swansea.

#### The Current Situation

As in other areas the Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) is being affected by Welsh Government cuts. For 2015/16 the SPPG allocation was reduced by 5.45% from the previous year and early indications suggest these are likely to continue year on year with the percentage reduction likely to increase. The LA is currently developing a new Supporting People Programme Grant procurement plan to implement in approximately two years. In the interim it is likely that there will be a reduction in service provision as it is unlikely that enough reduction in expenditure can be delivered through efficiency savings alone.

The key national drivers for the SPPG programme currently are:

- Responding to the new Homelessness Legislation and enhanced prevention duties
- Implement the findings of the Aylward Review, an independent review of housing related support in Wales.
- Greater synergy with other Tackling Poverty Grants i.e. Communities First, Families First & Sure Start Preparing for the Social Services & Wellbeing Act

The service is subject to increasing demand. Strategic investment of the SPPG is directed by a combination of the Homelessness Prevention action plan and the Social Care Commissioning plans. The Supporting People Commissioning Group, a multi-agency group consisting of Health, Social Services, Housing and the Probation service is responsible for local commissioning decisions. The detailed commissioning activity and administration for the SPPG and associated contracts is administered by a dedicated Supporting People Team (SPT). The team ensures that all services are evaluated on a three year cycle so they are strategically relevant, safe and currently deliver on the National Supporting People Outcomes Framework.

The number of people with complex needs requiring support services is increasing and finding solutions is becoming more challenging. A range of groups collaborate on future service planning, including the Homelessness Planning Team, Social Care accommodation subgroups, third sector forums, local and regional supporting people collaborative forums and the Join In Service user Involvement Framework.

The Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan contains details about the programme, what it funds, how it is administered and the future priorities for the programme. Following Local Cabinet and Authority approval, the plan will be scrutinised by the newly established Supporting People Multi-Sector Regional Collaborate Committee (RCC). The RCC will be able to agree funding changes of up to 10% although anything greater than this will have to be referred to Welsh Government. The RCC will then consider the City & County of Swansea's Commissioning Plan, along with the equivalent from Neath Port Talbot and Bridgend, and develop a Regional Commissioning Plan for Western Bay. The Plan will then be submitted to the Welsh Government.

## **Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

The Supporting People programme has;

- Ensured that £13.8 million SPPG and additional contributions from the local authority and health board, were invested in housing related support services aimed at prevention of homelessness.
- Administered a funding reduction of 5.45% on the previous years through negotiation with service providers. Even though there have been funding reductions, it has not resulted in any service users losing their support.

- Administered a Join in Services User Involvement Framework to ensure that homeless people are represented and are able to have an influence on the commissioning of homelessness and housing related support services.
- Monitored and prioritised support packages to prevent homelessness and enable move on using the Temporary Accommodation Gateway, Mental Health OASIS Project, Tenancy Support Unit Central Referral Core and the Youth Homelessness Strategic Group.
- Worked collaboratively with Sheltered Housing providers to make progress to implement recommendations from the Aylward Review, such as severing the link with tenure.
- Delivered further supported housing accommodation options with the aim of eliminating the use of Bed & Breakfast for 16 & 17 year olds.
- Delivered brand new accommodation to enable a supported housing project for people with mental health problems.
- Established innovative and collaborative multi agency responses to prevent homelessness and enable access to suitable accommodation.

## **Future Developments**

Many of the current priorities are highlighted in the Homelessness Chapter of this Strategy, but in addition;

- Undertake a strategic review of the need for all housing related support services to inform the commission priorities going forward to determine what services are needed going forward to respond to the key strategic drivers.
- Develop and implement a procurement strategy over the next two years to in respond to the findings of the strategic review which delivers sustainable services in the medium term reflecting the reduced SPPG allocations over the next 3 years.
- The SPT will continue to monitor welfare reforms changes which specifically impact on rental income of projects and their sustainability.
- The SPT will continuously review and improve service delivery in order to achieve the national and local strategic outcomes needs.
- Will implement Welsh Government reductions to the SPPG allocation exploring way to minimise the impact on front line service as much as is possible in the short term over the next two years.

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

- Work with projects to mitigate the impacts of Welfare Reform

- Improve the availability of Move-On accommodation
- Model the impact of a reduction to the SPPG on local services
- Commission services which are responsive to the new Homelessness legislation prevention duties.

## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.3 An Ageing Population

**The One Swansea Plan**

People are healthy, safe and independent

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### The Current Situation

##### Introduction

Nationally, the number of older people relative to the rest of the population is increasing and the fastest rate of increase is forecast to be in those over 80 years of age. Information from the 2011 Census indicates that 18% of the local population are over 65 (42,800 people).

Whilst recognising and valuing the important continues contribution we all make to all areas of life as we age, one of the major challenges for the Authority is to continue to plan and deliver services that meet the needs of its ageing population. Housing is recognised as a key determinant of health and it follows that as people age health needs become more complex and having suitable housing becomes more important. Welsh Government studies indicate that older people are far more likely to occupy housing in poor condition, which has a significant impact upon their health and well-being.

Research into the housing choices and aspirations of older people commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in 2008 found that most people expressed a preference to stay where they were currently living for as long as possible. However as a demographic group, older people generally tend to be asset rich and cash poor, and may struggle to finance the necessary adaptations to their homes such as grab rails and stair lifts, which would make their homes more suitable to their needs and reduce health risks. Falls in particular are more prevalent in older persons due to problems with balance, coordination and/or strength and where falls occur; they tend to have greater general health implications. However, evidence suggests that fall prevention can reduce the number of falls between 15% and 30% and that falls, are, therefore, not an inevitable part of ageing. The overarching aim of the Ageing Well in Wales Falls prevention thematic network is to reduce the risk of falling and the number of falls amongst older people in Wales.

Older people are also more likely to experience physical and sensory impairments than the rest of the population with around 20% being classed as permanently sick or disabled. In addition 49% report living with a limiting long term illness and 19% are providing unpaid care for other people.

Fuel poverty is another concern as older people need to spend a greater proportion of their income on heating their homes during the winter months and may struggle to finance high fuel bills.

The percentage of older people owning their own home is higher than in the population as a whole, with 76% of those over 50 being owner occupiers. This proportion rises to 81% of the 50-64 age group, but reduces to 54% of the 85+ age group.

### **Key Local Research**

The findings of a research exercise carried out by Opinion Research Services in 2005 to determine the housing needs of people over 50 years old in the Authority area highlighted the following issues:

- The majority of older people want to continue to live independently in their own homes. This will require innovative support services and through the work of Network 50+ older people have told us that;
  - They want to remain at home provided they are not lonely and isolated in that home
  - They need to be supported to live in homes and communities that are suitable for their needs
- Older people will need repairs and adaptations to their homes to assist them to live independently and to help to prevent them going into care
- A significant proportion of the Authority's housing stock is pre or inter-war and this will pose a challenge as older properties can be more difficult to adapt
- An ageing population will result in an increase in the number of people living alone risking social isolation
- Under-occupation will provide a challenge
- There will be an increase in the numbers of people requiring assistance to maintain their home and garden
- Advice and support services must link with others to ensure people are aware of all their options
- Older people prefer a variety of housing options so that they can choose the one that best meets their needs
- Maximising the use of technology based support services will be a cost effective way of providing more support to more people

- The proportion of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) older people is also increasing with the latest statistics indicating that 1.3% of over 50s were from BME groups compared to just 0.6% in 2001

### **Strategy for Older People 2013-23- Living Longer Ageing Well**

Within national work on developing the third phase of the Strategy for Older People older people said:

*- That their housing needs change as they age, and either the home or its location needs to change to adapt to their changing needs.*

The WG aims for housing through the Strategy for Older People is:

*Older people have access to housing and services that supports their needs and promote independence.*

With the following issues needing to be addressed:

- Effective services that can provide appropriate aids and adaptations to help people retain independence.
- Supported housing
- Simpler and more effective arrangements for people who rent their homes
- Housing improvements such as the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- Energy efficiency measures
- Availability of housing options for older people and appropriate support to move.
- Alternative housing models (including retirement communities, sheltered housing and extra care) and a variety of provision.

The following indicators will be monitored:

- Number of Disabled Facilities Grants and reduced waiting times
- Number of units of support available for older persons and funded via Supporting People programme
- Number of people helped by Care & Repair services and Rapid Response Adaptations Programme

The following policies or strategies will help achieve these outcomes:

- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Renting Homes Bill (Wales) 2014
- Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013
- Framework for Action on Independent Living
- Support for Care & Repair
- Supporting People Programme
- Nest and Arbed



## **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

### **Older Persons Housing Strategy**

A key aim of the Authority's Older Person's Housing Strategy is to develop a range of flexible services to address present housing provision and to work with partners and voluntary groups to allow people to live more independent lives for longer.

The Authority has been working closely with the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board Community Resource Team and Care & Repair, to maximise older people's independence within their own homes through a range of initiatives and funding streams, and to address key issues raised in the Older Person's Housing Strategy.

A local implementation plan for the Strategy for Older People is being developed and an Ageing Well Plan through the LSB is expected by the end of October 2015, with planning groups on each of the priorities.

### **Renewals and Adaptations**

Nearly 35% of the Authority's households contain at least one older person, with 26% of households being solely occupied by older residents. The vast majority of older person households are single person households.

A recent review of the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy concluded that the targeted assistance for vulnerable, older and disabled persons should continue. The review also highlighted the success of partnership working, particularly with Swansea Care and Repair which maximises value for money when providing minor repairs and adaptations to the homes of older persons.

### **Joint Working**

The previous Local Housing Strategy (2007-2011) identified a need to contribute to the delivery of the National Service Framework (NSF) for Older People by promoting integrated working between housing and support and care services, and by linking into health and social care strategies. As a result of this work, the Authority will continue to ensure that joint commissioning of services is based on strategic priorities and assessment of need and also that joint commissioning takes advantage of opportunities to maximise resources.

The importance of housing related matters also features in the Social Services Commissioning Plan for Older Peoples Services and Housing are represented on the Age Friendly/ Dementia Sensitive group as well as the Local Service Board Ageing Well Planning Group.

### **Future Housing Provision for Older Persons**

A key aim outlined in the last strategy was to promote the housing needs and aspirations of the over 50s in the City & County of Swansea by supporting a strategic shift away from residential care and acute settings, into community-based housing, support services and preventative services. This would include extra care housing which would aim to support people to stay at home for longer by maximising the benefits of Assistive Technology and Telecare.

To contribute to achieving this aim, a review of the Hazel Court extra care complex has been completed and the findings should inform future work in this area. The Authority is working to continue to maximise the use of technology based support services as a cost effective way of providing more support to more people.

### **Adequate and Appropriate Future Housing Provision**

The previous strategy also highlighted the need to ensure a range of good quality and affordable public and private housing which meets the changing needs of older people. Since the production of the last strategy there have been a number of new social and affordable housing developments undertaken in partnership by the Authority and local Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), to provide accommodation specifically for older persons.

Some of the most recent developments include the development of 14 units of older person accommodation at the former medical centre in Clydach and also a mixed use redevelopment of St Michael's Church, Manselton, where 6 units of older person accommodation were built in the grounds of the churchyard. The above schemes were developed in partnership with Gwalia Housing Group,

Coastal Housing has undertaken the Mariner's Court development in the SA1 area of Swansea. This scheme of 80 flats allows residents to release the equity tied up in their existing home and purchase an affordable flat alleviating the worry of possible high maintenance costs in the future.

Work has also been undertaken to address the housing needs of older people with complex needs and substance misuse and Family Housing Association have developed a block of 8 units to provide housing solutions for those unable to access sheltered housing.

### **Future Developments**

The Authority will continue to strive to develop new accommodation that meet the needs of older people, be it through specific developments or through more flexible designs which allow properties to be easily adapted to reflect the changing needs of the population.

Further investment will be made in assistive technology to help people to maintain control over their lives, contribute to their independence and manage risk more effectively.

The Authority will explore options to meet the future demand for accommodation which has a care and support element; including sheltered housing schemes and dementia care services. A key feature of the provision of extra care will be the avoidance of residential care through the flexible capacity to increase 'at home' support when needed. A comprehensive review of housing provision for older persons will be undertaken by Social Services starting in late 2016 and will involve other Departments in the Council, private sector providers and third sector providers.

There are increasing numbers of older people living with a learning disability, mental illness, dementia, or with a history of homelessness, all of which require more tailored housing and associated support services. In 2010 there was an estimated 3,189 people living with dementia in Swansea over the age of 65. By 2021, it is predicted that this number will increase by 19.6% to a total of 3,814 people.

### **Social Services Commissioning Plan for Older People 2011-2014**

A detailed Commissioning Plan for Older People's Services has been developed by the Authority's Social Services Department in partnership with stakeholders. Key priorities are listed under the plan, a number of which have direct or indirect implications for older persons' housing, especially when enabling older people to remain at home for longer. For example:

- There is an aim to maximise investment in services that provide a rapid response to manage urgent unplanned care needs and provide support in a crisis which will enable people to stay at home. This should be accessible on a 24 hour basis
- The commissioning of long term domiciliary provision will be designed and evaluated in terms of its success in meeting the outcomes identified by the service user
- The Authority is keen to reshape day services to meet a wide range of needs especially supporting access to advice and information to better support people with lower level needs
- There is an aim to increase the capacity and variety in dementia care services to meet the growing need. These will be founded on a person centred and strengths based model of care, promoting human rights and the independence and emotional wellbeing of service users and will endeavour to support them to remain in their own home

### **Dublin Declaration on Age Friendly Cities and Communities in Europe 2013**

The Declaration was signed by Cabinet in February 2014 – part of the supporting pledge includes to:

*Promote and support the development of neighbourhoods and communities for all ages that are diverse, safe, inclusive and sustainable, and that include **housing** for older people that is of the highest quality. Particular attention should be given to the needs of older people in assisted living, residential care and nursing homes where their dignity and autonomy is at greater risk.*

One of the 8 domains/Essential Features of the WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities checklist, which underpins the Declaration, is in relation to housing:

- Sufficient, affordable housing is available in areas that are safe and close to services and the rest of the community
- Sufficient and affordable home maintenance and support services are available

- Housing is well-constructed and provides safe and comfortable shelter from the weather
- Interior spaces and level surfaces allow freedom of movement in all rooms and passageways
- Home modification options and supplies are available and affordable, and providers understand the needs of older people
- Public and commercial rental housing is clean, well-maintained and safe.
- Sufficient and affordable housing for frail and disabled older people, with appropriate services, is provided locally.

The implementation of the strategy and Dublin Declaration is supported by the Ageing Well in Wales Programme. The programme has five priority areas:

- Age Friendly Communities
- Dementia Supportive Communities
- Falls Prevention
- Opportunities for learning and employment
- Loneliness and Isolation

Within the priority area of Dementia Supportive Communities there is the following outcome:

*Ensure engagement of public services, such as housing and transport, with the dementia agenda.*

And within Loneliness and Isolation:

*Older people are aware of and have access to housing schemes that promote social interaction and inclusion.*

### **Areas where future joint working would be beneficial**

The Authority considers the combating of fuel poverty as an increasingly pressing issue as many residents cannot afford to heat their own homes adequately. Health studies have concluded that older people are disproportionately affected by living in fuel poverty. The Authority will continue to work in partnership with energy companies to maximise energy efficiency measures in housing of all tenures.

As outlined above, a key aim is to promote a strategic shift away from residential care into community-based housing and support services. This will require further exploration into extra care housing and increased investment in equipment and adaptations, including assistive technology and telehealth.

The Authority will continue to review the delivery of private sector housing renewal and adaptations for disabled people to ensure there is a range of good quality and affordable public and private housing which meets the changing needs of older people.

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

In order to meet the housing needs of older people, the Authority will need to:

- Monitor and evaluate the work of existing extra care housing schemes in order to assess whether it would be beneficial to fund further schemes
- Continue to ensure that all frontline staff undertake training with respect to the Equality Act 2010
- Work with housing developers to ensure adequate and appropriate future housing provision
- Promote safety and accessibility in the home in partnership with other statutory and third sector agencies
- Promote and support property maintenance and repairs in partnership with third sector organisations
- Support the tackling of fuel poverty in partnership with third sector organisations
- Work closely with Social Services and Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board in exploring the development of more flexible, responsive and localised domiciliary support at home
- Further investigate the potential for assistive technology and associated support services to help older people, particularly those living with dementia, to remain in their own home
- Ensure all frontline staff have a better understanding of how to support people living with dementia, including a positive approach to managing risk, so that obstacles which prevent people remaining at home can be overcome
  - Support work on the appropriate objectives within the Strategy for Older People Development Plan and Ageing Well Plan (in particular creating Age Friendly and Dementia supportive communities)
- Undertake a review of housing provision for older persons which will involve relevant Council Departments, private sector providers and third sector providers.



## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.4 Black and Minority Ethnic Groups (BME)

**The One Swansea Plan**

People are healthy, safe and independent

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### The Current Situation

##### Current Population

Over the past 20 years the population in Swansea has become more diverse and its Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities have nearly trebled in size. In December 2012, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) published the official 2011 Census population figures by ethnic group for Local Authorities in England & Wales.

The 2011 Census data suggests that an estimated 14,326 people in Swansea were from a non-white ethnic group, around 6.0% of the total population; higher than the equivalent figure for Wales (4.4%) and the third highest percentage of the 22 local authorities in Wales. However, these proportions are much lower than the equivalent figure for England and Wales combined (14.0%).

In 2011, 20,368 (8.5%) of Swansea's population were non-'White British' (i.e. also including other white ethnic groups); above the Wales average (6.8%) and again third highest of the Welsh LAs, but below England & Wales (19.5%).

Over the period 2001 to 2011, the proportion of people in Swansea from a non-White ethnic group increased from around 2% of the population to 6%, an overall increase of approximately 9,500 (+198%). The number of non-'White British' increased over this period by 10,800 (+113%). Both figures exceed the equivalent increases for Wales (+118% and +78%) and England & Wales (+70% and +65%).

The 2011 Census data suggests that the largest non-white ethnic groups are:

- Chinese – 2,052 people (0.9% of Swansea's population)
- Bangladeshi – 1,944 (0.8%)
- Other Asian – 1,739 (0.7%)
- Black African – 1,707 (0.7%)
- Arab – 1,694 (0.7%)

Amongst the non-white ethnic groups, the largest estimated increases in population between 2001 and 2011 were in the Black African (+1,500 approx.), Bangladeshi and Indian groups (both +900). There was also a significant numerical increase in

the 'Other-White' population of 1,400 (+40%), mainly reflecting the inflow of economic migrants from Eastern Europe since the beginning of EU Accession in 2003. Other minority groups which had very low populations in 2001 have seen significant growth in proportionate terms, for example, the Pakistani population has increased by 89% to 591. +89% (to 591).

Growth in the Bangladeshi ethnic group, long regarded as the largest non-white ethnic group in Swansea, has continued between 2001 and 2011, almost doubling (+94%) over the period. However the latest estimates suggest that the Chinese ethnic group is now larger than the Bangladeshi population in Swansea.

Amongst children, the ONS estimates suggest that the numbers aged 5-15 from non-white ethnic groups increased from around 1,000 in 2001 to 4,500 in 2011 (Census). The latest Swansea data from the Schools' Census (PLASC) suggests that the proportion of the school population who are not white-British increased from around 7.5% in 2004 to 11.3% in 2013 (around 4,100 pupils).

Ward level breakdowns of Swansea's population by ethnic group are also available from the 2011 Census. The largest ethnic minority populations were recorded in the urban wards of Uplands (2,091), Castle (3,202) and Sketty (1,323). In proportionate terms, Castle and Uplands both record ethnic minority populations of above 10%. Within wards, the 2011 Census data also reveals evidence of distinct ethnic group clusters, for example, the Arabic population in the Castle, Sketty and Uplands areas. However, these are also areas with high numbers of students and while it is important that the housing needs of BME students are considered, it is important that this is not confused with the housing needs of the rest of Swansea's BME population. The two groups may have different needs, use different parts of the housing sector and require different long term planning and action.

The following table provides information from the 2011 Census that will be useful in understanding how the housing sector in Swansea is used by those of different ethnic groups at present. For example, those in the Other White category are more likely to live in private rented accommodation than White British households. Also those from Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British ethnic groups are more likely to live in the social rented sector. While this data will not give indications as to the reasons behind this, it helps understanding of the current use of housing in Swansea and enable future consultation aimed at removing barriers that may exist preventing individuals from accessing certain parts of the housing sector and understand future needs of groups.



Fig 5 Different housing tenures used by BME population in Swansea

<b>Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Owned: Owned outright</b>	<b>Owned: Owned with a mortgage or loan or shared ownership</b>	<b>Social rented: Rented from council (Local Authority)</b>	<b>Social rented: Other social rented</b>	<b>Private rented: Private landlord or letting agency</b>	<b>Private rented: Other private rented or living rent free</b>
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	33,517	30,188	12,075	6,173	10,904	2,950
White: Irish	176	172	50	45	109	31
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	3	3	4	3	6	1
White: Other White	353	414	233	174	771	69
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black Caribbean	22	53	38	19	47	7
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Black African	6	8	13	10	20	6
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: White and Asian	20	50	24	15	40	11
Mixed/multiple ethnic group: Other Mixed	16	41	40	23	49	11
Asian/Asian British: Indian	74	221	15	9	180	19
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	14	60	19	9	36	13
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	56	256	44	23	71	20
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	123	131	25	61	359	65
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	50	174	72	27	186	46
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	30	70	265	74	286	59
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	17	24	19	17	24	7
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other Black	4	6	9	4	11	0
Other ethnic group: Arab	70	82	57	38	474	31
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	25	38	102	50	115	18

Source: Census Data 2011- tenure by ethnic group by age

This data enables the Authority to address potential options for some. For example, groups less likely to own their own homes such as Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British groups may be able to access other forms of housing, such as affordable housing or intermediate renting/purchase options.

### **Quality of Accommodation**

The Authority has an important role in ensuring those from BME communities in Swansea are able to access appropriate accommodation that meets their needs. Research by the Institute for Public Policy Research found that over a third of privately rented homes were of a poor quality standard and that the private sector was the most expensive renting option. Given those from BME communities in Swansea are more likely to rent than others, this will have a disproportionate impact on these communities and underlines need for appropriate action to be taken by the local authority to ensure the private rented sector complies with appropriate standards. Environmental Health and HMO licensing will play an important role in this, in accordance with the measures detailed in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

### **Asylum Seekers and Refugees**

Asylum Seekers and Refugees may face similar issues to people from Black and Minority Ethnic people but they do not form one homogenous group; they come from many different countries and speak different languages, representing at least 100 different nationalities.

Swansea was designated a dispersal area for Asylum Seekers in 2000. By March 2012 an estimated 690 lead applicant asylum seekers lived in Swansea and there were 204 Asylum Seekers resident in Council properties.

In October 2012 Ready Homes (part of the Clearsprings Group) took over the contract from the Home Office to supply accommodation for Asylum Seekers. The Authority, however, through the work of one full time refugee resettlement officer, continue to offer refugee resettlement support for those former Asylum Seekers who received a positive decision on their case and moved to Council properties.

The Housing Service has long established working relationships with relevant third sector organisations and Social Services to meet the needs of asylum seekers and well as refugees.

### **Gypsy and Traveller Communities**

There are several Gypsy & Traveller communities residing in the Swansea area; there is one official Council site, a tolerated site, and on various private sites. It is important to establish whether these communities have any accommodation needs; be it the need for more plots for family members, more pitches or exploring the possibility of moving into bricks & mortar accommodation. These needs are recorded via Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs surveys that are undertaken on a bi-annual basis. 2011 Census figures state there are currently 95 Gypsy & Travellers residing in the Swansea area. However, due to the transient nature of these community groups the population figures could be higher or lower than indicated on

any given day. More comprehensive information regarding Gypsy & Traveller communities can be found later in this strategy.

## **Religion**

The 2011 Census is also the latest definitive source of information on religion. Christianity remains the predominant religion in Swansea (55%); although 34% held no religious beliefs and 7% did not answer (as the Census question on religion is voluntary). Of the groups listed, 5,415 people (2%) stated their religion as Muslim.

Information from the 2011 Census on the distribution of non-Christian religion by Ward again sees the greatest numbers in Castle (2,049), Uplands (1,208) and Sketty (886). In proportionate terms, the wards of Castle (13%), Uplands and Landore (both 8%) have the highest rates of population with a non-Christian religion.

Religion plays an important role in the choice of area, for example, the high concentration of Muslims in the Castle and Uplands wards may be attributed to a Mosque being within walking distance. Places of worship can be good indicators for people's choices of areas. Therefore, the Authority should ensure there is good quality and appropriate accommodation that meet the needs of communities in these localities.

## **Public Sector Equality Duty**

Race and equality duties have become more mainstreamed since numerous anti-discrimination laws were combined into one single act- the Equality Act 2010.

The Act protects people from discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (in employment), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. These are known as "protected characteristics".

A new Welsh Public Sector Equality Duty was introduced as part of the Act. Part of this duty requires the Council, in the exercise of its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The duty also requires all public authorities to produce a strategic equality plan containing set equality objectives. The City & County of Swansea's strategic equality plan 2012-2016 sets out how we will build on our previous equality and diversity scheme and our arrangements for meeting the new legislative duties. We are required to publish annual equality and diversity review reports which demonstrate our progress against the equality objectives and include details of additional work we have undertaken throughout the year.

The plan also has close links with a number of key council strategies and plans such as the Community Strategy.

### **Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs)**

The City & County of Swansea, like all other public authorities in Wales, has a legal duty to assess all its proposed functions, policies and procedures for their impact on protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

The Council's EIA process also covers other areas including:

- Welsh language
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Poverty
- Community Cohesion
- Carers

The impact assessment enables the Council to:

- Identify and address possible discrimination
- Avoid or remove any inequalities
- Improve the services provided
- Improve customer access and relationships

### **Hate Crime**

People may be targeted, bullied, harassed or have a crime committed against them because of their age, disability, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, gender (including gender identity) or lifestyle choice (e.g. Goth) and these are termed hate crimes or hate incidents.

Victim Support has been funded by the Welsh Government as the official National Hater Crime Report and Support Centre for Wales. They have introduced a new single reporting mechanism and process for ensuring victims receive support and can report hate.

In October 2014, the Council introduced Victim Support's reporting process to replace the Housing Service's Hate and Harassment reporting procedure. New leaflets and posters have been distributed to District Housing Offices and the website has been updated. Staff have been updated on the charges.

### **Equality Monitoring**

It is very important to incorporate equality into service monitoring. Without this, it would be difficult to establish the nature or extent of inequalities, the areas where action is most needed, and whether the measures aimed at reducing inequality are succeeding.

The monitoring of customers using services provided by housing is mainly done by using the 'About You' monitoring form and also by recording information directly onto the housing register.

The About You monitoring form was introduced at Corporate level in 2008. The form has been tailored to suit the Housing Service and results are collated and distributed throughout the service on a regular basis. The collation of About You statistics by the Housing Service began in October 2008 and the latest results were captured in January 2015. Since the inception of About You 7041 customer's details have been analysed with 4.8% from BME communities and 9.3% of unknown ethnicity. The BME figure for using the Housing Service (4.8%) is lower than the overall BME population in Swansea. This could indicate that members of BME communities do not need, are not able to access, do not use or do not want to use the service. It should also be noted that taking part in equality monitoring is optional, with someone choosing to or not to take part. Effective monitoring can help to establish and clarify these reasons.

The About You monitoring form also records the languages spoken on a day to day basis. English is the main language used and there are a number of 'other' languages, recorded with Polish and Arabic being the most popular. There are 60 other individual languages/dialects recorded. The Housing Service also monitors the use of Wales Interpretation and Translation Service (WITS) and the Big Word on an annual basis to compare the different languages requested.

The Housing register is used exclusively by the Housing Service and the ethnicity and main/preferred language of applicants (including current tenants) who apply for housing should be recorded on the system. Doing so will evidence the ethnicity of all prospective tenants and subsequently all applicants who then become tenants. However, the current levels of monitoring via the register make it difficult to establish a true record of how many housing applicants and tenants are from BME communities.

The Housing Service is keen to focus on the monitoring of ethnicity to better establish the nature or extent of inequality, and/or the areas where action is most needed. Initiatives to improve the monitoring of ethnicity will be introduced in 2015/16 such as a relaunch of the 'About You' form monitoring to also include new protected characteristics.

### **Housing Options Service**

The Housing Options Service monitors the ethnicity of all families and individuals that approach the Homelessness Service. These statistics are robust and formulate part of the homelessness statistics required by the Welsh Government. Figures recorded show that there were 2,665 homeless decisions made during 2011/12, of which 200 were of 'Non-White' ethnicity (3.75%). However, the way these statistics are recorded could be improved upon as currently 'specific' ethnic groups are not recorded. Whilst it does appear that a disproportionately low number of people from BME communities use the homeless service without more specific monitoring of BME groups using the same it is difficult to understand why this is so.

Essentially all the statistics recorded for housing services emphasise that Swansea's BME population is growing and becoming more cosmopolitan with an increasing amount of diverse ethnicities and languages. Therefore, it is important to monitor this effectively, to ensure services are sensitive, knowledgeable, accessible and relevant.

## Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy

- An agreement was made between the Housing Options Service and Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council (SBREC) that if requested and/or required, housing advice/ homeless interviews with people from BME communities could be held at the SBREC offices
- There were ongoing reviews with RSL partners regarding potential city centre BME development opportunities; identifying areas of Swansea where BME communities were most likely to reside and whether there was suitable accommodation available. For example, Family Housing Association committed to the building of two larger than standard properties earmarked for larger BME family groups
- The Asylum Seekers and Refugee Team have provided accommodation and support services for Asylum Seekers and Refugees, in accordance with the contractual obligations of the UK Border Agency up until October 2012 when Ready Homes took over the contract
- In May 2010, the City and County of Swansea was the first local authority to become a partner in WITS. This service provides all translation and interpretation requirements directly for written and face to face interviews and indirectly via *'thebigword'* telephone interpretation service
- The Housing Service is committed to ensure that all front line Housing staff receive Equalities training, which includes raising awareness of the Equality Act 2010
- The 'About You' monitoring format was devised, initially at corporate level and was then adapted by the Housing Service. The About You monitoring form enables the Housing Service to monitor a number of protected characteristics of all people who use the Council's housing services
- SBREC devised and delivered their "Not On Our Estate" initiative, which targeted four Council Housing Estate areas (Townhill, Blaenymaes, Sketty and Dyfatty), with the aim of eradicating racism and to increase reporting of hate crime
- Hate Crime articles have been included in the tenants' magazine, Open House and Housing Service staff Team Information Sheets

## Future Developments

### Swansea Bay Regional Equality Council (SBREC) Recommendations

The SBREC have made recommendations for the future, some of which build on previous suggestions:

- The Housing Service should continue to reinforce the terms and conditions of tenancy agreements, with the overall objective of further reducing racial harassment. In addition, the housing service should build on established links with the Police, Victim Support's Hate Crime Project, SBREC, Welsh Refugee Council and others in order to address harassment and racism experienced by people from BME communities
- The Housing Service should research, consult and establish why people from BME communities prefer to live in certain areas of Swansea. This will enable the service to anticipate future BME population trends and to subsequently target resources at expanding communities, for example, the Bangladeshi community tends to cluster in the Hafod area of the City, whereas the Chinese or Sikh communities are more dispersed
- Some BME communities (Indian, Arab) traditionally have larger families and RSLs could try to be more flexible with their allocation policy- for example, allocating two accommodation units rather than one
- The Housing Service and the SBREC recognise that although the monitoring of ethnicity for those using the Council's Housing Service has improved, there are still strides that can be made
- The Chinese Community Centre have approached the Housing Service and Social Services to request assistance in undertaking a survey of the housing and care needs of the Chinese population in Swansea. This is as a result of their concern regarding the ageing Chinese population in Swansea and the challenges this will present. This survey could be used as a template when the Housing Service considers how to meet the future needs of other BME groups with ageing populations
- The Housing Services should be more pro-active in the raising awareness of Hate Crimes, both to its staff and to its customers. Any such ventures could be undertaken with SBREC, Victim Support's Hate Crime Project and South Wales Police

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

- Reinforce tenancy conditions to current tenants, strengthen racial harassment clause in the Tenancy Agreement
- Undertake research to establish why BME Communities prefer to live in certain areas which will allow more accurate targeting of resources
- The Council to hold discussions with RSLs regarding the possibility of them introducing a more flexible approach to allocation and accommodation policies
- Improvements to be made to the ethnic monitoring of people utilising the Council's Housing Services

- Assist the Chinese Community Centre to undertake a housing and care need assessment of the Chinese population of Swansea
- Ensure the needs of Asylum Seekers are addressed by the new Communities First Cluster areas and integrated into community cohesion work undertaken by the Council
- Use data that is collated as part of equality monitoring and use consultation with affected groups to improve services to BME communities and remove barriers that may create inequalities



## Chapter 6

### Addressing the Housing Needs of Specific Groups

#### 6.5 Gypsies & Travellers

**The One Swansea Plan**

People have good places to live and work

**Housing Service Objective**

Addressing the needs of all service users

#### The Current Situation

##### Introduction

Addressing the accommodation needs of Gypsies & Travellers in Wales is a stated aim of the Welsh Government.

The Authority currently has one authorised Gypsy & Traveller site located at Ty Gwyn in the Llansamlet area of the City and County. The Gypsies & Travellers on the site are required to pay rent and Council Tax to the Council.

In addition to the authorised site, there is a 'tolerated' site at the Park & Ride site in Swansea Vale. The number of caravans on this site can vary greatly over time.

The most recent Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment (GTAA) identified a need for 10 additional pitches but no clear need for Transit Site provision.

There has been a resident Gypsy & Traveller population in Swansea for at least the past 25 years. The only official site is located at Ty Gwyn, Llansamlet. The site accommodates 7 pitches, has a good standard of associated facilities and is usually at full capacity. There are several private sites in Swansea but not a current recognised need for such additional site provision, according to the GTAA 2013.

The Council has historically had to manage a number of unauthorised encampments, which tend to be on Council owned land in the Llansamlet area. The families unlawfully parking on Council and sometimes private land are not provided with any facilities and normally equates to around 5 caravans (Official WG Caravan Count, Jan 2015 recorded the figure as 3).

In addition, there is a tolerated site in Llansamlet, which has limited toilet and washing facilities, that was afforded such status following a High Court ruling in which the Council failed to gain a possession order. It is clear that until the Gypsies & Travellers gain access to an official site, the Council will be unlikely to gain a possession order for this location.

According to the most recent Official Welsh Government Caravan Count, which took place in January 2015, there were 13 caravans at the site. The site was created to facilitate moving the family from their previously tolerated location at the Park & Ride site, Llansamlet. This enabled the Lower Swansea Valley Flood Risk Management Scheme to be implemented, which involved large scale works on the Park & Ride site.

The numbers of caravans and people residing at the tolerated site can fluctuate but there is an extended family who reside there on a “permanent” basis. Any additional persons would be visiting family members as the aforementioned High Court ruling prevents anyone else other than those named in the ruling from living on the tolerated site.

There is currently no official Transit Site provision within the County and no clear identified need for such facility in the immediate future. This is also the case from a regional perspective whereby both Carmarthenshire and Neath Port Talbot Councils have concluded that there isn't a clear need for such provision. From a national context it is clear from evidence that the demand for such facilities is within the counties of Cardiff, Newport and Pembrokeshire.

In March 2010, Cabinet resolved to start the search for a new site(s). In order to engage Members on a cross party basis, a Member led Task and Finish Group was formed to work with a multi-disciplinary group of officers in applying agreed criteria as part of a sifting process. The Task and Finish Group received regular progress reports on the process undertaken that examined all Council owned land against a set of criteria as agreed by Cabinet. In line with established need, the work focussed on making site provision to accommodate 1-12 pitches with the capability of being sympathetically expanded to approximately 20 as in accordance with Welsh Government guidance. This work was completed in 2013 but failed to reach a decision on an appropriate site(s) and the search process followed is subject of ongoing review by a Scrutiny Committee.

### **Understanding the Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers**

The Authority is committed to furthering its understanding of the needs and requirements of Gypsies & Travellers in the City and County.

During 2013 a GTAA was undertaken in accordance with Welsh Government's Guidance. The Assessment identified a need for 10 pitches within the City and County. In addition the Assessment is required to look at maximum 'potential' demand for pitches over the next 5 years taking into account cultural factors, such as younger teenage Gypsies & Travellers that will turn 18 in the next 5 years might want a pitch of their own to start their own family unit. This part of the Assessment identified the likelihood of more pitches being required in the future.

In addition to the above, there is a requirement to accommodate the potential need over the LDP Plan period (up to 2025). However, it is important to note that not all younger Gypsies & Travellers currently living with their parents will want to marry at an early age and start their own family unit and some of those who do may elect to move away from Swansea.

### **The Housing (Wales) Act 2014**

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to undertake a GTAA and includes a duty of Local Authorities to provide sites for Gypsies & Travellers where a need has been identified in those Assessments. The Act is in force, having received Royal Assent on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014. This requires all Authorities to undertake a GTAA by February 2016. However, the majority of its provisions still need to be brought into effect by further commencement orders by the Welsh Ministers. The Gypsy & Traveller elements of the Act are anticipated to be enforceable from March 2016 whereby the need for sites has been identified but not met, Welsh Ministers will have the power to compel Local Authorities to provide sites for Gypsy & Traveller communities. Sites will need planning permission in the same way as any other development.

### **Welsh Government Circular 30/2007- Planning for Gypsy & Traveller Caravan Sites**

Circular 30/2007 states that where there is an assessment of unmet need for Gypsy & Traveller accommodation in an area, the Local Planning Authority (LPA) should allocate sufficient sites in its LDP to ensure that the identified pitch requirements for residential and transit use can be met. The LPA will need to demonstrate that sites are suitable, and that there is a realistic likelihood that the specific sites allocated in LDP will be made available for that purpose. This helps to provide certainty for all concerned when planning applications are determined by LPAs, or, appeals are considered.

### **The Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2014**

The Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2014 came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2014. It updates the existing legislation, originally put in place in the 1960s for residential mobile homes.

The new legislation required the licence agreements for Gypsies & Traveller residing on the authorised site to be revised and this exercise has been completed.

### **Key Achievements since the previous Local Housing Strategy**

Between 2009 and 2012 the Authority made successful bids to the Welsh Government for grant funding to improve the authorised Gypsy & Traveller site at Ty Gwyn.

As a result of this grant funding, considerable improvements have been made to the environment of the site and the level and quality of the facilities available. The improvements include;

- The refurbishment of the service blocks
- Fencing and gates for each pitch
- Site perimeter fencing
- Drainage improvements to the site
- 2 upgrades to the playground facilities
- Improvements to the drainage of the site
- The introduction of a range of fire safety measures

- Speed ramps on the approach road to the site
- Extensions to Service blocks
- Solar Panels installed on Service Blocks

## **Future Developments**

In order to comply with the Welsh Government's new Housing Act, the Authority plans to undertake a GTAA before February 2016 so that the conclusions gained can further inform the requirements of the forthcoming LDP. This would require an additional analysis of the potential pitch requirements over the Plan period (up to 2025).

In recognition of the potential need for an additional authorised site, the Authority is currently reviewing its approach to site location assessment.

## **Summary of Main Objectives**

- A new GTAA will be undertaken and is likely to commence September 2015.