



# Swansea Council

## Homelessness Strategy Final for Cabinet Approval

2018-2022

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## Introduction from Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy, Councillor Andrea Lewis



A fundamental belief running through all my work as Councillor and Cabinet Member is that everyone in Swansea should be able to live in a good quality, affordable home and that this is needed in order for people to realise their personal ambitions for themselves and their families. Many people who are threatened with homelessness are able to find housing for themselves, however some can find themselves excluded from society, unable to secure employment or training, unable to secure vital services and at risk of ill health.

This is Swansea's Homelessness Strategy and it is a framework for tackling and preventing homelessness in the area. Although the responsibility to publish this strategy lies with the Council, there are a wide range of partners involved, including: support and accommodation providers, service users, advice agencies, Health Board, GPs, the Police, the third sector and local authority services such as Housing, Social Services, Supporting People, Education and Poverty & Prevention. This strategy is the result of the commitment of the homelessness sector to tackling homelessness in Swansea and I extend my gratitude to all the organisations and individuals that have contributed.

The extent and complexity of the issues that face the Council and its partners over the next four years should not be under-estimated. However, we will strive to address these challenges in partnership, ensuring that the people of Swansea are able to access safe, secure and sustainable accommodation. The strategy seeks to further strengthen the partnership approach to tackling homelessness in Swansea and to continue to make significant improvements across homelessness services.

However publishing a strategy is the easy bit. Its success will depend on the commitment of the homelessness sector to delivering the vision it puts forward. I believe that if we, as a sector, remain committed to achieving the aims and objectives contained within this strategy, we can make a noticeable impact in terms of preventing homelessness and reducing the effect an episode of homelessness can have on a person's life.

Of course, homelessness cannot be solved by simply securing housing. Tackling homelessness is the responsibility of the Council as a corporate body and has major implications for us delivering on our corporate goals to safeguard vulnerable people and children and to tackle poverty. We will ensure that homelessness continues to hold a high priority at a corporate level and is recognised by other plans and strategies that affect the lives of homeless people.

Making this strategy work is vitally important. The impact of homelessness is not confined to just homeless people, it affects their families, children and everyone in our communities and I am pleased that the Council is able to continue to play its part in seeking solutions.

## 1. Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy sets out the guiding principles for the development and delivery of homelessness services in Swansea over the next four years. It will ensure that the services and support in place for those at risk of, or experiencing homelessness are as effective and accessible as possible. It also aims to inform stakeholders of the levels of homelessness in Swansea and provide a baseline to measure future progress and performance.

This Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan have been developed in response to the findings of the Homelessness Review 2017, which provided a comprehensive understanding of homelessness across Swansea. The review identified issues and gaps in service provision, which the Strategy will seek to address. The main findings of the review are summarised in section 9. This strategy has also been developed as a result of extensive consultation with service users and stakeholders to ensure that it accurately captures the needs and aspirations of all those involved with and experiencing homelessness in Swansea.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

### 2.1 Strategic aim and objectives

The aim of Swansea's Homelessness Strategy is to ensure that every person has access to good quality advice, accommodation and support at the earliest possible opportunity in order to prevent homelessness.

This Strategy is intended to increase the ability of the Council and its partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible. Prevention through early identification and intervention, as well as equitable and easy access to services, will reduce homelessness. Where it cannot be prevented, the Strategy aims to minimise the distress of the experience through rapid and robust service responses. This will be achieved through adoption of the following five objectives:

**Objective 1:** Ensuring service users are at the centre of service delivery

**Objective 2:** Prioritising early intervention and prevention of homelessness

**Objective 3:** Ensuring suitable accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless

**Objective 4:** Ensuring appropriate support is available for people who are or may become homeless

**Objective 5:** Providing robust responses to support rough sleepers and eliminating the need for individuals to sleep rough

### 3. Key Principles

In order to successfully deliver its objectives and aims this strategy will:

- Safeguard people from harm
- Ensure equality of access to services and promote social inclusion and community cohesion
- Maximise the resources available to deal with homelessness
- Encourage and promote local partnership and regional working, where appropriate, in order to make the best use of resources
- Work in line with the five ways of working set out in the Future Generations Wellbeing Act
- Uphold the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

### 4. Definitions

#### 4.1 Definition of homelessness

The legal definition of homelessness is set out in Section 55 of Housing (Wales) Act 2014. It states that a person is homeless if they, together with anyone who normally resides with them, have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere, which they have a legal right to occupy. A person is also homeless if he or she has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or the accommodation is a moveable structure, vehicle or vessel adapted for human habitation (such as a caravan or houseboat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person shall not be treated as having accommodation unless it is accommodation that it would be reasonable for that person to continue to occupy. A person is threatened with homelessness if it is likely that the person will become homeless within 56 days.

It is essential that there is consensus between partners on a common definition of homelessness and it is also important that this definition is broad and encompasses all possible forms of homelessness. Therefore, for the purpose of this Strategy, the broader Welsh Government definitions of homelessness and rough sleeping have been adopted:

***“Where a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure”***

*This includes:*

- *Sleeping rough/squatting*
- *Living in insecure/temporary housing (excluding assured/assured short-hold tenants)*
- *Living in short term hostels, night shelters, direct access hostels*
- *Living in bed and breakfasts*
- *Moving frequently between relatives/friends*
- *Unable to remain in or return to housing due to poor conditions, overcrowding, unaffordability, domestic abuse, harassment, mental, physical and/or sexual abuse*
- *Accommodation does not meet the needs of people with; physical or learning disabilities, sensory impairments or mental health conditions*
- *Threatened with losing their home without suitable alternative accommodation for any reason e.g. domestic abuse*
- *Leaving hospitals, police custody, prisons, the armed forces and other institutions or supported housing without a home to go to*
- *Required to leave by family or friends or due to relationship breakdown*
- *Within 56 days of the end of tenancy, facing possession proceeding or threat of eviction.*

## 4.2 Definition of rough sleeping

***“People who are sleeping or bedded down, in the open air; people in buildings or other places not designed for habitation”***

*This includes:*

- *Sleeping on the streets or in doorways, parks, bus shelters*
- *Sleeping in buildings not designed for habitation such as squats, tents, makeshift shelters, cars, sheds, barns, derelict boats, stations or car parks.*

## 5. National Context

### 5.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is Wales’ first piece of housing legislation and its purpose is to improve the supply, quality and standards of housing in Wales. This included a reform of homelessness law, which placed a stronger duty on local authorities to prevent homelessness (within 56 days) and allowed the use of the private rented sector to discharge statutory homelessness duties. The Act also places a responsibility on all local authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy in 2018, which will set out how they plan to tackle homelessness in their area over a four year period.

### 5.2 Other relevant plans

Other relevant plans, which have been considered as part of the development of the strategy include:

- The Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales 2009-2019
- Welsh Government Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2018-20
- National Housing Strategy – Improving Lives and Communities – Homes in Wales
- Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014
- Wales Audit Office Report “How Local Government manages demand – Homelessness” January 2018

The Welsh Government has identified the following key priorities for tackling homelessness in Wales:

- Rough sleeping – with a particular emphasis on following a Housing First approach.
- Youth homelessness
- Improving use of the private rented sector
- Mental health

These are issues that have also been identified by Swansea’s Homelessness Review. The objectives of the Strategy are intended to be broad and to cover all household types and equalities groups, therefore they do not reference specific groups. However, the accompanying Action Plan contains a range of measures intended to address the key homelessness issues identified by Welsh Government, in addition to the specific local needs identified by the review, and to ensure that services are accessible, appropriate and responsive to all groups.

### 5.3 Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Act requires public bodies to carry out their functions in a sustainable way which improves economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being. Tackling

homelessness is an essential element in achieving the well-being of future generations. Homelessness prevention is a Well-being of Future Generations national indicator therefore is a key contributor to the Welsh Government's national goals. These are: a prosperous Wales; a resilient Wales; a more equal Wales; a Wales of more cohesive; communities; a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language; a healthier Wales; a globally responsible Wales. The Act also sets out five ways of working:

- **Preventing problems from occurring or from getting worse:** the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has placed a firm emphasis on the prevention of homelessness. The Homelessness Service has adapted well to meet the new requirements and the strategy reinforces this with an objective to prioritise early intervention and prevention of homelessness.
- **Addressing long-term challenges:** The Strategy ensures an emphasis on helping households to secure long term, sustainable accommodation appropriate for their needs and maintain their tenancies through effective support. The Strategy also has a specific focus on rough sleeping which is the most extreme form of homelessness.
- **Working in partnership with others:** Partnership working is fundamental to this Strategy. Many people have multiple needs that extend beyond the basic need for a home. It is not possible for the Council to meet those needs in isolation. It is therefore essential to work in partnership in order to prevent homelessness and offer sustainable housing solutions.
- **Avoiding conflicts between public body objectives:** The Council is aware that any changes to its services may have an impact on its partners and other public bodies. The consultation process undertaken to develop the strategy provided partners with the opportunity to advise whether the Strategy would have a positive, negative or neutral impact on their own objectives.
- **Involving people:** The Strategy recognises the importance of involvement through a specific objective to establish service users at the centre of service delivery, and a commitment to ensure that principles of co-production are incorporated in the design and delivery of services.

## 6. Local Strategic Context

### 6.1 Swansea Public Service Board and Local Well-Being Plan

As part of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, every council in Wales is legally required to have a Public Services Board, a partnership of public service agencies, whose purpose is to work collectively to improve local social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being. Each Public Service Board is required to carry out an Assessment of Well-being to understand current levels of well-being and what matters most to local communities and to produce a plan in order to improve well-being.

Following the Assessment of Well-being in Swansea, the Local Well-being Plan has been produced which contains the high-level priorities that the Swansea Public Service Board has identified as being the most important, these are:

- **Early Years** – To make sure children have the best start in life to be the best they can be

- **Live Well, Age Well** – To make Swansea a great place to live and age well
- **Working with Nature** – To improve health, enhance biodiversity and reduce our carbon
- **Strong Communities** – To empower communities promoting pride and belonging

Housing is a key theme within the plan and the Homelessness Strategy supports the delivery of some of the drivers identified to achieve the Well-being objectives, including:

- Ensuring children have the best start in life by enabling families to live in a good standard of housing
- Contributing to ensuring that people live well and age well by enabling people to live in safe, good quality homes and providing support so that people can get information, advice and help.

## 6.2 Corporate Vision and Priorities

Preventing homelessness is a fundamental function of the Council and an essential element of achieving Swansea's vision "*To create a safer, greener, smarter, fairer, healthier and richer Swansea.*" The strategy reflects the corporate priorities of:

- **Safeguarding** people from harm - so that our citizens are free from harm and exploitation
- Improving **Education and Skills** - so that every child and young person in Swansea gains the skills and qualifications they need to succeed in life
- Transforming our **Economy and Infrastructure** - so that Swansea has a thriving mixed use City Centre and a local economy that will support the prosperity of our citizens
- **Tackling Poverty** - so that every person in Swansea can achieve his or her potential
- Maintaining and enhancing Swansea's **natural resources and biodiversity** - so that we maintain and enhance biodiversity, reduce our carbon footprint, improve our knowledge and understanding of our natural environment and benefit health and well-being
- **Transformation and Future Council** development - so that we and the services that we provide are sustainable and fit for the future

In particular, the Strategy contributes to tackling poverty and safeguarding people from harm. It is essential that the Council provides a high quality homeless service so that it is able to protect the most vulnerable people in Swansea.

## 6.3 Links to local plans & strategies

There are a number of key local strategic links that the Homelessness Strategy needs to make in order to be fully effective including:

- Local Housing Strategy 2015-20
- Local Housing Market Assessment 2015
- More Homes Strategy
- Supporting People Regional Strategic Plan 2017-18
- Supporting People Regional Substance Misuse Plan.
- Western Bay Area Plan 2018-23
- Health of Homelessness & Vulnerable Groups Action Plan 2017/18
- Prevention Strategy 2018-21



- Poverty Strategy 2018-20
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy 2018-22
- Safer Swansea Strategy 2018 -2021

The Strategy and Action Plan have been developed in partnership with the stakeholders responsible for these strategies and plans and the Action Plan reflects needs and priorities they have identified.

## **7. How Homelessness Services are Delivered in Swansea**

### **7.1 Funding**

The numbers of households requiring homelessness advice and assistance is unlikely to reduce in the coming years and recently the Homelessness Service has been under considerable pressure in implementing the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and adapting to the changes in service, which are required. The service is funded via the Council's General Fund and has therefore been under the same financial pressures as all other areas of the Council, and has been required to make savings, whilst continuing to manage high levels of demand and maintain a high quality service. However, as part of the implementation of new Act, the Welsh Government provided Transitional Funding to local authorities in recognition of the increased resources required to meet the new duties.

This funding has been fundamental in enabling the Council to achieve high levels of homelessness prevention and to develop innovative solutions to tackle homelessness. The funding has been used to provide the following:

- Prevention Fund – e.g. to provide rent in advance, admin fees, rent guarantees, cash bonds and to cover debt and arrears.
- Prevention Caseworker post
- Rough Sleeper research
- Youth Homelessness research
- Private rented sector tenancy support

The Welsh Government has committed to providing additional funding for the prevention of homelessness for 2018/19 and 2019/20. This money is essential to the Council's achievement of the aims, objectives and actions set out in this strategy and to sustain the high levels of homelessness prevention work.

### **7.2 Housing Options**

The Council fulfils its statutory homelessness duties through the provision of Housing Options. This is the Council's Housing Advice Service, which provides free advice and information including: homelessness, access to temporary accommodation for qualifying households, applying for council housing, renting privately, debt/money advice, access to housing association accommodation and specialised accommodation for people with disabilities. The service identifies support needs and refers to the Tenancy Support Unit to ensure vulnerable households are able to maintain their tenancies. The Homeless Service is provided by a team of homelessness officers, plus specialists in areas such as money advice, ex-offenders and refugees.

### **7.3 Youth Homelessness**

Services for young people are provided through a collaborative partnership between the Council and Barnardo's who provide the service to young people aged 16 – 20 who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The purpose of the service is to support

the holistic needs of young people and to provide a “one stop shop” approach for young people. BAYS+ @ Info-Nation consists of a multi-agency, multi-disciplinary team including staff from both Barnardo’s, Social Services and Housing co-located in one building, including:

- The provision of Social Workers to assess and where appropriate case manage young people who are Children In Need, Looked After Children or Care Leavers
- The provision of Personal Advisors to support young people who are Looked After Children or Care Leavers (this service can be provided up to the age of 25).
- The (non-statutory) assessment and support of young people who present with accommodation issues including the Welsh Government funded Home Support and Mediation Service
- A bed & breakfast prevention service (with access to the Homelessness Prevention Fund) and supported lodgings scheme
- Also present in the building are elements of the Youth Service and the Youth Drug Service

Young people who are aged 16 or 17 are seen by a Social Worker, who carries out an assessment of their accommodation needs and provides advice and assistance. For young people who are 18 - 20 they will be seen by a Youth Homeless Caseworker. Support is provided on an emergency basis to those young people who are homeless. The aim is to support young people to remain/return home where possible. However if homelessness is not preventable then they are supported to explore their accommodation options, through the Swansea Accommodation Pathway.

#### **7.4 Tenancy Support**

Support is provided to households to maintain their tenancy via the Tenancy Support Unit (TSU). The TSU delivers housing related support to vulnerable people living in Swansea funded by the Supporting People Programme Grant. The TSU in-house team provide a central referral and assessment gateway for the vast majority of floating support services in Swansea. Partner agencies provide support to specific client groups such as young people, older people, domestic abuse, mental health, families and single people. The TSU is also the Council’s in-house support provider and provides a floating support service to all residents including tenants of Registered Social Landlord (housing associations), local authority or private landlords and owner occupiers. In addition to generic support, a range of floating support services are also provided including:

- Rapid Response – for tenants at imminent threat of eviction where possession has already been granted.
- Private Rented Support – crisis resolution and short term resettlement support for those in private rented accommodation.
- Support on Demand – for households who have support needs that can be resolved in one or two sessions.
- Personal Budgeting Support – for Universal Credit claimants who need budgeting help as a result of migration from multiple legacy benefits to new Universal Credit monthly payments.

#### **7.5 Supported Temporary Accommodation**

Supported temporary accommodation is shared or self-contained accommodation primarily for single, homeless people; and also includes temporary accommodation for young people. It is funded by the Supporting People Programme Grant. The majority of supported accommodation is accessed through a central referral route called the

Housing Gateway and is not ordinarily used to discharge a statutory homeless duty by the Council. Accommodation for young people is accessed through the Swansea Accommodation Pathway. This accommodation is short to medium term for up to two years. Individuals in temporary supported accommodation are able to access the Move On Strategy for general needs accommodation.

### **7.6 Rough Sleeping**

Help and support is provided to rough sleepers primarily through the Rough Sleepers Intervention Team (available 7 days a week), which provides street outreach and a breakfast run. Other provision includes:

- Direct access hostels and emergency bed provision
- Rough Sleepers Cold Weather Plan
- Swansea Night Shelter
- Primary Healthcare support – through the Health Board funded Homelessness Health Care Nurse and a specialist Mental Health Nurse
- Rough Sleeping Resource Card – an information card for rough sleepers which explains where and how to access relevant services
- Streetlink phone line: helps to identify and report new locations where rough sleepers can be found and appropriate help and advice is provided by the Rough Sleepers Intervention Team.

### **7.7 Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse is a main cause of homelessness in Swansea –with 12% of households threatened with homelessness for this reason in 2016/17. Housing Options provides advice and assistance to households experiencing domestic abuse and temporary accommodation is provided to households in the form of Women's Aid refuges and safe houses (women and children only) and one for BME women run by BAWSO (Black Association of Women Stepping Out), or where appropriate, the Council's own temporary accommodation. Appropriate Council temporary accommodation is also provided for males or other specialist accommodation will be sourced. Other provision includes:

- Target hardening – improved security measures which allow those at risk of domestic abuse to remain in their own homes.
- Domestic Abuse Hub – the Hub has been established as a multi-agency team to provide help and support to families with children experiencing domestic abuse or escalating relationship problems. The Hub provides a whole family approach to ensure children, young people and their families receive the right support at the right time by the right person.
- Cross-Borders – regional provision of temporary supported housing for women with complex needs fleeing domestic abuse.
- On-going tenancy support once in permanent accommodation for households who require it.
- Domestic Abuse One Stop Shop – A multi-agency partnership service for anyone (including single people, men, families) needing support, advice and assistance on a range of issues around domestic abuse. It offers a drop-in, surgeries and training sessions and workshops.
- Support for men is also provided through a range of options, including through the Hub, One Stop Shop, and Hafan Cymru.

- A five year Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy to improve the prevention, protection and support for people affected by violence and abuse.

## 8. Key Achievements

Over the last five years the Council and its partners have made a number of significant achievements in relation to homelessness and its prevention, including:

- ✓ A well-established focus on successful homelessness prevention work
- ✓ Strong working relationship with Supporting People and effective use of supporting people funding to prevent homelessness
- ✓ Provision of Housing Options as a one-stop housing advice service, including the Tenancy Support Unit located in the same service
- ✓ Establishment of the Homelessness Prevention Fund
- ✓ Very low levels of intentionally homeless decisions (1 in 2016/17)
- ✓ Low number of cases closed due to “failure to co-operate” (19 in 2016/17)
- ✓ Training for Housing Options staff on Psychologically Informed Environments
- ✓ Significant reduction in use of bed and breakfast through the development of alternative forms of temporary accommodation
- ✓ Partnership with the voluntary sector to provide support for households in bed and breakfast
- ✓ Development of Cross-Borders regional provision to provide temporary supported accommodation for women with complex needs
- ✓ Increased the number of adapted temporary accommodation units to make them fully accessible
- ✓ Development of the holistic, BAYS+ Service for young people incorporating a range of services, alongside homelessness advice and assistance
- ✓ Establishment of Swansea Accommodation Pathway (for young people)
- ✓ Development of the Housing Gateway database for accessing temporary supported accommodation and the adoption of a “tell it once approach”
- ✓ Successful Move-On Strategy which ensures that individuals can effectively transition from supported accommodation into a permanent home
- ✓ Improved access to the private rented sector by embedding the Private Rented Sector Access Team within Housing Options, in partnership with the Wallich
- ✓ Close working relationship with the Council’s Housing and Public Health Team, to ensure that statutory standards for private rented accommodation are met before households are permanently rehoused
- ✓ Development of provision for rough sleepers including establishment of a Rough Sleeping Intervention Team and extension of the support offered to a 7 day service
- ✓ Working with Swansea Hope and partners to resource Swansea Night Shelter, to provide temporary accommodation and re-settlement support to rough sleepers during the coldest months
- ✓ Development of an Armed Forces Community Covenant which seeks to ensure that veterans are not discriminated by deed of their service, and those leaving the forces are prioritised as homeless should they present themselves for council accommodation upon demobilisation.
- ✓ Collaborative approach with the voluntary sector and Health Service (i.e. Homelessness Nurse and Mental Health Outreach Nurse) that provides advice and support to rough sleepers

- ✓ Well-established working relationship with Health on the Homeless and Vulnerable Groups Health Action Plan
- ✓ Effective partnership working arrangements in place for MAPPA and MARAC<sup>1</sup> processes, with key partners i.e. Criminal Justice, Health, Social Services and Education, including a specific MARAC for Street Vulnerability

## **9. The Homelessness Review**

### **9.1 Introduction**

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness in their area, and to develop a Homelessness Strategy based on the review findings. Under the Act, the strategy must seek to achieve the following objectives in the local authority area:

- The prevention of homelessness
- Suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless
- Satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless

The main findings of the review are summarised below. The full review is an extensive and detailed document which can be obtained from:

*Operations Manager – Community Housing  
Housing and Public Health  
Civic Centre  
Swansea  
SA1 3SN*

*Email: [housing@swansea.gov.uk](mailto:housing@swansea.gov.uk)*

Due to the significant changes to the Council's statutory homelessness duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, it is not possible to directly compare the number of "homeless households" collected under the current and previous legislation. Therefore much of the data collected for the Review focuses on comparisons between 2015/16 and 2016/17. This provides a solid baseline to measure future progress and performance.

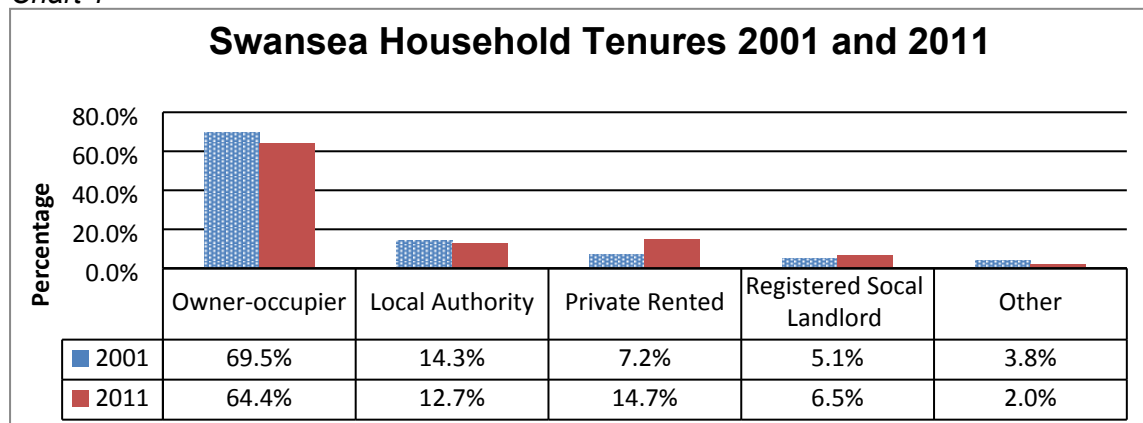
### **9.2 Housing market in Swansea**

There have been significant changes in household tenures in Swansea over a ten-year period. The most common tenure remains owner-occupier, although this has reduced by 5%. The private rented sector has now overtaken Council housing as the second most common tenure increasing from 7% to nearly 15%, whilst Council housing is now just under 13%. RSL accommodation accounts for 6.5%.

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<sup>1</sup> MAPPA – Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements  
MARAC – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

Chart 1<sup>2</sup>



A Local Housing Market Assessment was carried out in 2013, and updated in 2015. It assessed the full range of housing requirements for the area. The results indicated a requirement for between 2010 to 2025 for an additional 17,100 new dwellings in Swansea. Of these, around 7,400 need to be a mix of affordable rent or sale. The More Council Homes Strategy sets out the Council’s future development of affordable homes. The Council enables the delivery of affordable housing units in partnership with Registered Social Landlords through the Programme Delivery Plan utilising Welsh Government funding. This ensures the maximum future provision of affordable housing units. However, demand for housing is still outstripping supply.

The Local Housing Market Assessment has highlighted several significant features in terms of household size, age structure and affordability, which will influence the demand for housing (particularly for affordable housing) in Swansea.

- **Household Size:** Between the 2001 and the 2011 Census, Swansea’s population increased by 15,700 to a total of 239,000 people, representing an increase of 7%, with an average household size of 2.26 persons. Furthermore, the total number of households in Swansea increased by 9,100 in the same period. The upward growth trend identified in the 2011 Census is continuing both in terms of population numbers and also in terms of household numbers. These increases will put further pressure on the housing market in Swansea where the supply of housing in all tenures is not keeping pace with demand.
- **Age Structure:** Comparing the age structure for the population in Swansea against the whole of Wales shows a higher proportion of young adults aged 15-34 years, and particularly those aged 20-24 (largely because of the significant local student population). Swansea also has a slightly higher proportion of residents aged over 75 compared to the Welsh average. This demographic, coupled with a growth in the number of older residents (whether single people or couples) increases the requirement for smaller properties across all tenures.
- **Affordability:** In terms of affordability, over 46% of *non*-homeowners in Swansea have incomes of under £10,000 per annum, while 72% have incomes under £20,000 per annum. Assuming that housing costs (to be affordable) do not exceed 35% of income, many of these households could afford no more than social rent and many would need Housing Benefit support to meet the cost of social rents in

<sup>2</sup> Census data 2011

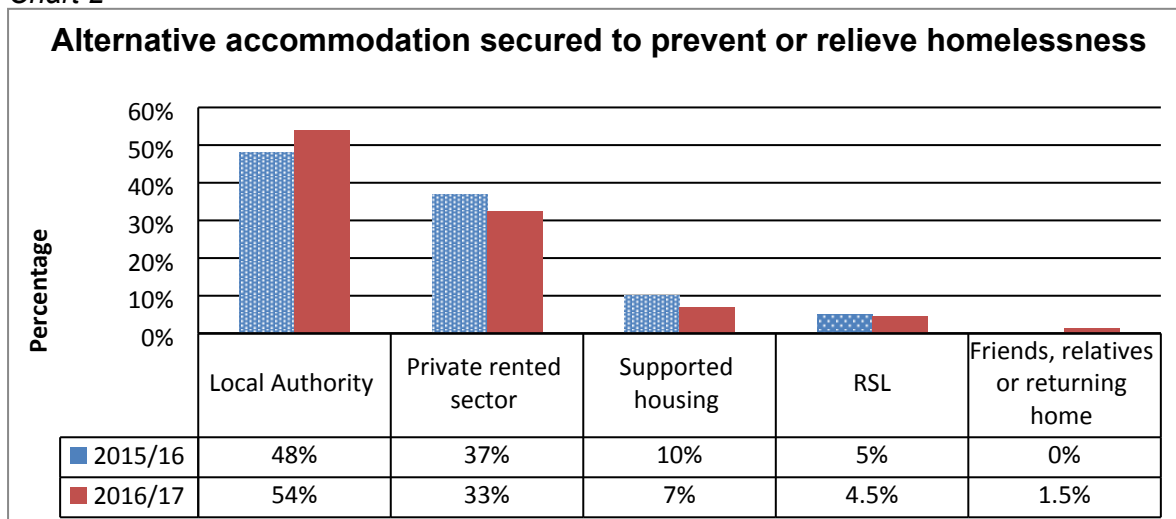
Swansea. In terms of home-ownership, affordability for single first-time buyers has declined sharply since mid-2004, less than 20% of all sales in Swansea are for properties sold for below £80,000 with almost 40% selling for over £150,000. Many dwellings in the private sector stock are only affordable to households with incomes of £20,000 or more.

- **Welfare Reform:** The Government's continuing reform of the welfare system has led to a greater demand for smaller accommodation due to the introduction of the Spare Room Subsidy/Bedroom Tax, as well as for an increase in shared accommodation for single people under 35 years in the private rented sector. This is likely to increase demand for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) accommodation within Swansea. Access to the private rented sector can be difficult for households on welfare benefits, due to increases in rent levels and the current freeze of the levels of local housing allowance. Since 2010, housing benefit levels have not risen in line with increasing private rents.
- **Levels of deprivation:** In addition, Swansea has an above average share of its Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) featuring in the top 10% most deprived in Wales, with 18 (12%) of its 148 LSOAs now ranked in the top 191 (10%) most deprived. Levels of deprivation (as measured in the index of multiple deprivation) are most significant in respect of the Education, Income and Health domains, with levels in the Access to services, Housing and Physical environment domains falling below the Welsh average.

As a result, demand for social housing remains high. In May 2018, there were 450 households who were vulnerably housed and/or threatened with homelessness on the Council's waiting list of approximately 5,000. The majority of homeless households (76%) were waiting for one-bedroom properties. The Council consistently lets around a third of its vacant properties each year to homeless households. These factors contribute to housing demand outstripping supply and lead to continuing high levels of homeless applications.

Chart 2 below shows that the main housing solution for homeless households was Council accommodation, with private rented accommodation the second highest. It is a key priority for the Council to ensure that it can facilitate access to the private rented sector and to work closely with Registered Social Landlords (housing associations) to find solutions for homeless households.

Chart 2



### 9.3 Profile of homelessness

There is a consistently high number of homeless presentations in Swansea. Over the past five years these have ranged between 2,500-3,000. There is no indication that this will decrease in the next few years and therefore there is continual pressure on the service.

In 2016/17, 2,661 homeless decisions were made by the Council. 1,143 (43%) were found to be threatened with homelessness (within 56 days). Despite these high numbers, Swansea has performed well and prevented homelessness for 73% of these households, which is above the Welsh average.

Table 1: Swansea's homelessness prevention rate – compared with Wales

	Households threatened with homelessness within 56 days	Households successfully prevented from homelessness	% prevented from homelessness	Wales - % prevented from homelessness
<b>2016/17</b>	1143	831	73%	62%

Of the remaining households who made a homelessness application:

- 983 households were found not to be homeless and were provided with other forms of housing advice and assistance
- 395 households were found to be either homeless or their homelessness could not be prevented
- 56 (of the 395) were homeless and not in priority need<sup>3</sup>, and whilst not entitled to Council provided temporary accommodation they continued to receive advice and assistance to resolve their homelessness
- 54 (of the 395) were homeless and in priority need, and entitled to temporary accommodation until their homelessness was resolved
- 29 were ineligible<sup>4</sup> for homelessness/housing assistance

<sup>3</sup> Priority need status is defined in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, for example pregnant women, households with dependent children, those vulnerable from old age, mental illness or disability. If a household is deemed to be in priority need then the Council has a duty to provide them with temporary accommodation until they are permanently rehoused.

<sup>4</sup> Applicants ineligible due to their immigration status.



- 1 household was found to be intentionally homeless

The main causes of homelessness in Swansea remain the same as previous years and reflect the position across Wales:

- Loss of rented accommodation – 18%
- Parent(s) no longer willing or able to accommodate – 14%
- Domestic abuse – 12%
- In institution or care – 12%
- Prison leaver – 11%
- Breakdown of relationship with partner (Non-violent) – 11%
- Other relatives/friends no longer willing or able to accommodate – 10%

The majority of households who were found to be threatened with homelessness within 56 days in 2016/17 were single males, with single parents being the next highest group.

- 39% (451) were single males
- 26% (298) were single parents with dependent children
- 21% (240) were single females
- 7% (78) were couples with dependent children
- 7% (76) were other household types

Of the 1143 households assessed as threatened with homelessness within 56 days during 2016/17:

- Less than 1% (10) were aged 16-17
- 27.5% (315) were aged 18-24
- 61% (697) were aged 25-49
- 10.5% (121) were aged 50 plus

When compared with the age breakdown of Swansea's population (2011 Census), it indicates that 18-24 year olds are at a higher risk of experiencing or being threatened with homelessness. Young people in this age group make up 14% of the population as a whole, however they account for 27.5% of households threatened with homelessness.

Of the 1143 households assessed as threatened with homeless within 56 days during 2016/17:

- 85% (966) were White
- 8% (87) were Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- 4% (51) were from other ethnic groups
- 3% (39) were Asian or Asian British

Overall 15% of households assessed as threatened with homelessness in 2016/17 were from an ethnic minority background, compared to 8% in the population of Swansea as a whole (2011 Census). The higher number of homeless applications from ethnic minority groups is largely attributed to the fact that Swansea is a dispersal area for asylum seekers.

The following table provides a demographic breakdown of the households who were actually homeless, or their homelessness could not be prevented:

*Table 2: Breakdown of household types assessed as homeless*

<b>Household type</b>	<b>Single male</b>	<b>Single female</b>	<b>Single parent</b>	<b>Couple with children</b>	<b>Other household types</b>	<b>Total</b>
Homeless or homelessness could not be prevented	227	93	41	19	15	395
Homeless and in priority need	35	8	4	1	6	54
Homeless, non-priority need	47	8	0	0	1	56
Intentionally homeless	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>506</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>61%</b>	<b>21.5%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4.5%</b>	

*Table 3: Breakdown of households assessed as homeless, by ethnic group of applicant*

<b>Household type</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Black / African / Caribbean / Black British</b>	<b>Asian or Asian British</b>	<b>Other ethnic group</b>	<b>Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups</b>	<b>Total</b>
Homeless or homelessness could not be prevented	346	18	13	16	2	395
Homeless and in priority need	54	0	0	0	0	54
Homeless, non-priority need	53	0	2	0	1	56
Intentionally homeless	1	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>506</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>3.5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	

*Table 4: Breakdown of households assessed as homeless, by age of applicant*

<b>Household type</b>	<b>16-17</b>	<b>18-24</b>	<b>25-49</b>	<b>50 plus</b>	<b>Total</b>
Homeless or homelessness could not be prevented	0	48	317	30	395
Homeless and in priority need	0	9	43	2	54
Homeless, non-priority need	0	5	50	1	56
Intentionally homeless	0	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>506</b>
<b>%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	

In 2016/17, 54 households were found to be homeless, in priority need and in temporary accommodation. The main reasons were:

- Vulnerable due to mental illness/learning disability – 42% (23)
- Vulnerable due to physical disability – 26% (14)
- Vulnerable due to other special reason – 7% (4)
- Former prisoner – 7% (4)
- Household with dependent children – 6% (3)
- Domestic abuse 6% (3)
- Pregnant – 4% (2)
- Care leaver – 2% (1)

The highest number of households who are found to be in priority need, and therefore in temporary accommodation, are vulnerable due to mental illness, learning disability and physical disabilities, which demonstrates the difficulties in finding permanent housing solutions for these client groups. There is a need to work closely with Social Services to find ways to improve outcomes for these groups.

### 9.3 Rough Sleeping

Since 2015, the Welsh Government has required local authorities to carry out an annual rough sleeping count. Swansea has historically carried out counts on a local basis over the past 10 years. The data is collected to gain a better understanding of the scale and trends in rough sleeping over time to inform local and national policy.

The actual counts of rough sleepers are single night snapshots. The estimated count is based on data collected over a two-week period with assistance from the voluntary sector, faith groups, local businesses, residents, health and substance misuse agencies, and the police.

*Table 5: Number of people sleeping rough in Swansea and Wales between 2015 and 2017*

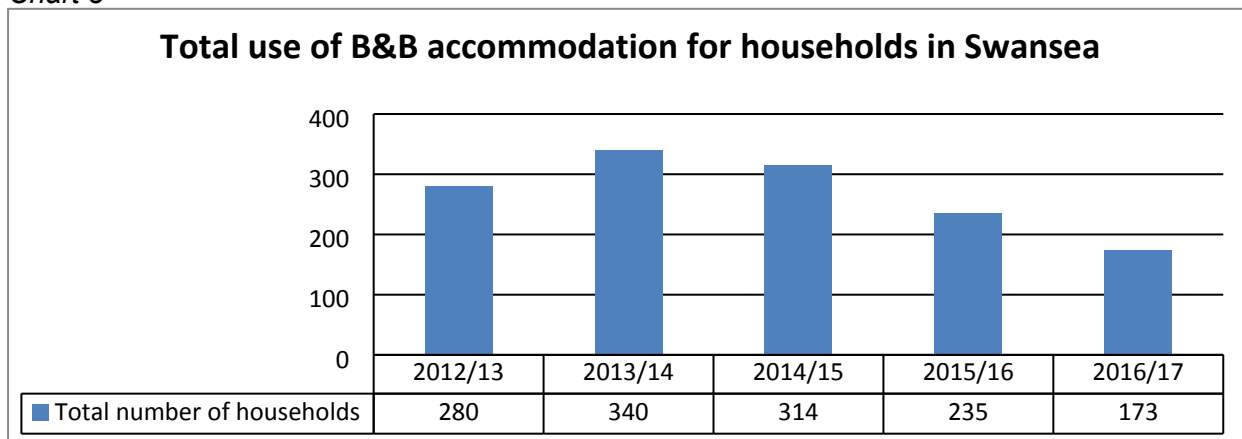
	Swansea			Wales		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Actual count	5	16	21	82	141	188
Estimated rough sleepers (2 weekly count)	19	23	26	240	313	345

The figures show that rough sleeping is on the rise, both in Swansea and nationally, with a 44% increase in estimated number of rough sleepers across Wales and a 37% increase in Swansea between 2015 and 2017.

### 9.4 Temporary accommodation

Use of temporary accommodation is an important indicator for the Council to measure levels of homelessness over time. Chart 3 shows a significant reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation since the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

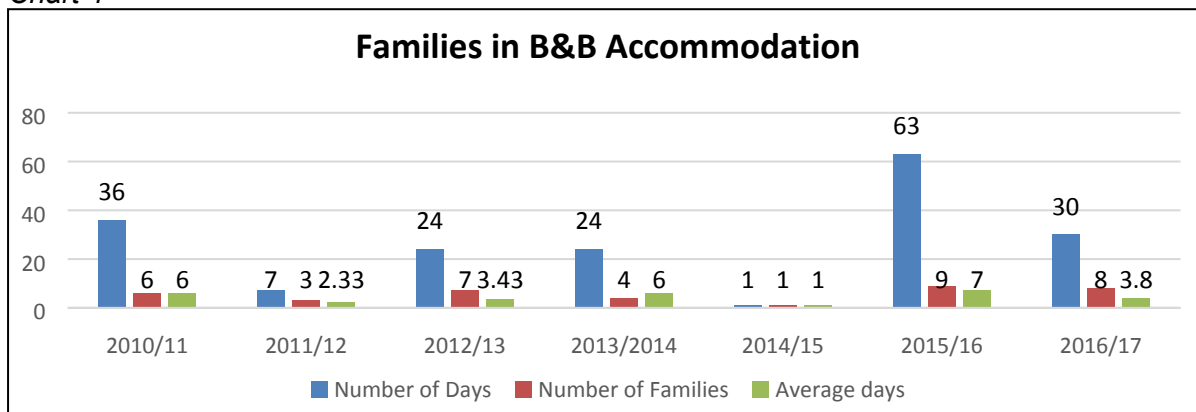
Chart 3



It is a key priority to ensure that use of B&B is kept to a minimum and a range of alternative options have been developed to enable this. In particular, the Council aims to abolish the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds and there were no young people placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation during 2016/17.

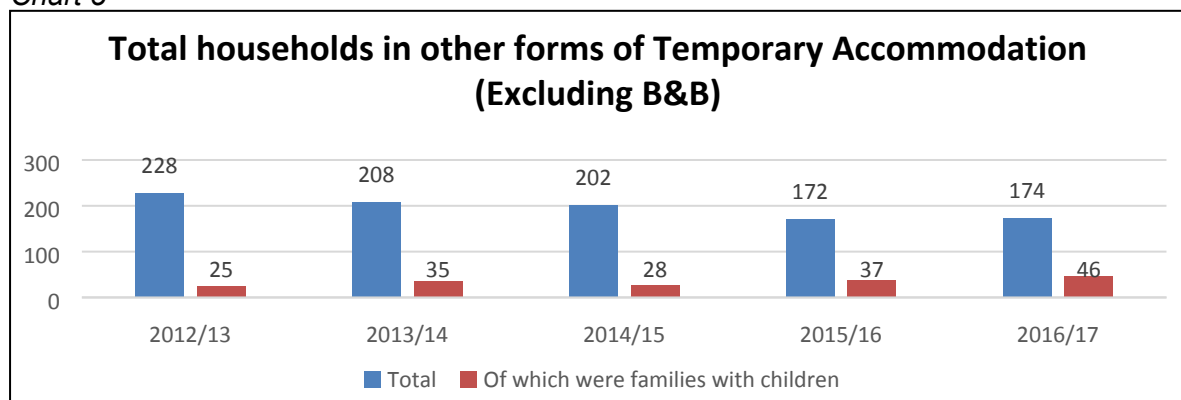
The Council also aims to minimise use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families, and use only when absolutely necessary. In 2016/17, a target was set to ensure that the average days spent in bed and breakfast did not exceed 6 days, which was achieved. Chart 4 shows that the number of families in bed and breakfast has remained consistently low, with the exception of 2015/16 when there was a slight spike in use and time spent in B&B. This is because a number of the Council’s temporary accommodation flats for families were taken out of use so that adaptations to be completed to make them fully accessible.

Chart 4



Despite good progress made in reducing use of bed and breakfast chart 5 below shows that there has been a slight increase in the number of families in temporary accommodation overall. In 2016/17, the higher number of families in temporary accommodation was due to a high number of refugee families moving on from Home Office accommodation. 22 of the 46 families in temporary accommodation were refugees who were made homeless from their Home Office Accommodation following a decision on their application. Therefore, there was limited prevention work that could take place and emergency accommodation was required.

Chart 5



### 9.5 Tenancy Support

Tenancy support (provided by the Tenancy Support Unit) is an essential part of the Council's approach to homelessness prevention. The demand for floating support services in Swansea has remained consistently high. Additional pressures have been created due to the welfare reforms that are taking place which have led to an increased demand for welfare benefits advice and budgeting support.

During 2016/17, 2300 households were supported by the TSU and partner agencies, table 6 provides a breakdown of the type of support schemes delivered by the unit. The numbers of households supported by the TSU has consistently increased, with an additional 253 households (12% increase) receiving support in 2016/17 compared to 2014/15. This has been due to the effective management of support services including:

- The introduction of rapid response support, to provide very short term support to enable households to overcome an immediate crisis
- Increasing the amount of support provided by external partners by negotiating additional capacity within their Supporting People contracts
- Including the RSL's floating support schemes into the TSU (from December 2017) to ensure that their capacity to provide support is fully utilised.

Table 6: Type of support provided by Tenancy Support Unit

Categories of Support	2014/15 Number supported	2015/16 Number supported	2016/17 Number supported
Generic for single people/couples (tenancy sustainability)	555	681	670
Families (over 25yrs old)	471	516	487
Older Person	333	356	307
Domestic Violence	122	164	174
Community Care	167	165	164
Young Person	158	169	134
Refugee	53	89	61
Young Families (under 25yrs old)	103	105	105
Private Rented Sector Support (in house)	0	93	77
UC Personal Budgeting (in house)	0	34	64
Rapid Response (in house)	85	71	49
Support on demand (in house)	0	0	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>2047</b>	<b>2443</b>	<b>2300</b>

The average length of time households are supported is 22 weeks. The table below shows a more detailed breakdown by category of support:

Table 7: Length of time households were supported 2016/17

Categories of Support	Average number of weeks supported
Generic for single people/couples (tenancy sustainability)	23
Families (over 25yrs old)	15
Older Person	48
Domestic Violence	19
Community Care	35
Young Person	28
Refugee	30
Young Families (under 25yrs old)	24
Private Rented Sector Support (in house)	13
UC Personal Budgeting (in house)	4
Rapid Response (in house)	7

## 9.5 Consultation

Detailed consultation has taken place with service users and partner organisations to ensure that the Homelessness Review and development of the strategy is an inclusive process. The following consultation has taken place:

- **Service users** – via a survey distributed by service providers, which was also available on-line (for the Review of Homelessness and for consultation on the Draft Strategy and Action Plan)

- **Four service user focus groups** – as part of the Review of Homelessness focus groups were held with service users from a range of Wallich services, Crisis Members, young people engaged with homelessness and support services, and women currently receiving support from Women’s Aid and BASWO
- **Service Providers** – via a survey and discussions/workshops at the Supporting People and Homelessness Forum during 2017/18
- **The general public** – via an on-line survey
- **Partners:** including Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations), Health, Probation, Prison Service, Police, BME representative groups
- **Internally** – Heads of Service and officers responsible for key strategies and plans
- **Politically** – Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy, Cabinet Member for Care, Health & Aging Well, Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Scrutiny Working Group on Homelessness, Poverty Reduction Policy Delivery Committee

The full details of the findings from the consultation form part of the Homelessness Review. Across all the consultation responses some clear, common issues emerged and the views provided have been used to develop the aim, objectives and actions for the strategy. A summary of the findings is attached at appendix 1.

## 10. Future Levels of Homelessness

The Homelessness Review has looked at what factors could have an impact on future levels of homelessness. Whilst the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 has made some significant improvements in the prevention of homelessness, socio-economic factors, outside of the control of the Council, have a major influence. The following factors have been identified as having a potential negative impact on future levels of homelessness. They have been considered as part of the development of the Action Plan and where possible mitigating actions have been identified.

- There are high levels of demand for social housing and supply is not currently meeting demand – having a reasonable supply of quality, affordable accommodation is crucial in meeting statutory homelessness requirements.
- The lack of one bedroom accommodation, and in particular affordable housing options for under 35 year olds (for example lack of appropriate shared housing), is likely to lead to an increase in young single people being unable to resolve their own housing issues.
- There are increasing numbers of people with unmet complex support needs - including but not limited to people with poor mental health, substance misuse issues, offending, learning difficulties.
- There are increasing levels of rough sleeping in Swansea and across Wales.
- Welfare Reform has already begun to have an impact on rent arrears levels, and it is likely that the further welfare reform changes identified will continue to impact upon individuals’ ability to meet their housing costs.
- The continuing impact of the economic climate, financial pressures and personal debt, including increasing demand for debt advice, welfare benefits and budgeting advice.

- There is an increased prevalence of common mental health related issues due to an increasing population, the long term effects of austerity, the high degree of lower super output areas in Swansea and associated deprivation and the availability of illicit and illegal drugs. All combine to increase the likelihood of depression with a reduction in local authority resources to manage this increase in demand. In addition, the Welsh Government Daffodil System for predicting social care trends has indicated that in 2016 Swansea had around 35,000 adults with mental health related issues and this is likely to rise to 35,767 in 2019.
- Following a Welsh Government announcement in October 2018, the level of Supporting People Programme Grant will be protected for 2019/20.
- An ageing population will require appropriate housing and support to prevent an increase in homelessness amongst older households.
- Future legislative changes made by Welsh Government, such as the introduction of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act, the removal of the power to make intentionally homeless decisions, and the potential expansion of priority need categories will change and increase the Council's legal duties, for example increased need for temporary accommodation.

## **11. Key Priorities**

The following issues have emerged as areas requiring development:

### **11.1 Early intervention and prevention**

The Homelessness Service provides effective prevention and advice with homelessness prevented for over 73% of households who are threatened with homelessness. More work could be done to design services to ensure early contact with service users and to improve the information and knowledge of services that are available to prevent a crisis situations developing. Effective services for young people also remain a high priority through the continued provision of the Bays+ Service, improvements to the information available for young people and their families and a review of the mediation services in place to prevent homelessness. There is also a need to work closely with Health and the Criminal Justice system in order to ensure that when homelessness can be predicted (for example on release from prison or discharge from hospital) that the system is as effective as it can be through implementation of the Prisoner Pathway and Hospital Discharge Protocol.

### **11.2 Provision of temporary accommodation**

Swansea is well served with an extensive range of temporary accommodation, which meets the needs of the vast majority of people. It is important therefore that we look at and expand on existing good practice, wherever possible, in order to maintain and improve provision. A range of issues have been identified to look at ways to improve access to temporary accommodation. Provision to meet the needs of households with complex needs, in particular, mental health, learning disabilities and substance misuse, needs to be reviewed and improved.

### **11.3 Support**

There are effective services in place to provide people with housing related support through Supporting People funded projects and the Council's Tenancy Support Unit.



There is a close and effective working relationship between the Homelessness Service and the Supporting People team and the commissioning process for housing related support works well, with prevention of homelessness the key priority in the Supporting People Commissioning Plan. However, there are a number of areas for improvement and enhancement of support services to be addressed, including meeting the increased need for support for people with mental health/complex needs and providing a more flexible and responsive support service to ensure that people receive the right level of support at the right time. In particular, it will be essential to work closely with Social Services and Health in order to address some of the areas for improvement identified through the Homelessness Review regarding the difficulties faced by individuals requiring mental health support and access to substance misuse services. This is of particular significance for those individuals who are subject to a dual diagnosis, i.e. problems with substance misuse alongside mental health issues. It is also important to work with Health and Social Services to look at ways to improve early intervention with regard to the provision of low level emotional / mental health support with the focus on preventing higher-level needs from developing.

#### **11.4 Access to permanent accommodation**

Ensuring quick access to permanent accommodation is an essential part of preventing and alleviating homelessness. There is high demand for social housing which exceeds the supply therefore access to permanent accommodation needs to be improved. It is also essential that the Homelessness Strategy continues to feed into the Council's More Homes Strategy and Social Housing Grant Programme in order to ensure that the housing needs of homeless people influence any new housing developments. A key priority for the Council is to increase access to the private rented sector and to work closely with Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations) to set out and agree expectations to identify how the social housing sector will work together to alleviate homelessness.

#### **11.5 Rough sleeping**

There are a wide range of services available for people who are sleeping rough however numbers continue to increase. There is a specific objective to deal with rough sleeping and the issues to be addressed include improving the facilities available for rough sleepers, implementing a Housing First approach and improving the information that is collected on their needs to enable more effective solutions to be developed.

#### **11.6 Service user involvement**

There is currently limited monitoring of satisfaction levels by the Homelessness Service and limited service user involvement. This has been identified as an important area for improvement for the strategy therefore a specific objective has been included. In particular to develop opportunities to ensure that the principles of co-production are incorporated into the design and delivery of services.

## **12. The Way Forward**

Each of the strategic objectives has a range of areas for development that will be focused on for the next four years. The Council cannot achieve this in isolation and partnership working will be essential to ensure that the best outcomes and solutions can be reached. The objectives form the basis of a four-year Action Plan, which gives clear outcomes, provides details on the key activities to be carried out and identifies the leads who will ensure that the action and outcomes identified are progressed in

partnership with stakeholders. Each of the strategic objectives are detailed on the following pages and the full Action Plan is attached at appendix 2.

### **Objective 1: Ensuring service users are at the centre of service delivery**

#### **Areas for development:**

- Introduce a co-productive approach with service users to develop the following:
  - Homelessness Charter
  - Service standards for Housing Options
  - Written standards for temporary accommodation used by the Council
- Improve digital inclusion of homeless people.
- Improve written information to all homelessness households including reviewing use of Personal Housing Plans and implementing feedback mechanism to monitor effectiveness.
- Raise general public and professional awareness of homelessness, advice and support services in order to ensure a more widespread understanding of where people can go if faced with a housing issue.
- Review Housing Options equalities monitoring systems to ensure that homelessness and housing services are accessible to all.

### **Objective 2: Prioritising early intervention and prevention of homelessness**

#### **Areas for development:**

- Develop pre- eviction protocols with all housing providers and understand reasons for abandoned tenancies.
- Review the effectiveness of the Hospital Discharge Protocol and Prisoner Pathway on an annual basis.
- Monitor reasons for loss of rented accommodation in order to better understand the drivers behind this cause of homelessness in order to reduce the number of evictions from private rented accommodation.
- Review and improve information available on-line and in written format in order to reduce demand on Homelessness Service by providing clear, comprehensive housing advice on line.
- Develop an education programme to increase knowledge of housing and homelessness issues in partnership with young people to improve homelessness prevention services for young people.
- Develop consistent, accurate, shared local messages on availability and affordability of independent housing for young people in Swansea and identify the

most effective communication channels in order to provide simple clear housing advice available for parents/carers and young people.

- Review mediation services that are available to assist with homelessness prevention.
- Work with partners to address the increased need for advice on welfare benefits, income maximisation and debt.
- Monitor repeat homelessness cases and repeat support cases.
- Develop stronger links with Poverty & Prevention Service to ensure that homeless households have access to training, employment and education services.
- Work with DWP, Housing Benefit-& and the Poverty and Prevention Service to identify and advise households at risk of future homelessness due to the impact of Welfare Reform in order to improve early intervention and prevention for households affected.
- Develop a housing training programme to up-skill support workers (and other professionals) to enable them to provide basic housing advice and improve knowledge of homelessness legislation.
- Explore ways to improve outcomes for households with no local connection.
- Identify and prepare for the implications of the Immigration Act 2014 e.g. Right to Rent checks and Britain's exit from the EU.

### **Objective 3: Ensuring suitable accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless.**

#### **Areas for development:**

- Work with RSL partners to set out and agree expectations to identify how the social housing sector will work together to alleviate homelessness.
- Improve the outcomes for homeless households with complex needs (e.g. mental health, learning disabilities, substance misuse).
- Create a Housing Gateway Officer post to provide an effective single point of access for all supported accommodation.
- Reduce barriers for accessing temporary accommodation and supported temporary accommodation, including couples.
- Simplify access to refuge accommodation for households who are experiencing domestic abuse.
- Review the provision of temporary supported accommodation for households with complex needs experiencing domestic abuse.
- Improve the support and advice offered to private landlords in order to increase the supply of good quality, affordable private rented accommodation.
- Consider feasibility of establishing social lettings agency for private sector properties.
- Development of shared accommodation solutions for single households under 35.
- Review the Move-On Strategy and consider options to adopt the process for all temporary accommodation.
- Review the Councils Housing Allocation Policy.

#### **Objective 4: Ensuring appropriate support is available for people who are or may become homeless**

##### **Areas for development:**

- Improve access to substance misuse support services for homeless households.
- Improve access to mental health support services for homeless households.
- Deliver a responsive, flexible tenancy support service to ensure that people receive the right level of support at the right time.
- Strengthen and formalise the working relationships between Local Area Co-ordinators and Housing Options/Tenancy Support Unit.
- Raise awareness of provision in place to support men who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse.
- Consult with BME stakeholders and service users to improve ways services are provided to households with language barriers and cultural differences.
- Develop housing advice leaflets specifically for refugees to provide targeted housing advice.
- Map the provision in place to assist and advise individuals who are ineligible for homelessness and housing assistance.
- Develop a training plan for housing and support providers.

## **Objective 5: Providing robust responses to support rough sleepers and eliminating the need for individuals to sleep rough**

### **Areas for development:**

- Carry out a feasibility study to look at developing a holistic “solutions centre” for services for rough sleepers.
- Develop a Housing First approach to address the housing and support needs of homeless people and rough sleepers with the most complex needs
- Increase emergency bed provision and ensure support and advice is provided to rough sleepers within 48 hours.
- Develop a multi-agency approach to serious incidents involving rough sleepers and other vulnerable groups to ensure that lessons are learnt and service improvements identified across all agencies/organisations.
- Carry out an annual review of the Cold Weather Plan to ensure that it is robust, offers appropriate protection for rough sleepers, and proactively helps them to access more suitable housing and support.
- Develop information leaflet for general public and local authority Councillors on support available to assist rough sleepers. Increase awareness of assistance available to rough sleepers.
- Develop a monitoring system to record the support needs and housing history of rough sleepers in order to accurately inform future service provision. Better information on the needs of rough sleepers available to identify effective interventions
- Work with HHA/VGAP (Health of Homelessness and Vulnerable Groups Action Plan) to ensure implementation of Welsh Government’s Health Standards for Homeless and Vulnerable Groups in order to improve health outcomes for rough sleepers and other vulnerable groups.
- Carry out local qualitative research with former rough sleepers to identify the key factors that helped them obtain and maintain permanent housing, so that better information is available to identify effective interventions.

### **13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The Homelessness Strategy outlines how the Council and its partners plan to tackle homelessness between 2018 and 2022. Progress towards achieving the strategy's aims and objectives will be measured and monitored on a regular basis. In order to achieve this the following activities will be carried out:

- A steering group will be established to oversee the implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan.
- The Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and progress reported to the Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy
- An annual update will be produced including Action Plan progress and an up-date of the key homelessness statistics
- An annual review day will be held with the Supporting People and Homelessness Forum

In addition to the annual review of progress, the following key performance measures will be used to monitor the on-going success and progress of homelessness services in Swansea:

- Number of homelessness presentations
- Number of households threatened with homelessness within 56 days
- Homelessness prevention
- Average length of stay in B&B for families
- Use of B&B for 16 and 17 year olds
- Tenancy Support Unit – tenancy sustainment measure
- Use of temporary accommodation

Further appropriate measures will be developed over time as the Action Plan is updated.

### **14. Equalities**

A key principle of this strategy is to ensure equality of access to services and promote social inclusion and community cohesion. Equalities issues have been mainstreamed throughout this strategy, therefore reference to specific groups or communities of interest is limited. Wider housing issues relating to these groups have been highlighted in the Local Housing Strategy 2015-20. <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/housing>

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the development of this strategy and is available on the Council's website.

### Summary of Findings from Service User Consultation

#### *Information*

- Raise general public awareness of homelessness, advice and support services in order to ensure a more widespread understanding of where people can go if at risk of homelessness or faced with a housing crisis
- Develop an education approach/programme to target young people. Do this in conjunction with young people following a co-productive<sup>5</sup> approach.
- Improve use of the internet, social media, and texts to provide information on the services and advice available
- Improve understanding of homelessness issues of some professionals – in particular social workers, GPs and the Job Centre. But also important to ensure that staff from any organisation who come into contact with people experiencing homelessness have an understanding and empathetic manner
- Need to ensure that service users are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities. Look at developing Service Standards/Homelessness Charter - should be done in conjunction with service users following a co-production approach
- Need for effective co-ordination and communication across agencies, e.g. local authority (Social Services, Housing, Education, Supporting People), Health, Probation, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector) and also with service users

#### *Early intervention and prevention*

- Need to increase focus on early intervention to prevent problems from escalating.
- Early access to tenancy support before eviction takes place.
- Improved family mediation services

#### *Rough sleeping*

- There is a need to improve service provision for rough sleepers due to the levels of homelessness and rough sleeping
- Ensure that the basic needs of people who are unable or unwilling to engage with services are met e.g. access to washing and cooking facilities for rough sleepers

#### *Access to housing and support*

- Need for rapid access to affordable and appropriate permanent accommodation. For example: need to find ways to improve access to the private rented sector
- Need to improve provision of housing and support for people with complex needs e.g. mental health, learning disabilities and drug and alcohol issues.
- Service users who had experienced substance misuse identified difficulties with recovery in shared accommodation / hostel environments where others are still using substances.
- Develop a Housing First approach to deal with the needs of rough sleepers and individuals with complex needs.
- Improve information around employment and support to find sustainable work
- Not enough suitable properties for young single people – more variety/wider range of accommodation is needed

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<sup>5</sup> Co-production is one of the main principles of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. It means encouraging individuals to become more involved in the design and delivery of services that they need for themselves.



- Need to improve access to mental health support – across a range of needs including young people; and early access to lower level counselling/support
- Need to ensure that young people are able to effectively have a say in the development of their support packages

#### *Digital inclusion*

- Need for improved access to phones and the internet via service providers

#### *Welfare reform*

- Need to develop services/approaches to help alleviate the impacts of welfare reform including:
  - Meeting high levels of need/demand for welfare benefits advice
  - Meeting high levels of need/demand for debt and financial advice
  - Need to develop affordable accommodation for people under the age of 35 – due to introduction of shared accommodation rate. *NB the introduction of the shared accommodation rate in social housing has now been scrapped but there is still a need to provide access to affordable accommodation for under 35s in the private rented sector*