



City and County of Swansea

Notice of Meeting

You are invited to attend a Special Meeting of the

Scrutiny Programme Committee

At: Council Chamber - Guildhall, Swansea

On: Monday, 1 October 2018

Time: 4.00 pm

Chair: Councillor Mary Jones

Membership:

Councillors: C Anderson, M Durke, E W Fitzgerald, L S Gibbard, D W Helliwell, T J Hennegan, P K Jones, E T Kirchner, W G Lewis, S Pritchard, G J Tanner and W G Thomas

Statutory Co-opted Members: D Anderson-Thomas, J Meredith and A Roberts

Councillor Co-opted Members: P M Black, C A Holley, P R Hood-Williams, J W Jones and M Sykes

Agenda

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- 1 **Apologies for Absence.**
- 2 **Disclosures of Personal & Prejudicial Interest.**
www.swansea.gov.uk/disclosuresofinterests
- 3 **Prohibition of Whipped Votes and Declaration of Party Whips.**
- 4 **Public Question Time.**
Questions must relate to matters on the open part of the Agenda of the meeting and will be dealt with in a 10 minute period.
- 5 **Consultation on Draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022.** 1 - 68

Next Meeting: Monday, 8 October 2018 at 4.30 pm

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Huw Evans'.

Huw Evans
Head of Democratic Services
Monday, 24 September 2018

Contact: Democratic Services - Tel (01792) 636923

Agenda Item 5



Report of the Chair

Special Scrutiny Programme Committee – 1 October 2018

Consultation on Draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2022

Purpose:	The Scrutiny Programme Committee is meeting to discuss the recently published consultation draft of the Council's Homelessness Strategy.
Content:	This draft Homeless Strategy and accompanying Action Plan, as published by the Council, are appended. The findings from the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group (June 2018) and Cabinet Member response are also provided for information.
Councillors are being asked to:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss and give views on the draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan to feed into the consultation process
Lead Councillor:	Councillor Mary Jones, Chair of the Scrutiny Programme Committee
Lead Officer & Report Author:	Brij Madahar, Scrutiny Team Leader Tel: 01792 637257 E-mail: brij.madahar@swansea.gov.uk
Legal Officer:	Debbie Smith
Finance Officer:	Paul Cridland

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Programme Committee has already agreed that the scrutiny work programme should include a focus on homelessness. Having already set up a Working Group, which met in May / June 2018, to look at activities to manage homelessness, the current position, performance of relevant services, and challenges, the Committee intends to scrutinize the Homelessness Strategy which is being developed by the Council.

- 1.2 Although the Committee intends to carry out pre-decision scrutiny of the final Strategy ahead of decision by Cabinet (expected on 15 November), the Committee agreed that it should meet to discuss the draft Strategy which has been recently published for the purposes of public consultation. This meeting will enable any views and response from the Committee to inform the cabinet report, as part of the overall consultation process.
- <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/HomelessnessStrategy>

2. Draft Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan

- 2.1 The Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 (final draft for consultation) and Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018-2022 (final draft for consultation) are **appended**.

- 2.2 Information taken from the consultation:

- The draft 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.
- The strategy and 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. 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.

- 2.3 The Committee is invited to discuss and comment on the draft Strategy and Action Plan. Any views will be passed on to the Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy and relevant officers so that they can be considered, along with other consultation responses, and inform the preparation of the cabinet report and final Strategy.

- 2.4 The final Strategy and Action Plan is currently scheduled for decision by Cabinet on 15 November. It is also scheduled to then be reported to Council, for information, on 20 December.

3. Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group

- 3.1 In order to contribute to improvement a Homelessness Working Group was set up by the Committee during 2017/18. The Working Group, convened by Councillor Peter Black, met in May and June 2018.
- 3.2 The first meeting involved discussion with external organisations on what they thought was working well in Swansea; where the gaps in provision were; and, what was not working so well. The second meeting involved discussion with the Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy and relevant officers of the Council, and representatives of ABMU Health Board.
- 3.3 In conclusion, the Working Group sent a letter to the Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy, Cllr Andrea Lewis, in July and a response received. In her response the Cabinet Member stated that she will ensure that the issues raised by the Working Group are taken into account when finalising the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan for 2018-2022. This correspondence is also **appended** for the Committee's information.

4. Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no specific legal implications raised by this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific financial implications raised by this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

Appendix A – Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 (final draft for consultation)

Appendix B – Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2018-2022 (final draft for consultation)

Appendix C – Letter from Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group to Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy (dated 5 July 2018)

Appendix D – Letter from Cabinet Member for Homes & Energy to Homelessness Working Group (dated 26 July 2018)



Swansea Council

Homelessness Strategy Final draft for consultation

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 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 visions 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

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 Community's – 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
- **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 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 and Vulnerable Groups Action Plan 2017/18
- Prevention Strategy 2018-21
- Poverty Strategy 2018-20
- Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence Strategy 2017-22
- 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
- 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. 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 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

Temporary supported 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 (women and children only) and one for BME women run by BAWSO, or where appropriate, the Council's own temporary accommodation. 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 5 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
- ✓ Collaborative approach with the voluntary sector and Health Service (i.e. Homelessness Nurse) that provides advice and support to rough sleepers
- ✓ Effective partnership working arrangements in place for MAPPA and MARAC¹ processes, with key partners i.e. Criminal Justice, Health, Social Services and Education

¹ MAPPA – Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC – Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences

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:

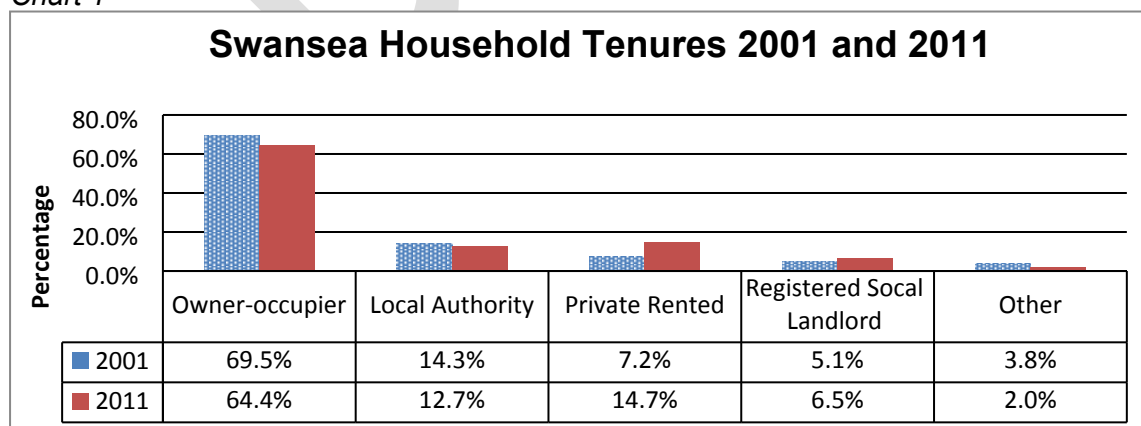
*Operations Manager – Community Housing
Housing and Public Protection
Civic Centre
Swansea
SA1 3SN
Email: housing@swansea.gov.uk*

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%.

Chart 1²



² Census data 2011

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.

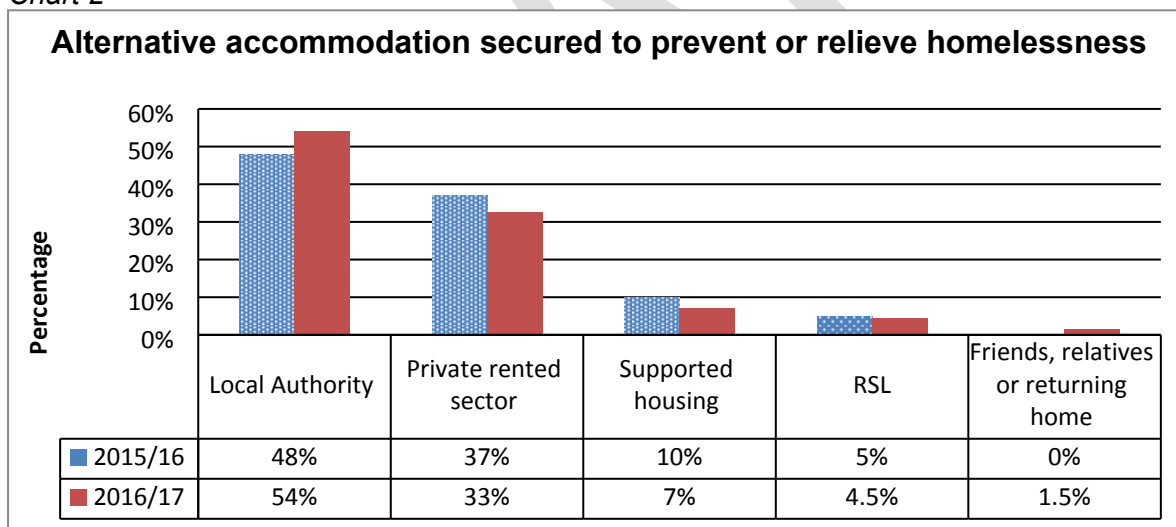
- **Household Size:** Between the 2001 and the 2011 Census, Swansea's population increased by 15,700 to a total of 239,000 people, representing an increase of 7%, with an average household size of 2.26 persons. Furthermore, the total number of households in Swansea increased by 9,100 in the same period. 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 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
2016/17	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 need³, 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 ineligible⁴ for homelessness/housing assistance
- 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

³ 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.

⁴ Applicants ineligible due to their immigration status.

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

Household type	Single male	Single female	Single parent	Couple with children	Other household types	Total
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
Total	310	109	45	20	22	506
%	61%	21.5%	9%	4%	4.5%	

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

Household type	White	Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	Asian or Asian British	Other ethnic group	Mixed / Multiple ethnic groups	Total
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
Total	454	18	15	16	3	506
%	90%	3.5%	3%	3%	0.5%	

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

Household type	16-17	18-24	25-49	50 plus	Total
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
Total	0	63	410	33	506
%	0	12.5%	81%	6.5%	

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

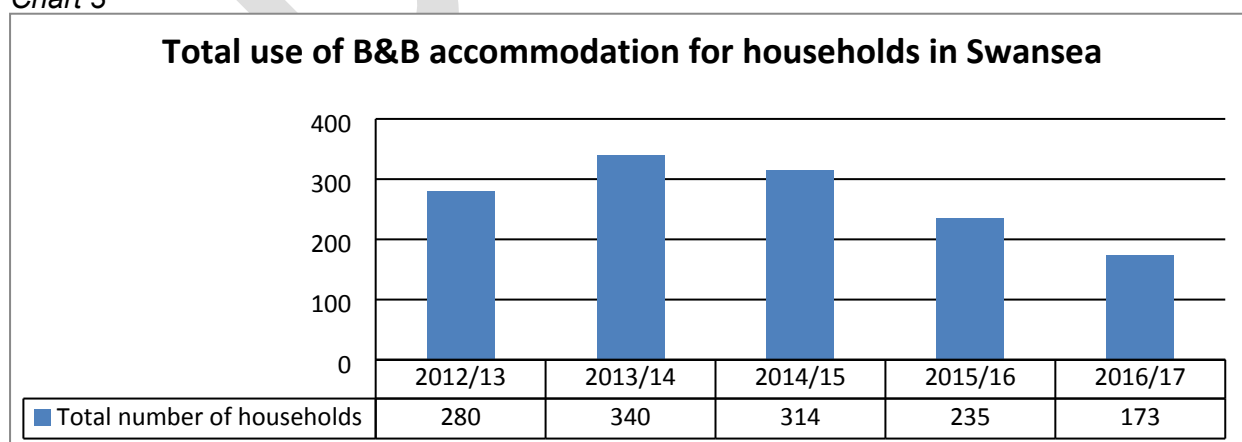
	Swansea			Wales		
	2015	2016	2017	2015	2016	2017
Actual count	5	16	21	82	141	188
Estimated rough sleepers (2 weekly count)	19	23	26	240	313	345

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

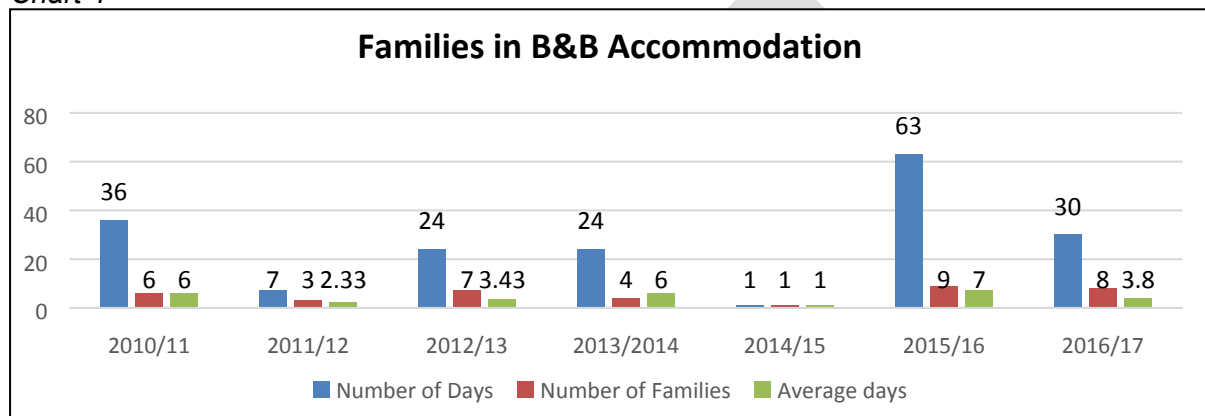


It is a key priority to ensure that use of B&B is kept to a minimum and a range of alternative options have been developed to enable this. In particular, the Council aims to abolish the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation for 16 and 17 year olds and

there were no young people placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation during 2016/17.

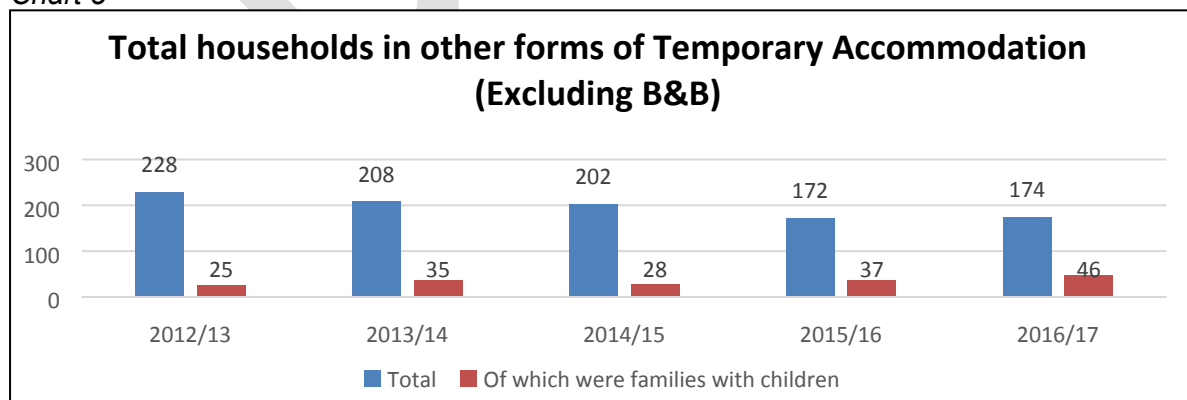
The Council also aims to minimise use of bed and breakfast accommodation for families, and use only when absolutely necessary. In 2016/17, a target was set to ensure that the average days spent in bed and breakfast did not exceed 6 days, which was achieved. Chart 4 shows that the number of families in 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 1910 households were supported by the TSU and partner agencies, table 6 provides a breakdown of the type of support provided. The numbers of households supported by the TSU has consistently increased, with an additional 513 households (37% more) 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

Type of Support	2014/15 Number supported	2015/16 Number Supported	2016/17 Number Supported
Generic for single people (tenancy sustainability)	420	461	604
Families (over 25yrs old)	310	370	409
Older Person	214	199	237
Domestic Violence	88	121	146
Community Care	90	92	107
Young Person	89	105	92
Private Rented Sector Support (in house)	0	93	74
Young family (under 25yrs old)	78	75	71
Refugee	39	73	59
UC Personal Budgeting (in house)	0	0	54
Rapid Response (in house)	69	65	49
Support on demand (in house)	0	0	8
Total	1397	1654	1910

The effectiveness of the support provided by the TSU is demonstrated by looking at the number of households threatened with homelessness at the start of support compared with the number who are homeless or threatened with homelessness at the end of support. The average length of time households are supported for is 212 days (approximately 7 months). The table below shows a more detailed breakdown.

Table 7: Length of time households were supported

Length of Time Supported	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Up to 1 week	5%	5%	3%
1wk-3mths	39%	42%	33%
3mths-6mths	20%	23%	21%
6mths-1yr	25%	18%	25%
Over 1yr	12%	12%	18%

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.
- Public funding cuts are leading to reduced budgets across local government and health, which are resulting in higher thresholds for people to qualify for services such as mental health care.
- There is uncertainty over future funding levels for Supporting People. The Welsh Government is considering changes to how the grant is managed and has introduced a two year Full Flexibility Pathfinder over ten Welsh Government grants, which include Supporting People and the Homelessness Prevention Grant and another 15% flexibility pathfinder across five grants which includes Supporting People. Swansea sits in the 15% pathfinder. Whilst the outcomes are currently unknown, any decreases in funding levels will result in a reduction in the number of support staff at a time when demand is likely to increase dramatically.
- Changes to future funding of housing costs for short-term supported accommodation will also have an impact on the level of support services provided. In October 2017, the UK Government announced its intention to change the way it funds the housing costs (rent and eligible service charges) for short term supported accommodation across the UK. From April 2020, the UK Government plans to devolve this funding to the Welsh Government (it is currently paid to individuals via Housing Benefit). As a result, the Welsh Government needs to develop a model to distribute this funding to supported accommodation schemes in Wales from 2020/21 onwards. It is critical that Swansea ensures that it receives adequate funding to maintain current levels of support.
- 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 & 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:

- 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 ([add link](#))

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-productive⁵ 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, 3rd 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

⁵ 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*

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Homelessness Strategy Action Plan
Final draft for consultation
2018-2022

Page 36

Aims & Objectives

The Homelessness Strategy sets out the aim and objectives of Swansea Council and its partners to tackle homelessness over the next four years. This plan has been developed to provide the details of the actions that the Council and its partners will need to take to deliver these.

Homelessness Strategy Aim:

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

Homelessness Strategy 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 end the need for people to sleep rough.**

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
Objective 1: Ensuring service users are at the centre of service delivery.					
1.1	Introduce a co-productive approach with service users to develop the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness Charter Service standards for Housing Options Written standards for temporary accommodation used by the Council 	Operations Manager Community Housing	Dec 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of Steering Group using co-production principles Publication of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homelessness Charter Housing Options Service Standards Temporary Accommodation Standards 	Principles of co-production are incorporated into the design and delivery of services to ensure that people with experience of homelessness are meaningfully involved in planning services.
1.2	Improve infrastructure to allow digital inclusion in Housing Options, Tenancy Support Unit and District Housing Offices	Senior Caseworker / Operations Manager East/West/ TSU Co-ordinator	March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide WiFi access, phone charging points, and PC access 	Improve digital inclusion of homeless people.
1.3	Review use of Personal Housing Plans.	Housing Options Manager	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PHPs in place for all households accepted at risk of homelessness Written information provided for all households who approach service Feedback mechanism in place to monitor effectiveness 	Improve written information to all homelessness households.
1.4	Pro-actively promote Housing Options Services in social media and press.	Housing Options Manager	December. 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 press releases providing information on the Homelessness Service, reported in local press annually Increase use of social media to promote services Bi-annual survey to gauge levels of general public's understanding of homelessness & housing advice services 	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.
1.5	Review Housing Options equalities monitoring systems	Casework Team Leader	June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed consultation with equalities representative groups re. best use of equalities monitoring data. 	Ensure that homelessness and housing services are accessible to all.

		& TSU Co-ordinator		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research best practice • Areas for improvement identified 	
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Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
Objective 2: Prioritising early intervention and prevention of homelessness.					
2.1	Develop pre-eviction protocols with all housing providers and understand reasons for abandoned tenancies.	Operations Manager Community Housing / Supporting People Team	March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols in place • Evictions accurately monitored across all forms of housing 	Number of evictions reduced.
2.2	Review the effectiveness of the hospital discharge protocol on an annual basis.	Operations Manager Community Housing	Annual – 1 st review completed by April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & address any blockages in order to reduce delayed discharges • Active, on-going engagement with health, social services and ADAPT 	Robust Hospital discharge protocol in place.
2.3	Review the effectiveness of the Prisoner Pathway on an annual basis.	Operations Manager Community Housing	Annual – 1 st review completed by April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting People budget to continue funding specific Homelessness Officer post to deal with applications from ex-offenders. • Increase use of technology to provide appropriate advice to those in custody • Reduce number of ex-offenders homeless on release (target to be agreed with Prison/Probation Service) 	Robust Prisoner Pathway in place
2.4	Ensure target is met for homelessness prevention.	Housing Options Manager	Annual reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of households successfully prevented from becoming homelessness to meet or exceed 67% 	Target met and reviewed annually.
2.5	Monitor use of Prevention fund to ensure it successfully contributes to sustainable tenancies.	Housing Options Manager	September 2019 (Annually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and evaluate success rate of tenancies obtained and/or supported by the prevention Fund, 	Homelessness Prevention Fund is used effectively and can demonstrate tenancy sustainment.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
2.6	Monitor reasons for loss of rented accommodation in order to better understand the drivers behind this cause of homelessness.	Casework Team leader	May 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve understanding of impact of welfare reform on tenancy sustainability to inform work of financial inclusion steering group see action 2.12 On-going monitoring in place to fully understand and evaluate other reasons for loss of accommodation. 	Reduce number of evictions from private rented accommodation.
2.7	Review and improve information available on-line and in written format, taking into account the recommendations from the Wales Audit Office Report including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making better use of the Council's website and social media Use the WAO checklist to identify options to improve how the Council manages demand for homeless service 	Housing Options Manager/ Senior Customer Services Officer	September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved, mobile friendly website in place WAO checklist completed and improvements identified to better manage demand Easier point on-line access for service users and professionals to refer to TSU and Housing Options 	Reduce demand on Homelessness Service by providing clear, comprehensive housing advice on line.
2.8	Agree criteria for mapping how many young people age 13-16 may be at high risk of homelessness	BAYS+ Partnership Manager	April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Criteria agreed. Agree with key stakeholders (eg Families First & Team Around the Family) what the "support offer" to this group will be 	Improve homelessness prevention services for young people.
2.9	Develop an education programme to increase knowledge of housing and homelessness issues in partnership with young people.	BAYS+ Partnership Manager	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VSG awarded to BAYS+ to develop Project & implement between October 2018 & October 2019 Evaluation of project completed 	Improve homelessness prevention services for young people.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
2.10	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 for reaching: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people aged 14 and over • Parents/carers • Other professions working with young people with families 	BAYS+ Area Manager	April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication materials developed, with young people (including consideration of alternatives methods e.g. technological solutions such as Apps, website, social media, animations) • Communication plan in place to promote agreed messages • Assessment of education programme completed (see 2.6) 	Simple clear housing advice available for parents/carers and young people.
2.11	Review mediation services that are available to assist with homelessness prevention.	Casework Team Leader / Housing Options Manager	October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping exercise on existing mediation provision completed including: how they are accessed; availability; funding arrangements: and consider good practice elsewhere • Monitor outcomes of Voluntary Sector Grant Funded Mediation Project 	Increase homelessness prevention due to mediation.
2.12	Work with partners to address the increased need for advice on welfare benefits, income maximisation and debt.	Casework Team Leader / Adult, Prosperity & Wellbeing Manager/ TSU Co-ordinator	September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out assessment of current provision with Financial Inclusion Steering Group to identify best use of funds to increase provision • Continue to maximise use of Discretionary Housing Payments 	Increased availability of welfare benefits, income maximisation and debt advice.
2.13	Develop stronger links with Poverty & Prevention Service to ensure that homeless households have access to training, employment and education services.	Community Housing Operations Manager / Adult, Prosperity & Wellbeing Manager/ TSU Co-ordinator	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify barriers to access services with service users and support providers. • Work with Workways+ to improve access. 	Homeless households become more economically active and resilient.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
2.14	Work with DWP, Housing Benefit & Poverty and Prevention Service to identify and advise households at risk of future homelessness due to the impact of Welfare Reform.	Adult, Prosperity & Wellbeing Manager / Casework Team Leader	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing Options representative on Financial inclusion Steering Group Identification of communities most affected by welfare reform to target advice 	Improve early intervention and prevention for households affected by welfare reform.
2.15	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.	Housing Options Manager / Housing Training Officer	September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete pilot with Domestic Abuse Hub workers Assess feasibility of extending training to other organisations 	Reduce demand on Homelessness Service by ensuring a wider range of organisations can provide housing advice.
2.16 Page 41	Explore ways to improve outcomes for homeless households with no local connection.	Operations Manager Community Housing	December 2020	<p>Liaise with neighbouring authorities to determine the feasibility of developing a regional group to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hospital discharges Reciprocal arrangements Housing First Reconnection Temporary accommodation 	More regional focus and collaborative approach for those homeless households with no local connection.
2.17	Identify and prepare for the implications of the Immigration Act 2014 e.g. Right to Rent checks and Britain's exit from the EU.	Housing Solicitor	TBA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor implementation date from Welsh Government. Identify relevant steps landlords are required to undertake to comply. 	Appropriate advice is in place for housing providers.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
Objective 3: Ensuring suitable accommodation is available for people who are or may become homeless.					
3.1	Work with RSL partners to set out and agree expectations to identify how the social housing sector will work together to alleviate homelessness.	Landlord Services Manager	April 2021	Complete the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Nomination agreements Review Housing Management Arrangements for Supported Housing Review Move-On Strategy Development of Pre-Eviction Protocols 	Written agreement in place with all the major RSLs operating in Swansea committing to revised protocols.
3.2	Ensure B&B accommodation is only used for families in an emergency and that target of 6 days is not exceeded.	Housing Options Manager	Annual reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to ensure adequate levels of council-run temporary accommodation for families. 	Average time that families are in B&B not to exceed 6 days.
3.3	Prevent use of B&B for 16 & 17 year olds.	BAYS+ Partnership Manager	Annual reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that the Homelessness Service and BAYS+ actively participate in the Supporting People Review of Young Persons Accommodation. 	B&B not used for 16 & 17 year olds.
3.4	Reduce the use and length of time spent in temporary accommodation for homeless households with complex needs (ie Mental Health issues & Learning Disabilities, substance misuse) spend in temporary accommodation.	Operations Manager Community Housing / Supporting People Team	April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working group established with Mental Health, Learning Disabilities, Health & Substance Misuse 	Improve the outcomes for homeless households with complex needs (e.g. mental health, learning disabilities, substance misuse).
3.5	Create a Housing Gateway Officer post.	Operations Manager Community Housing	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements made to Housing Gateway database Improved data collection, e.g. on evictions, abandonments, referrals etc. 	An effective single point of access for all supported accommodation.
3.6	Improve access to temporary supported accommodation for couples.	Casework Team leader / Supporting People Team	Dec 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify barriers Discuss options with providers 	Homeless couples are able to access temporary supported accommodation.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
3.7	Reduce barriers for accessing temporary accommodation and supported temporary accommodation.	Housing Options Manager / Casework Team Leader	September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify barriers with stakeholders/service users Address key issues including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pets Storage of belonging Work/finance Review completed and recommendations agreed 	Temporary and supported accommodation is more accessible for all households.
3.8	Simplify access to refuge accommodation for households who are experiencing domestic abuse.	Operations Manager Community Housing / VAWDASV Co-ordinator	March 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with neighbouring authorities and providers to identify issues Develop common referral process 	"Tell it once" approach implemented for households accessing domestic abuse accommodation.
3.9 Page 43	Review the provision of temporary supported accommodation for households with complex needs experiencing domestic abuse	VAWDASV Co-ordinator / Operations Manager Community Housing/ Supporting People Team	April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review to consider: No of spaces available, void levels, waiting list, eviction levels 	Adequate provision of temporary supported accommodation for households with complex needs experiencing domestic abuse.
3.10	Review the Move-On Strategy.	Operations Manager Community Housing / Nominations Officer	Dec 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenancy sustainment performance indicator agreed Review of Move-on Strategy completed with partners Consider options to adopt process for all temporary accommodation. 	Robust Move-On Strategy in place.
3.11	Increase the supply of suitable and affordable private rented properties.	PR Sector Access Team Manager / Team Leader - Housing and Public Health Division	June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding of 2 additional Environmental Health Officers to speed up Rent Smart Wales registration process and increase no. of inspections carried out. Information leaflet provided for PR landlords on support and advice that the Council can provide Develop closer links with PR landlords 	Increased supply of good quality, affordable private rented accommodation

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
3.12	Consider feasibility of establishing social lettings agency for private sector properties.	PR Sector Access Team Manager / Housing Options Manager	April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with PR Landlord Forum to identify barriers/issues • Improve "offer"/support to private landlord • Recommendation to be made on feasibility of Council run lettings agency. 	Increase the supply of good quality, affordable private rented properties.
3.13	Development of shared accommodation solutions for single households under 35.	Landlord Services Manager	September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess local need for shared housing for young people (under 25 and under 35) and inform More Homes Strategy and Local Housing Strategy. • Meet with RSLs/Council housing management to discuss development of shared social housing • Identify best practice • Consider and cost additional private landlord incentives 	Increased affordable housing options for people under the age of 35.
3.14	Review the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.	Landlord Services Manager	December 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish Steering Group • Identify changes required by the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Welfare Reform etc within 12 months • Complete review and revise policy 	New Allocation Policy in place.

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

4.1	Improve access to substance misuse support services for homeless households.	Supporting People Team / Operations Manager Community Housing	June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out consultation with service users and providers to identify issues • Work with Substance Misuse Area Planning Board to improve access to services • Improve links between Housing Options, TSU and Area Planning Board 	Reduction in the number of individuals whose tenancies fail or who are prevented from accessing supported accommodation due to lack of appropriate substance misuse support.
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Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
4.2	Improve access to mental health support services for homeless households.	Supporting People Team / Operations Manager Community Housing	June 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out consultation with service users and providers to identify issues Work with Social Service's Mental Health Commissioning Board and Health to improve access to services 	Reduction in the number of individuals whose tenancies fail or who are prevented from accessing supported accommodation due to lack of appropriate mental health support.
4.3	Implement findings from Supporting People review of Tenancy Support Unit.	Tenancy Support Unit Co-ordinator	September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting People review of the service due in Autumn 2018 Revise referral and assessment forms 	Adopt enabling, strength-based approach to support.
4.4	Reduce Tenancy Support Unit waiting lists across all client groups.	Tenancy Support Unit Co-ordinator	April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish reasons why households are supported over a year & consider ways to reduce this Increase the "support on demand" service 	Deliver a responsive, flexible tenancy support service to ensure that people receive the right level of support at the right time.
4.5 Page 45	Strengthen and formalise the working relationships between Local Area Co-ordinators and Housing Options/Tenancy Support Unit.	LAC Implementation Manager / Housing Options Manager / TSU Manager	June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish good working relationships with Local Area Co-ordinators Monitor no. of introductions to LAC service Monitor no. of referrals to Housing Options/TSU 	Reduce demand on homelessness services by providing alternative options to support households at risk of homelessness.
4.6	Raise awareness of provision in place to support men who are experiencing or have experienced domestic abuse.	VAWDASV Co-ordinator / Housing Options Manager	June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor level of need Map provision Ensure information is disseminated through a range of channels i.e. social media, website, information leaflet 	Sufficient provision in place for men experiencing domestic abuse.
4.7	Consult with BME stakeholders and service users to improve ways services are provided to households with language barriers and cultural differences.	Housing Options Manager / Senior Policy Officer	June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with BME Stakeholders Identify service improvements Research best practice 	Provide a more accessible homelessness service.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
4.8	Develop housing advice leaflets specifically for refugees to provide targeted housing advice.	Housing Options Manager / Senior Customer Services Officer	September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with BME Stakeholders and service users to identify issues Leaflet produced and translated into identified languages Work with Home Office accommodation provider to ensure information is provided to asylum seekers at an early stage. 	Refugees have an improved understanding how to access housing.
4.9	Map the provision in place to assist and advise individuals who are ineligible for homelessness and housing assistance.	Operations Manager Community Housing / Migration, Asylum Seeker and Refugee Coordinator	October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Social Services and the Asylum Seeker & Refugee Multi-Agency Forum to identify issues Existing provision mapped 	Clear understanding and improved signposting to resources available to assist non-eligible households.
4.10	Up-date and improve on-line Supported Housing Directory.	Supporting People Team	April 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement system to ensure information is regularly up-dated 	On-line directory up-dated and monitored which is promoted and accessible to all stakeholders.
4.11	Develop a training plan for housing and support providers.	Operations Manager Community Housing / Housing Training Officer	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key areas for training to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Domestic Abuse ➤ Mental health training ➤ Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Psychologically-informed environments (PIE) ➤ Housing/Homelessness legislation ➤ Substance misuse awareness ➤ Households with No Recourse to Public Funds. ➤ Welfare Reform updates Training sources identified Training plan disseminated to relevant stakeholders. Training plan implemented for Housing Options staff. 	Housing and support providers receive appropriate training and are well resourced to provide appropriate advice according to the needs of individuals.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
4.12	Develop a Transitional Accommodations Officer Post	Housing Options Manager / TSU Co-coordinator	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link in with TSU to ensure smooth transition of support. Develop referral process to identify those households that require transitional service. Measures in place to sustain tenancies. 	Pre-tenancy and transitional support service operational.
4.13	Identify and monitor the number of repeat homelessness presentation and the number of repeat requests for support.	Housing Options Manager / TSU Co-coordinator	March 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review homelessness presentations and identify repeat cases during 2017/18 Review TSU support cases and identify repeat requests for support during 2017/18 	Reduce number of repeat homelessness presentation. Reduce number of repeat support cases.
Objective 5: Providing robust responses to support rough sleepers and end the need for people to sleep rough.					
5.1 Page 47	Carry out a feasibility study to look at developing a holistic “solutions centre” for services for rough sleepers.	Landlord Services Manager	April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feasibility Study completed Options assessed Report to Cabinet Member 	Improve facilities for those who are vulnerably housed and sleeping rough.
5.2	Develop a Housing First approach to address the housing and support needs of homeless people and rough sleepers with the most complex needs.	Operations Manager Community Housing / Supporting People Team	April 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out tendering exercise Housing First Project in place to support approx. 15 people per annum 	Reduce levels of rough sleeping in Swansea.
5.3	Increase emergency bed provision and ensure support and advice is provided to rough sleepers within 48 hours.	Operations Manager Community Housing	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Robust Rough Sleeping Intervention Team in place and providing support 7 days a week Develop additional emergency bed space Improve link between and emergency bed space and supporting housing projects (Gateway Officer Post) 	Reduce levels of rough sleeping in Swansea.

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
5.4	Develop a multi-agency approach to serious incidents involving rough sleepers and other vulnerable groups.	Operations Manager Community Housing	June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement on approach from relevant partners Lessons learnt and service improvements identified across all agencies/organisations 	Robust safety protocol in place for rough sleepers.
5.5	Carry out an annual review of the Cold Weather Plan.	Housing Options Manager	September 2019 (annually)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual review completed Relevant improvements identified and implemented 	Robust cold weather plan in place that offers appropriate protection for rough sleepers, and proactively helps them to access more suitable housing and support.
5.6	Develop information leaflet for general public and local authority Councillors on support available to assist rough sleepers.	Operations Manager Community Housing	October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with partners Produce leaflet Promote and disseminate information 	Increase awareness of assistance available to rough sleepers.
5.7	Develop a monitoring system to record the support needs and housing history of rough sleepers in order to accurately inform future service provision.	Housing Options Manager / Casework Team Leader	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of (Welsh Government's) Street Homelessness Information Network (SHIN) Council rep. on national development group. 	Better information on the needs of rough sleepers available to identify effective interventions.
5.8	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.	Senior Caseworker	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-going homelessness/housing representation on HHA VGAP Group Support implementation of action plan recommendations 	Improve health outcomes for rough sleepers and other vulnerable groups.
5.9	Review with Social Services/ABMU the need for rough sleepers and vulnerable households to have better access to health including mental health services.	Operations Manager Community Housing	December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with service users and providers Hold discussions with health and social services 	Increased access to health services

Ref	Action required	Responsible officer	By When	Key activities	Outcome
5.10	Carry out local qualitative research with former rough sleepers to identify the key factors that helped them obtain and maintain permanent housing.	Operations Manager Community Housing	December 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with service users • Research report completed 	Better information in the needs of rough sleepers available to identify effective interventions.

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To:
Councillor Andrea Lewis
Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy

Please ask for: Scrutiny
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Date 05 July 2018
Dyddiad:

Summary: This is a letter from the Homelessness Working Group to the Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy following the meeting of the Working Group on 12 June 2018.

Dear Cllr Lewis

The Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group met on 14 May when two sessions were held to take evidence from representatives of relevant organisations on what the Council can do to help homelessness in Swansea and in particular the Council's activities to manage homelessness, the current position, performance of relevant services, and challenges. The evidence gathered from this meeting was used to prepare questions to put to you and relevant officers at the second meeting of the Working Group on 12 June.

We would like to thank representatives from Swansea Homeless Sanctuary, Shelter Cymru, Crisis, Wallich Dinas Fechan, Caer Las, Zac's Place, Matthew's House, and the homelessness nurse for participating in the first meeting and you, Alex Williams, Jane Harries, Steve Porter, Anita Evans, Peter Fields from the Council and Gareth Bartley and Malcolm Jones of ABMU for attending the second meeting and answering questions. We appreciate everyone's engagement and input.

This letter provides you with feedback from these meetings.

At the meeting on 12 June you gave a short introduction on the Council's work on homelessness, stating that the Council will be working closely with a range of partners to develop the Homelessness Strategy. You informed Members that not all of the issues fall within your portfolio but that you will ensure that any conclusions and recommendations are passed on to the relevant Cabinet Member.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

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Whilst the Working Group found the meetings informative and interesting, a number of important issues were raised and discussed. The bullet points are evidence we heard in the first session.

Accommodation

- It is felt that there is a lack of specialist accommodation for people with complex needs (people with multiple conditions such as substance misuse and LD, or substance misuse and mental ill health, Alcohol related brain injury, etc.).
- The Wallich argue that a specialist residential project is needed as a priority for those clients who have become homeless due to the issues surrounding their mental health and/or substance misuse. These individuals are often very chaotic, and their needs deemed too high for a standard hostel.
- There is an increasing number of homeless people with complex/multiple needs including mental health. Many of these individuals don't have basic life skills and need continuous support over a long period of time. Often this support is not available. No one takes responsibility in the council or health board to assess and meet their needs.

We heard the Council has identified there is a need for greater specialist support; however, it is difficult to provide for all circumstances. The Strategy will look at this to try and deal with the most entrenched rough sleepers, and you hope that the development of housing first will start to address this issue. The working group believe that it is important that this lack of specialist accommodation is addressed as part of the work on the strategy and would like more information on what is planned.

- Concern that wet houses are no longer meeting the needs of alcoholics with many becoming incontinent and ending up blocking beds in hospitals. Is this model fit for purpose? Should we be looking at specialist 'wet residential care homes', employing care staff at our current wet projects or opening a Managed Alcohol programme?

We were told that Social Services do not think that this issue causes bed blocking in hospitals and that there are only a small number of people involved but that it can have a large impact on provision. Alcoholics in this group need to have a bespoke package. They are offered provision but do not always accept it. We heard the council is looking at reducing the number of evictions and better recording them so they can look at the causes. We would be grateful for more detail as to what this involves and the timescale for such measures to be put in place.

- Further gaps include hostels that take women, under 18s and under 21s and provision for EU citizens or people with no recourse to public funds. Shelter dealt with 100 of the latter category last year.
- Very little emergency accommodation for homeless couples. Private renting is the only route other than living on the street. Hostels and supported accommodation providers are very reluctant to accommodate couples in the same project.

The Working Group heard that the Homelessness Strategy will try to deal with all gaps in provision with this approach. We would like more information on specific proposals for these groups.

On the issue of 'no recourse to public funds' we were told that this is a real challenge for housing as these people fall outside the criteria for eligibility to council housing. The voluntary sector will be involved to assist with housing people from outside the UK who don't meet the criteria for council housing. This could be a bigger problem when we leave the EU. We would like some reassurance that the housing strategy will seek to address this problem.

- It is important that Swansea learns from any good practice being used by Councils elsewhere in relation to the Housing First approach. Are the witnesses aware of any?

The Working Group heard that Wales is not the first country to use this approach. It is being used in Scandinavia and there are mixed reviews of its success. It has also been introduced in Dublin. Officers have learnt is that it cannot be introduced on a piecemeal basis.

- There is concern that homeless people are not fully benefitting from housing association accommodation.

The Working Group heard that housing associations are part of the 'move on strategy'. They also house people themselves directly. As part of the strategy the Council is looking at strengthening the agreement with them. Housing First will also include private housing. We were reassured on this point.

- Caer Las argue that there are long waiting lists for access to move-on panel. There needs to be options from providers for bespoke packages for individuals.

The witnesses at the meeting did not believe that this was a problem. Nevertheless, as the perception exists we would like a more detailed assurance that Caer Las' concerns have been heard and that a dialogue has been opened up with them to deal with any issues they have identified.

- Concern about potential changes to legislation with the abolition of priority need and intentionality. This will have a major impact on temporary accommodation and provision of supported housing. How will the Council cope with this?

The Working Group heard that it will be very difficult and will come at a cost to Swansea. However, in Swansea we have quite good provision. It was stated that Shelter Cymru is keen to be involved with the abolition of priority need and intentionality.

- The Working Group felt Swansea needs a seamless way for people to access provision following concerns raised with us by some groups that they were unable to direct clients to suitable provision at certain times during the week.

The Working Group was informed that Housing Options is our 'Front Door'. A gap in provision has been identified on weekends and working with Wallich has helped to

close this gap. We heard the Council is looking at providing information to businesses so they know how to direct people to help. The challenging part is getting people to engage. We would like more information on what is planned and how this is being addressed in the draft housing strategy.

- There is concern about support for people with learning difficulties who have moved into housing.

We were informed that if people are assessed to have a social care need then social services could potentially support them. It is looked at on an individual basis. We would like more information as to how this group fit into the housing first project and what further support will be available for them once this is underway.

- Concern that some people who have moved into housing have issues with budgeting.

We heard that there is a tenancy support unit for council house tenants who can help them to manage their finances. We also heard that as part of the homelessness strategy, the Council is looking at providing transitional support and homes being ready for tenants to move in. There is a possibility that this could begin before the strategy is in place. We would like to take you up on your offer to provide more information on what is provided to social housing tenants and would be grateful if this could also encompass tenants of RSLs as well.

- Concern about how we identify the needs of people who do not have mental health issues but have never owned or rented a house before and do not know what to do.

We were informed that there is a procedure in place and that there are a number of ways that issues are picked up. People's needs are assessed and if needed they are referred to tenancy support services. We would like more information on what work is carried out to identify these vulnerable tenants, how that work is recorded and what actions are taken to put support in place. How are those actions monitored and what evaluation takes place of outcomes?

Social Service and safeguarding issues

- The thresholds for homeless and vulnerable adults being accepted for social services involvement are too high. Agencies work with some of the most complex and challenging individuals and yet it is almost impossible to get additional specialist support for them especially if they have not been in the system before.

Social Services stated that the mental health team is a secondary care service so there will be a gap in provision and confirmed that there is difficulty in accessing support for lower level need. We would like details on actions being put in place through the draft housing strategy and housing first, by social services and ABMU to ensure that this group do not miss out on much needed support.

- Dual diagnosis remains an issue. People with mental health needs are unable to access the Community Mental Health Team support because of drug dependency issues.

We heard that Social Services do provide provision but they agree that it may not be enough support. However ABMU confirmed there is going to be a Dual Diagnosis Strategy developed to map need across dual diagnosis as dealing with dual diagnosis is something that has not been done well in the past. We would like more detail on the implementation of this strategy including resources, timescale and proposed support.

ABMU were also asked if they have provision to add value to the Housing First Strategy. They confirmed that housing is key to their approach and strategy. If people have a dual diagnosis there can be a dual approach. They feel the important thing is how services are wrapped around people in Housing First.

- The homelessness nurse has identified that there is an issue with data sharing between health and social care.

We were told by Social Services that there is no issue with the sharing of data as far as they are concerned. Nevertheless, we felt that as the homelessness nurse works in a primary care environment that there may be difficulties in them accessing data on clients. We would like some reassurance that data sharing protocols enable primary care providers to work seamlessly with other agencies including the council and secondary care providers.

Health Service issues

- Hospital social work for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed is extremely limited. Homeless people in hospital should be assessed as quickly as possible to prevent delayed discharges.
- Within Swansea any client who wishes to be scripted must first self-refer to AADAS on either a Monday or Tuesday morning. To a chaotic drug user this is a time where they may be potentially begging etc to fund their first hit of the day. These referral hours need to be made more flexible and dramatically extended as clients who neither make it on a Monday or Tuesday must wait an entire week before the opportunity again arises. Once referred to AADAS there is approximately a six-month waiting list to be scripted. Many clients therefore do not even start the process. There is a 12 month wait to go into rehab.

Witnesses recognised that there is a problem and having more flexibility in the system to deal with people who are chaotic is something that will be explored in the future. We would like more detail as to what actions are being put in place to deal with this issue.

- Caer Las argue that services for people who are unable to access services due to dual diagnosis could be improved by Swansea having a network that brings together stakeholders from health (incl. mental health), D&A services and housing.

Witnesses confirmed that they hope there will be a joint approach taken with the Housing First project. We would like more information as to what that joint approach will entail.

- Concern that ABMU cuts will see the homeless nurse being axed.

ABMU confirmed that the homeless nurse post is secure and that they hope to extend the service. We are happy with that assurance.

Learning Disabilities

- There is an increasing number of homeless people with Borderline Learning Disabilities who have no access to Learning Disability services but are unable to read (or have limited reading and language skills), write, manage money or maintain a tenancy and are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

We would like information as to how this group will be supported as part of the draft housing strategy.

Housing First

- The Wallich argue that without the recruitment of additional experienced staff to provide intensive support then this pilot is doomed to fail. They say that there are still gaps in service provision which requires the full engagement of the health board specifically around mental health. Crisis argued that Housing First cannot be implemented in isolation but that it was not on the health board's agenda.

We were reassured by the health board representatives at the meeting that they are fully engaged with the housing first process but would like more detail on the work that is on-going to deliver a cross-agency service once housing first gets underway.

Ex-Offenders

- People are coming out of prison and have nowhere to go. What advice and support are being given to them before they are discharged? Is probation liaising with housing at appropriate staging points? What work is being carried out to maintain continuity of housing provision for Swansea residents from the start of their prison term to release?

The Working Group was informed that due to legislative changes ex-offenders are no longer priority need. However there is currently a prisoner pathway and there are resettlement teams in prisons in Wales. The challenge is to get ex-offenders into housing on the day of release from prison.

We also heard that Social Services have greater involvement with prisoners now as there is a statutory requirement. If prisoners are found to need social services support they will receive it when they leave prison.

We would like to see detailed statistics on the number of ex-prisoners who are released and return to Swansea. What percentage are referred to housing and social services and how quickly are they resettled and found accommodation?

Day Centre

- The loss of the St Matthew's day centre is felt particularly hard by agencies. Many argue for a one-stop seven-day service shop, opening long hours and which

accommodates all staff including outreach, Big Issue, physical and mental health professionals, Housing Options caseworkers, probation etc and which would benefit from regular drop-in sessions from Citizen's Advice, DWP and job centre coaches. They believe this building would include subsidised food, computers, lounge area, laundry facilities, showers, lockers etc. and could be used to develop suitable social enterprises to assist clients back into work.

We heard that good work is being done by Access Point but that they need better accommodation to provide better services. You implied that as part of the Homelessness Strategy you are looking to bring providers together under one roof and provide some of the day services previously available at St, Matthew's centre. You said that you recognise that there is a gap and the Council, with partners, is looking at what can be done. We would like more detail on these proposals together with some idea of timescale.

Gateway

- All the agencies argued that the Gateway system, which is the single central referral system that operates all the supported (hostel) accommodation in Swansea needs reform. They argue that the system is not being managed or utilised to its full potential. They would like to see an allocated 'Gateway Officer' appointed to oversee all hostel vacancies in Swansea.

Because some hostels allegedly 'cherry pick' clients leaving the most difficult clients to sit on the waiting or declined lists indefinitely, and because many hostels also require their own specialist referral forms to be completed as well as the gateway referral form, this creates a duplication of work and places an extra burden on the limited outreach services.

There was also an assertion that there is a lack of confidence/knowledge from frontline staff in using/managing Gateway effectively. This could be due to the turnover of staff in residential projects and needs to be addressed by training new recruits correctly.

We heard the Council recognises there is a problem and hope to put such an officer in place in the next few months. We would like some indication as to when that officer is likely to take up post.

Evictions from supported accommodation due to rent arrears

- Wallich argue that many of their clients have previously relied on Simple Payment or Post Office accounts for their benefit payments. However due to the closure of these types of accounts all supported accommodation providers are being urged to ensure that residents are being assisted to open bank accounts. Clients are frequently being evicted from supported accommodation due to service charge arrears.

Can the council work with these providers to assist them in setting up Direct Debit payments for these charges? This would assist the most vulnerable, those lacking

budgeting skills, and financially exploited members of our society to avoid losing their accommodation due to these arrears.

The Council is aware that it is an issue but that people have to take responsibility. However, they are looking at the number of evictions and the reasons for them. We would like more detail on the conclusions of this study.

Out-of-hours support

- Matthew's House argue that there does not appear to be any support at weekend and out-of-hours. They say that being open on Sunday evenings they are often caught in a volatile situation with people struggling with nothing. On many occasions they say they have been unable to access anything after 2pm on weekdays. Can the council provide clearer signposting for volunteers and charities to access support out-of-hours?

We were given confirmation that the rough sleeper's team provision has been extended and there is therefore support at the weekend. An offer was made by the operations manager of community housing to meet with Matthew's House to discuss the matter further if they still think that there is a gap. We would appreciate more detail as to the hours this provision now works and how it is being advertised to various third sector agencies working with rough sleepers.

Co-ordination

- There are many small groups that have established themselves on Facebook etc. and want to help homeless people. However, these are not co-ordinated or monitored. Do we have the capacity to try and tackle this?

The Council says that for assistance people should contact Housing Options in the first instance, then Access Point and then the rough sleeper's team. Could the council better publicise these arrangements for these groups?

City Centre

- A number of agencies told us that the City Rangers and Police have acted in an aggressive way towards homeless people and even outreach workers seeking to help them. As well as homeless people, Big Issue sellers have also been moved on by Rangers. Can the council provide training for the Rangers to act in a more sympathetic way? Can they liaise with the police on this issue?

It was confirmed that a City Centre Street Vulnerability Group has been set up by the police. It has only just started but it will look at the issues. We would like some details as to the instructions and training issued to City Rangers as to how to deal with rough sleepers and beggars in the City Centre. We would also like details of any discussions that the council has had with the police on this issue.

Following the meeting, we discussed progress and made the following conclusions:

1. The Working Group appreciates what is being done by everyone involved but feels that the threads need to come together – a clear pathway is needed.
2. The Working Group feels that it is important for the Council to take a strategic viewpoint and that is why Housing First is so important.
3. Scrutiny will need to do pre-decision on the Homelessness Strategy before it goes to Cabinet. The issues highlighted by this Working Group will need to be taken into account when developing the Strategy.

Your Response

We hope you find this letter useful and informative. We are interested in hearing your thoughts about the issues raised and would ask that you respond by Thursday 26 July 2018.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Black', written in a cursive style.

COUNCILLOR PETER BLACK
CONVENER, HOMELESSNESS SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP
CLLR.PETER.BLACK@SWANSEA.GOV.UK

Councillor Peter Black
Convener
Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group

Please ask for: Councillor Andrea Lewis
Direct Line: 01792 63 7442
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Our Ref: AL/CM
Your Ref:
Date: 26 July 2018

BY E MAIL

Dear Councillor Black

HOMELESSNESS SCRUTINY WORKING GROUP

Thank you for your letter dated the 5th July 2018, following the meeting with the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group held on 12th June 2018. The following response seeks to address the issues raised in your letter, provide the working group with assurances that Swansea is leading the way in preventing homelessness and sets out how the Council and its partners intend on tackling homelessness over the next few years.

The Working Group I know are fully aware that homelessness can be a challenging environment and that external factors, such as welfare reform, can have a direct impact on the levels of homelessness. In addition, it is important to note that those faced with homelessness can often suffer with mental health or substance misuse issues and therefore we need to take a multi-agency approach if we are going to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable in the City are met.

For ease of reference I have addressed each of the comments in the order they have been raised in your letter.

Accommodation

The working group believe that it is important that the lack of specialist accommodation [for people with complex needs] is addressed as part of the work on the strategy and would like more information on what is planned.

Swansea already provides a wide variety of supported accommodation through its Supported Housing Programme. However it is recognised that for the more entrenched rough sleepers a more innovative approach needs to be taken. The review of homelessness supports the need for a *Housing First Project* to be introduced in Swansea and officers from Housing and Supporting People are currently working to develop this project. *Housing First* in Swansea should be implemented towards the end of 2018/19.

We heard the council is looking at reducing the number of evictions and better recording them so they can look at the causes. We would be grateful for more detail as to what this involves and the timescale for such measures to be put in place.

As you are aware officers are currently developing the Homelessness Strategy and within the review of homelessness it has been identified that we need to work with all our partners in reducing the number of evictions from all types of tenures. The draft Strategy has included this in its action plan and through the recruitment of a Gateway Officer in 18/19 we aim to improve the way we collate and monitor this information.

In your letter you have identified that there are gaps in the provision of supported accommodation, particularly for women, under 21's and for those with no recourse to public funds. The Working Group heard that the Homelessness Strategy will try to deal with all gaps in provision with this approach. We would like more information on specific proposals for these groups.

As stated there is a wide variety of supported housing projects that meet the needs of the most vulnerable households. These include a number of Direct Access Hostels, a Cross Borders Women's Project, as well as a number of homeless projects for young persons under the age of 21 and therefore there is no clear evidence that there is a gap in this type of hostel accommodation.

We do recognise that couples can sometimes be limited in accessing certain types of accommodation. The *Housing First Project* will be able to address this issue and, in addition, the Council is currently working with the Voluntary Sector to extend the number of emergency bed spaces which will be suitable for couples who are sleeping rough.

On the issue of 'no recourse to public funds' we were told that this is a real challenge for housing as these people fall outside the criteria for eligibility to council housing. The voluntary sector will be involved to assist with housing people from outside the UK who don't meet the criteria for council housing. This could be a bigger problem when we leave the EU. We would like some reassurance that the housing strategy will seek to address this problem.

Despite the restrictions that the Council faces to assist households with no recourse to public funds, the Homelessness Strategy will seek to ensure that there is a clear understanding within the sector of the resources available to assist non-eligible households, which will be predominately from the third sector or Social Services for households with children. For example, it is intended to develop a training plan for housing and support providers and "no recourse to public funds" has been identified as one of the topics that should be covered. The Council will seek to work in partnership with key third sector organisations on this matters such as the Welsh Refugee Council.

In addition, the draft Strategy has also identified a need to prepare for the implications of the Immigration Act 2014 and Britain's exit from the EU, in order to ensure that appropriate advice is in place for housing and support providers.

In your letter you state that Caerlas have concerns about the long waiting lists for access to move-on panel. The witnesses at the meeting did not believe that this was a problem. Nevertheless, as the perception exists we would like a more

detailed assurance that Caerlas' concerns have been heard and that a dialogue has been opened up with them to deal with any issues they have identified.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that the Chair of the Move-On panel has spoken directly with Caerlas on this matter and no major issues have been identified. However, an action within the Homelessness Strategy will be to review the Move-On process as a whole so we can ensure that waiting lists are kept to a minimum.

The Working Group was informed that Housing Options is our 'Front Door'. A gap in provision has been identified on weekends and working with Wallich has helped to close this gap. We heard the Council is looking at providing information to businesses so they know how to direct people to help. The challenging part is getting people to engage. We would like more information on what is planned and how this is being addressed in the draft housing strategy.

The Council has been working closely with the Rough Sleeper Intervention Team to ensure that the needs of rough sleepers and those vulnerably housed are met. Recently we have extended this service to include a weekend provision. In addition to this the Homelessness Strategy will have a clear objective of ensuring service users are at the centre of service delivery. As part of this objective a Homelessness Charter will be co-produced, and this will focus on trying to ensure that we have engagement from service users, the general public, businesses and the community as a whole.

In your letter you state that there is concern about support for people with learning difficulties who have moved into housing. We were informed that if people are assessed to have a social care need then social services could potentially support them. It is looked at on an individual basis. We would like more information as to how this group fit into the housing first project and what further support will be available for them once this is underway.

Housing First is designed to assist those service users who are long term entrenched rough sleepers and/or find it difficult to reside in a hostel type environment. This may include some service users who have a social care need and in these circumstances bespoke, intensive support will be available for as long as is required. However, it is important to remember that for many with a social care need they may only require generic tenancy support and be able to live independently, without the need to be referred through the *Housing First Project*.

In your letter you state that you would like to have more information on the tenancy support service and how support needs are identified and monitored in terms of outcomes.

The Council's Tenancy Support Unit (TSU) offers housing related support to all residents of Swansea. The TSU supports households in all forms of accommodation, including council tenants, housing association tenants, private rented tenants as well as owner occupiers. There is no upper or lower age limit on the housing support. The majority of referrals are made by the individual, however professionals from many different sectors and organisations will also seek help on behalf of the household.

The TSU in-house team provides support to approximately 150 households at any one time and a further 600 are supported through more specialist commissioned services with partner agencies. The initial assessment of support needs for every case is completed at the TSU offices.

The referrals, assessments and outcomes are collated by the TSU for the cases supported in-house team as well as by the partner TSU agencies. The outcomes and data are returned to the Supporting People Team to be included in the annual Homelessness Review which feeds into the annual spending priorities for the Supporting People Plan.

Social Service and safeguarding issues

In your letter you comment that the thresholds for homeless and vulnerable adults being accepted for social services involvement are too high. Agencies work with some of the most complex and challenging individuals and yet it is almost impossible to get additional specialist support for them especially if they have not been in the system before. Social Services stated that the mental health team is a secondary care service so there will be a gap in provision and confirmed that there is difficulty in accessing support for lower level need. We would like details on actions being put in place through the draft housing strategy and housing first, by social services and ABMU to ensure that this group do not miss out on much needed support.

Officers from our Adult Social Services team have confirmed that if someone feels they may have care and support need or know someone they feel may have care and support needs they can refer to the Common Access Point for Health and Social Care.

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/commonaccesspoint>

When a person is assessed as having care and support needs it will be identified whether each need can be met through signposting to preventative services, or met in another way, OR whether a Care and Support Plan is required. If the identified need can be met through signposting the need will NOT be eligible. If the identified need can only be met through a Care and Support Plan the identified need will be eligible.

Where this relates to needs around Mental Health, the General Practitioner (GP) within primary health care services is the initial assessment and access point to specialist mental health services. Where the GP considers the needs are such that an assessment by the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) is required, within secondary mental health services, a referral will be made. The CMHT is an integrated health and Social care assessment and support service. Further information can be found here

<https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/3941/Mental-Health>

Adult Social Services does not currently provide any services to those who are not care managed by the CMHT. These are provided or commissioned by ABMU Primary Health Services. However the Council does commission some specialist mental health services within Tier 1 of the Adult Services Model from the third sector e.g. specialist mental health housing related support services within the Tenancy Support Unit, Connect Day service and carers respite service, and counselling service for young people. Individuals can self-refer to these services and do not require a care manager.

These services along with Tier 2 and 3 commissioned services are part of the Adult Service Commissioning review.

The ABMU fund SCVS to support and promote the range of Mental Health Services in Swansea. Information on this can be found here; <https://www.scvs.org.uk/mhsupport>

The review of homelessness undertaken in drafting the new Homelessness Strategy has identified Mental Health as a significant care & support need amongst homeless people both as a cause and as a result of.

An action will be to improve the engagement between agencies working with homeless people and the Mental Health Services provided and commissioned in primary care and secondary mental health services.

In your letter you comment that dual diagnosis remains an issue and that people with mental health needs are unable to access the Community Mental Health Team support because of drug dependency issues. We heard that Social Services do provide provision but they agree that it may not be enough support. However ABMU confirmed there is going to be a Dual Diagnosis Strategy developed to map need across dual diagnosis as dealing with dual diagnosis is something that has not been done well in the past. We would like more detail on the implementation of this strategy including resources, timescale and proposed support.

The Council does not provide or commission specialist services to individuals around their Alcohol or Drug dependency as these are commissioned by the Area Planning Board for substance misuse. However, we are required to provide care and support to individuals whom may have these dependencies which can be very complex and challenging. This is particularly so where individuals do not engage in abstinence or harm reduction. An action for the Strategy will be to engage with the Substance Misuse Area Planning Board to focus on this group who are low in number but challenge health, homeless and social care service existing models of provision.

The action to develop a *Housing First* service in Swansea will need specialist input from both primary and secondary health and social services as well as substance misuse services.

In your letter you state that the homelessness nurse has identified that there is an issue with data sharing between health and social care. We were told by Social Services that there is no issue with the sharing of data as far as they are concerned. Nevertheless, we felt that as the homelessness nurse works in a primary care environment that there may be difficulties in them accessing data on clients. We would like some reassurance that data sharing protocols enable primary care providers to work seamlessly with other agencies including the council and secondary care providers.

The Homeless & Mental Health Outreach Nurses are based within Primary health services and currently are outside the Council's information sharing agreements with secondary health services that exist. Therefore, at present the identified ABMU staff are unable to have lawful access to the Social Services Paris IT system where we hold personal and sensitive information.

The Council has sought advice and clarity on the specific requirement and need for this access from the NHS Information Governance Unit to progress this issue without compromising privacy laws.

However, Social Services officers have confirmed that they do not feel this lack of access to the Paris IT system itself impedes seamless work between the Council Homelessness and Social Services and Health and commissioned providers.

Information is already shared as required between professionals when it is necessary to support an individual to achieve their outcomes.

Health Service issues

In your letter you stated that the Working Group would like to see increased flexibility to services provided to those who suffer with substance misuse issues. Witnesses recognised that there is a problem and having more flexibility in the system to deal with people who are chaotic is something that will be explored in the future. We would like more detail as to what actions are being put in place to deal with this issue.

I have requested that the appropriate officers take these issues forward and raise your concerns with the ABMU.

Witnesses confirmed that they hope there will be a joint approach taken with the Housing First project. We would like more information as to what that joint approach will entail.

Housing First will provide a bespoke package of support for each client. To be successful this will require a flexible and responsive approach from all relevant agencies, which will include Housing, Social Services, Health, Police and Probation.

Learning Disabilities

In your letter you state that there is an increasing number of homeless people with borderline Learning Disabilities who have no access to Learning Disability services but are unable to read (or have limited reading and language skills), write, manage money or maintain a tenancy and are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. We would like information as to how this group will be supported as part of the draft housing strategy.

The Council commissions a range of generic/multidisciplinary floating support services all of which would be able to offer housing related support to those with border line learning disabilities, having difficulties with literacy and numeracy. In addition it commissions a self-referral day service. Additionally there are specialist learning disability supported accommodation and floating support service for those supported in secondary care.

Homeless and Supporting People commissioners are continuously working to raise awareness of these services, to facilitate early referral and intervention and prevention. An action of the draft Homelessness Strategy is the development of a pre eviction and abandonment protocol with general needs and supported housing providers. Additionally it will look at pre-tenancy preparation, and different ways of engagement with individuals to further reduce evictions.

Housing First

We were reassured by the health board representatives at the meeting that they are fully engaged with the housing first process but would like more detail on the work that is on-going to deliver a cross-agency service once housing first gets underway.

As stated earlier, officers from a range of services are in the process of developing the *Housing First Project* and it will be essential that when the project is up and running that all agencies work together to ensure that every service user has a bespoke and intensive range of support.

Ex-Offenders

We would like to see detailed statistics on the number of ex-prisoners who are released and return to Swansea. What percentage are referred to housing and social services and how quickly are they resettled and found accommodation?

I have been advised that the Council would not be informed of the total number of ex-offenders who are returned to Swansea. We do work however work closely with the relevant resettlement teams from various prisons, in line with the Prisoner Pathway. In 17/18, 196 ex-offenders were either referred from prison or presented themselves to Housing Options. We were able to directly accommodate 50 of these cases into supported accommodation, social housing accommodation and private rented accommodation.

A number of the ex-offenders referred to the Council did not contact us for assistance on their release from custody, or subsequently lost contact with us during the application process, or were able to find accommodation themselves. We are aware that 12 out of the 196 referrals returned to custody.

Day Centre

We heard that good work is being done by Access Point but that they need better accommodation to provide better services. You implied that as part of the Homelessness Strategy you are looking to bring providers together under one roof and provide some of the day services previously available at St, Matthew's centre. You said that you recognise that there is a gap and the Council, with partners, is looking at what can be done. We would like more detail on these proposals together with some idea of timescale.

We are currently in the early stages of developing proposals for a multi-agency solutions centre and this will be an action within the Homelessness Strategy. As part of the development of this we will involve all relevant agencies to ensure that a collaborative approach is taken.

Gateway

In your letter you comment that the homelessness service would benefit from an improved and effective Gateway referral system. We heard the Council recognises there is a problem and hope to put such an officer in place in the next few months. We would like some indication as to when that officer is likely to take up post.

As previously stated, the Housing Service recognises that this needs to be prioritised and we are hopeful that the Gateway Officer will be in post by October 2018.

Evictions from supported accommodation due to rent arrears

In your letter you comment that there are a number of evictions from supported accommodation due to rent arrears, particularly as a result of budgeting difficulties.

The Council is aware that it is an issue but that people have to take responsibility. However, they are looking at the number of evictions and the reasons for them. We would like more detail on the conclusions of this study.

The Homelessness Strategy will ensure that evictions from supported accommodation due to rent arrears will be reviewed. The appointment of a Gateway Officer will also assist in ensuring that evictions are kept to a minimum.

Out-of-hours support

We were given confirmation that the rough sleeper's team provision has been extended and there is therefore support at the weekend. An offer was made by the Operations Manager of Community Housing to meet with Matthew's House to discuss the matter further if they still think that there is a gap. We would appreciate more detail as to the hours this provision now works and how it is being advertised to various third sector agencies working with rough sleepers.

The Rough Sleeper Intervention Team are available between 7 a.m. – 3 p.m. from Monday to Friday and 8 a.m. – 12 on weekends. We are currently in the process of updating our Rough Sleeper resource cards and we are also looking at improving how we communicate to third sector organisations and it is hoped that the co-production of the Homelessness Charter, which will include all the relevant agencies, will improve channels of communication. In the meantime, as stated the Operations Manager for Community Housing will discuss these issues further with a representative from Matthew House.

Co-ordination

In your letter you comment that there are many small groups that have established themselves on Facebook etc. and want to help homeless people. The Council says that for assistance people should contact Housing Options in the first instance, then Access Point and then the rough sleeper's team. Could the council better publicise these arrangements for these groups?

As previously stated we are always looking at ways to improve our communication with members of the public. Recently, I met with some volunteers who wanted to find out more about ways they could help with those who are faced with homelessness and we found this particularly useful in terms of sharing information about what outreach services are already available.

Despite our best efforts however, it is sometimes difficult for the Council to influence volunteers who are looking to assist homeless households; we will of course continue to ensure that the Housing Service is there to provide whatever advice and assistance we can to any volunteer(s) to ensure a coordinated and joined approach to tackle homelessness.

City Centre

It was confirmed that a City Centre Street Vulnerability Group has been set up by the police. It has only just started but it will look at the issues. We would like some details as to the instructions and training issued to City Rangers as to how to deal with rough sleepers and beggars in the City Centre. We would also like details of any discussions that the council has had with the police on this issue.

I have liaised with the Cabinet Member for Investment, Regeneration & Tourism in relation to this issue and offices have confirmed that key Performance Indicators show that the team of three Rangers deal on average with over 2,000 separate incidents each month in the City Centre with homelessness being one of a broad range of activities that they are involved with. This research shows that customer service is at the heart of the Rangers job role which is ambassadorial led. Nevertheless, the Ranger team, who each have more than a decade experience in the job, have over this time developed an understanding of the personal and complex issues associated with those who make up the homeless community in the City Centre. This has been achieved through a combination of formal training and working closely with the local Rough Sleepers Co-ordinator and the various outreach services that offer support to the homeless. For example, the Rangers have had specialist drugs training to understand the issues around drugs and substance misuse together with training on Equalities and Human Rights, Customer Service Skills and Emotional Intelligence.

As a result of working closely with the Rough Sleeper Intervention Team and colleagues in Housing, the Rangers are also very knowledgeable of the support services that are available to homeless households and will often advise and direct vulnerable individuals to access suitable support as well as highlight those at risk of harm to members of the Rough Sleepers Intervention Team so that the appropriate intervention can be arranged.

There are also occasions where the Rangers take a more direct role. For example, one of the Rangers recently assisted a long term homeless couple to obtain a birth certificate to enable them to open a bank account and access benefits. The Rangers have also accompanied the NHS Outreach Nurse on several occasions to engage with those on the street who may be suffering health issues. The Rangers were also integral to the establishment of the *Have a Heart- Give Smart* initiative in the City Centre. This diverted giving scheme, which forms part of a national initiative lead by the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) has been running locally for approximately 6 months and nearly 50 businesses in the City Centre, across both day and evening economies, have signed up. The main objective of the scheme is to encourage the public to donate within the designated premises rather than give directly to those begging on the street. The funds raised are then matched by Santander and awarded to a designated homeless charity to fund support services.

Historically the Rangers have enjoyed a productive working relationship with Big Issue Cymru and have engaged with them over many years to help manage the designated Big Issue pitches across the City Centre. There is no longer a Big Issue office located in Swansea which impedes the proactive on-site management of local vendors by Big Issue and communication with the Rangers although regular contact with the Head

Office is undertaken and the Rangers are often called upon, for example by businesses, to arbitrate conflict regarding the use of sites popular among vendors and other users e.g. charitable collectors, buskers, canvassers etc. The Rangers also continue to help enforce the terms of the Big Issue badge. For example, if a vendor is deemed to be under the influence of alcohol, to ensure the reputation of Big Issue and to minimise complaints, the Rangers have the authority of Big Issue to instruct them to leave the pitch and return when sober.

Whilst these examples show the Rangers to be empathetic to those who are homeless and supportive of those in genuine need, many of the individuals that the Rangers deal with on the streets are in fact housed and choose to frequent the City Centre to either socialise and source drink/ drugs with like-minded people and/ or beg for funds from the public.

The subsequent anti-social behaviour of some of these individuals, including those that are homeless, can unfortunately at times escalate. On such occasions, the Rangers will take proactive action to manage this behaviour and mitigate any potential alarm, distress or intimidation caused to the parties involved as well as to users of the City Centre. City Centre Management, which is the Service that is responsible for the City Centre Rangers team, has within the previous 12 months received only one complaint from a member of the public regarding the alleged treatment of a persistent and prolific beggar in the City Centre by the Rangers— an individual who is not known to be homeless. De-escalation techniques, engaging with the Police and sign posting individuals to outreach services are among the measures that are taken by the Rangers. The team have also referred over 30 individuals to the new Street Vulnerability MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) since March 2018.

I trust that my response addresses all the comments and issues raised in your letter on behalf of the Homelessness Scrutiny Working Group. Can I thank you for the opportunity to talk to the group, and for the positive comments and acknowledgment of the efforts being made by all partners to tackle homelessness and the causes of homelessness in the City. I will ensure that the issues raised by the Working Group are taken into account when finalising the Homelessness Strategy and action plan for 2018-2022.

Yours sincerely



**COUNCILLOR ANDREA LEWIS
CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES & ENERGY**