



Housing Support Programme Strategy

April 2022 - March 2026

Wrexham County Borough Council

This document is also available in Welsh



Ariennir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Funded by
Welsh Government

Contents

Introduction	4
Purpose of the Strategy	5
Legislative and policy context	6
Vision and principles	7
Needs Assessment	9
Data from the Housing Support Gateway	9
Supporting People Outcomes Reporting	9
Housing Support Grant Quarterly Monitoring Returns	10
Consultation with Service Providers and Service Users	10
Wrexham County Borough Council Housing Data	12
The Housing Register	13
Strategic Priorities	14
Strategic Priority 1	14
Strategic Priority 2	15
Strategic Priority 3	19
Strategic Priority 4	21
Strategic Priority 5	22
Strategic Priority 6	23
Strategic Priority 7	25
Strategic Priority 8	26
Strategic Priority 9	28
Strategic Priority 10	29

Stakeholder Engagement	32
Stakeholder Feedback	33
Impact Assessments	35
Implementation, Monitoring and Reviewing	36
Partnership Working	36
Funding Sources	36
Monitoring, Implementation and Review	37
Appendix A - Action Plan	38
Strategic Priority 1	38
Strategic Priority 2	38
Strategic Priority 3	38
Strategic Priority 4	39
Strategic Priority 5	39
Strategic Priority 6	39
Strategic Priority 7	40
Strategic Priority 8	40
Strategic Priority 9	40
Strategic Priority 10	40

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns have highlighted the need for increased support for homeless households, in particular, entrenched rough sleepers and those with complex needs if they are to sustain their tenancies.

As part of its response, Welsh Government issued guidance regarding the approach needed to ensure that those who were homeless and who were rough sleeping, or at risk of doing so, were able to protect themselves and comply with Government guidelines.

This included arranging appropriate rehousing for rough sleepers and the removal of priority need and intentionality from the homelessness assessment process.

Moving forward Welsh Government's expectation is that there will be no return to the situation before the pandemic.

The aim is to transform our whole approach to homelessness provision so that those who present as homeless each and every day experience a system focused on real prevention and where that fails, as it occasionally will homelessness is rare brief and non-repeated.

Individuals and households will be supported back into accommodation quickly and sufficiently supported so that they do not fall back into homelessness; setting households up to succeed not to fail.

Wrexham County Borough Council's first Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy, sets out how the Council will respond to meet this national change in direction. It has been developed in consultation with stakeholders. It combines the Council's statutory duty to produce a Homelessness Strategy with the strategic planning requirements for the Housing Support Grant.

It provides a single strategic view of the Council's approach to homelessness, housing support services, statutory revenue funded homelessness functions and non-statutory preventative services funded through the Housing Support Grant.

In writing the Strategy, we have referred to the Council's Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2022, the Housing Support Grant Annual Delivery Plan 2021 - 22 and the Housing Support Grant Needs Assessment, which was carried out to identify services currently provided and where there are gaps in that provision.

We will renew this Strategy every 4 years and review it every 2 years. This will ensure that it continues to meet the Council's aims, that these aims remain relevant and that it supports the delivery of Welsh Government's vision of preventing homelessness and delivering a rapid rehousing service.

Purpose of the Strategy

At the heart of this strategy is the Council's vision for the future of the residents of Wrexham County Borough, as set out in the Council Plan:

"..all the people that live here are supported to fulfil their potential, prosper and achieve a high standard of well-being. We will be a strong and inclusive community leader to help make this happen."

We understand that access to a good quality home is essential to achieving this, irrespective of tenure and so this Strategy sets out the main principles and priorities that we have identified in order to deliver the Council's vision for tackling homelessness and providing support services for the period 2022 to 2026.

We have identified these principles and priorities by consulting with stakeholders and service users and by analysing the information gathered during the drafting of our Needs Assessment.

This included information from the following sources:

- Data from Housing Support Gateway
- Supporting People Outcomes Reporting
- Housing Support Grant Quarterly Monitoring returns
- Consultation with Service Providers and Service users

As a result, they should be relevant to all providers of homelessness and support services in Wrexham County Borough and benefit those who use them.

Although the Strategy replaces the Council's current Homelessness Strategy, it must still meet the legal duties contained in the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. In writing this strategy, we have reviewed the Homelessness Strategy and where appropriate, incorporated priorities and aims that remain relevant, for example:

- Aiming to reduce youth homelessness
- Working with partners to reduce evictions
- Working in partnership to develop an integrated and holistic approach to tackling the underlying causes of homelessness
- Focussing efforts to promote early intervention and prevention; and
- Aiming to embed person centred principles into our work, by for example, supporting people with complex needs by providing the services they need, rather than addressing only one support need.

Legislative and policy context

Wrexham County Borough Council's Housing Support Programme Strategy, is underpinned by the following pieces of national legislation and policy:

- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015
- Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014
- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Housing Support Grant Practice Guidance
- Equalities Act (Wales) 2010
- Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014
- Welsh Government's Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness, 2016
- National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate
- Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood
- The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2015
- Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

At a local level, this strategy contributes to the following areas of work:

- Wrexham County Borough Council's Council Plan 2020 - 2023
- Wrexham County Borough Council's Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2022
- Wrexham County Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2018 - 2023
- North Wales Regional Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 22
- Wrexham County Borough Council's Allocation Policy (revised February 2021)
- Wrexham County Borough Council's Housing Support Grant Implementation Plan 2021
- Strategic Equality Plan 2020 - 2024
- Welsh Government Social Housing Grant - Local Authority Prospectus

Vision and principles

The Council's vision for Wrexham County Borough contained in the Council's Plan states:

"Our vision for the future is that all the people that live here are supported to fulfil their potential, prosper and achieve a high standard of well-being."

The Council's vision for homelessness prevention and housing related support services, will contribute to this vision. It is:

"To work with partners in the County Borough to prevent homeless. Where it does occur we will aim to make it brief and that appropriate levels of support are provided to ensure that, wherever possible, it is not experienced again."

To achieve this vision we have identified the following key principles:

- Work in partnership to provide the support necessary to help those with complex needs, for example, ex-offenders and those with mental health or substance misuse issues access appropriate housing and sustain their tenancies.
- Develop innovative housing models, such as rapid rehousing to ensure the amount of time households spend in temporary or supported accommodation is brief.
- Ensure that all agencies understand the role they have to play in homelessness prevention and understand the need to participate in partnership working.
- Work locally and regionally to develop closer links with Health Services, in particular Mental Health Services, and address identified gaps in provision.
- Aim to engage with people to develop a preventative approach to homelessness.
- Improve joint working with colleagues in Landlord Services, Statutory and Third Sector organisations so that early indicators of a person being in difficulty can be identified and appropriate support provided.

We have based these principles on the Council's well-being objectives contained in the Council Plan.

These are:

- Looking to the long term so we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs;
- Taking an integrated approach so we look at how our priorities impact on our other wellbeing goals and objectives and those of other public bodies;
- Involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area that the body serves;
- Working with others (including others within the council) in a collaborative way to find shared solutions to the well-being objectives; and
- Understanding the root causes of issues to prevent them from occurring or getting worse.
- Promoting the Welsh Language
- Prioritising the vulnerable

We will work in collaboration with partners to provide integrated services that tackle homelessness; promoting the view that bricks and mortar alone do not solve a person's risk of being homeless or vulnerable and in need of support and that all agencies in Wrexham County Borough have a role to play in addressing homelessness.

We have used the joint working arrangements already existing in Wrexham to develop the principles and priorities set out in the Strategy and we will aim to build on these so that our services represent and address the views and issues that partners will have as our work progresses.

Needs Assessment

Welsh Government's [Housing Support Grant](#) Guidance requires all local authorities in Wales to carry out a full assessment of needs in the local area every four years.

We have used the first Needs Assessment to inform the services we will provide and how we deliver them.

We have also used the findings of the Needs Assessment to inform the over-arching principles and priorities in this Strategy and the approach that we will take to prevent homelessness.

Data from the Housing Support Gateway

An analysis of 3068 referrals was undertaken. This indicated that 1136 people, which represents over one third of all people referred, indicated that their primary need was either homelessness or potential homelessness. An additional 52 people indicated that it was a relevant support need.

Whilst this does not give an indication of the reasons why people became homeless, or were at risk of becoming homeless, it does indicate that for some people, homelessness cannot be resolved or prevented without some form of support intervention.

Supporting People Outcomes Reporting

When a person begins planned support with a provider they are asked to indicate their main, secondary and tertiary support needs. Information gathered from support outcome returns between January 2018 and June 2020 indicated that the most common main support needs were: young people, aged 16 - 24, with support needs and older people, aged 55 and over, with a support need and mental health issues.

Housing Support Grant Quarterly Monitoring Returns

Housing Support Grant service providers submit quarterly monitoring reports to the Council. Providers of supported accommodation must provide information regarding the number of people in any supported housing project, who are prevented from moving on. These are individuals who are ready to move from supported accommodation but who are unable to do so due to a lack of suitable available accommodation.

Whilst numbers vary from quarter to quarter, since 2016 - 17, the overall trend shows a marked increase in the number of people prevented from moving out of supported housing.

Consultation with Service Providers and Service Users

Whilst it was impossible to hold face-to-face meetings with service users and stakeholders, due to restrictions imposed as a result of Covid-19, we issued questionnaires to both parties. In total 162 service users responded as did 23 service providers.

Responses from Service Users

Not surprisingly, a large proportion of the gaps in service, or the improvements suggested related to changes made to service delivery in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting lockdowns.

The most common themes were:

- Feelings of isolation due to the suspension of face-to-face meetings and home visits.
- Anxiety in relation to using technology, in particular amongst those who had disabilities and who would have benefited from support to use technology.
- Some expressed concerns regarding the timespan of their support being limited to 2 years.
- Concerns regarding the ability to secure appropriate move on accommodation.

Responses from Service Providers

The most common themes identified from stakeholders were:

- The lack of affordable and suitable move-on accommodation, in particular, smaller 1 bedroom accommodation.
- Barriers to accessing privately rented accommodation, including affordability and the reluctance of private landlords to accept housing benefit claimants.
- Landlords being unwilling to accept tenants without guarantors.
- An increase in service users with complex or co-occurring needs
- Appropriate support and accommodation for those with mental health issues.
- More timely access to mental health services,
- An increase in the amount of supported accommodation
- More support for those who have low-level mental health needs.
- The provision of wrap around services, which respond to a person's needs, rather than the person having to fit the aims of the services.
- More supported accommodation for young people and care leavers
- Having step down accommodation to provide a bridge between supported and independent housing.
- Substance Misuse services
- Domestic Abuse services
- Support and appropriate links to education, employment and volunteering opportunities.

Wrexham County Borough Council Housing Data

Households in Temporary Accommodation

Data for the last 3 years showed that the number of households in temporary accommodation increased from 119 to 246. Whilst the number of families remains smaller than that of single people, the increase from 52 households in 2018/19 compared to 82 in 2020/21, represents an overall increase of 57%.

In comparison, the increase in single people from 64 households in 2018/19 to 146 in 2020/21, represents an overall increase of 128%.

This data set indicates that whilst demand for family accommodation has increased, the most pressure continues to be on single person accommodation. The supply of single person Council accommodation has yet to adapt to meet changing demographics in terms of family size and an increase in single person households. This means that it is disproportionately difficult to accommodate single people in Council accommodation.

In addition, the privately rented sector has traditionally been averse to accepting tenants who may either have support needs or be benefit claimants. The recent increase in house prices and changes in the tax regime for private sector landlords have anecdotally, also led to properties being put on the market for sale.

Households in Temporary Accommodation by Household Type

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Families	52	53	82
Single People	64	69	146
Other Family Type	3	6	18
Total Number of Households	119	128	246

The Housing Register

During the same period of time, there has been a marked increase in the number of applicants who are registering for Council accommodation.

Between June 2019 and June 2021, the number of applicants registered on the Housing Register has increased from 1,951 to 2,846. This is an increase of 46% during a 2-year period.

The Housing Register is subdivided into the Waiting List, this refers to those who are currently not tenants of the Council and are applying for Council accommodation and the Transfer List, this refers to those who are currently Council tenants and who are applying to move to suitable alternative Council accommodation.

The number of Transfer List applicants has increased from 599 in June 2019 to 812 in June 2021. This is an increase of 35%. During the same period of time, the number of Waiting List applicants has risen from 1352 in June 2019 to 2034 in June 2021. This represents an increase of 50%.

As housing applicants are required to renew their application every 6 months, there can be a reasonable degree of confidence, that these figures are a reflection of current housing need within the County Borough.

This increase in numbers could be attributable to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, as household finances have been impacted by job losses, furloughing and the perception that a Council tenancy is more affordable and secure in comparison to other tenures.

Numbers Registered for Council Housing

	2019	2020	2021
Total Number of Applicants	1951	2122	2846
Waiting List	1352	1444	2034
Transfer List	599	678	812

Strategic Priorities

To achieve our over-arching principles and meet the needs identified in the Needs Assessment, we have set out a series of strategic priorities.

Strategic Priority 1

To redesign the Housing Options service taking into account the emerging local and regional priorities in line with Welsh Government guidance ensuring that targeted prevention is at the forefront of all statutory and commissioned services.

In order to meet future challenges in service delivery and the changing needs of customers, the Housing Options service must be responsive, able to deal with the public in a variety of ways and have efficient working systems in place that can support different ways of working.

To achieve this priority we will aim to:

- Develop a high quality, accessible and customer focused Housing Options Service,
- Have the right resources in the right places,
- Increase the accessibility of the service by providing outreach surgeries, online and telephone advice and explore further opportunities for service delivery using technology
- Adopt the recommendations contained in the Public Services' Ombudsman Own Initiative Investigation Report into Homelessness Reviews and;
- Work with Homelessness Steering Group partners to ensure that priorities do not conflict.

Strategic Priority 2

Improve accommodation-based support services, taking an integrated approach that meets the needs of people with multiple and complex needs, including mental health needs.

Through the Needs Assessment and consideration of stakeholder feedback, we have identified that there are gaps in service provision for those who have mental health issues and complex needs or dual diagnosis. This can lead to a deterioration in a person's health, whilst they wait to access appropriate services, or the failure of a tenancy leading to homelessness

Traditionally, support services have concentrated on a specific issue, whilst in reality a person can become homeless due to a range of issues, which are interlinked, for example substance misuse and chaotic or antisocial behaviour.

Missed opportunities to address complex needs in a holistic way can lead to continued problems and barriers to rehousing.

The number of referrals to the gateway where mental health was identified as a primary, secondary or tertiary support need indicate that many people continue to require support in order to cope with mental health issues. The fact that it is not only a primary support need for many also indicates that those who are experiencing problems with their mental health, are also in need of other forms of support which need to be accessed in order to sustain a tenancy and make a home for themselves.

Referrals to Gateway where mental health support was identified

October 2020 to March 2021

- 642 referrals in total
- 124 primary
- 67 secondary
- 8 tertiary need

April 2021 to September 2021

- 767 referrals in total
- 147 primary
- 116 secondary
- 19 tertiary need

To achieve this priority we will aim to:

- Work with partners to develop services that do not focus on one specific need or outcome.
- Use data available and the experiences of partners to understand where needs overlap and where services will need to be flexible, to meet these needs.
- Engage with partners in Welsh Government, to explore the possibility of support services being available for more than 2 years, to meet the needs of people with complex needs.

Good Practice Example - Glanrafon Centre

The gentleman came to our Glanrafon Project straight from hospital after being sectioned for 10 weeks under the Mental Health Act. Whilst receiving treatment he was diagnosed with bi-polar and hypermania. He accessed our services in a state of disbelief and felt very disorientated.

Initially, he received daily visits from the Wrexham Home Treatment Team who monitored him closely and continued his treatment. Over the next few weeks the gentleman grew in confidence and engaged really well with staff. He stated he felt like he was in a fantasy for the first couple of weeks as he struggled to make sense of what had happened. However, he told us Glanrafon felt like his support bubble in the early days as he tried to piece together how he got here.

His Senior Support Worker, confirms: The gentleman has been great to work with - mainly because he trusts our staff, is not afraid to ask for help and has engaged really well throughout. The gentleman has remained positive and optimistic and has really taken advantage of all there is to offer eg. the Reflections Counselling Services and the mental health support available. He has attended his weekly support sessions without fail.

The gentleman has proved that he will be a great tenant by paying his service charge on time (usually five weeks in advance) and has provided his Housing Officer with all his property research as requested. These things are so important and it's a credit to the gentleman that he really has done everything asked of him whilst here. He has also enrolled on a WISE mentoring scheme run through The Wallich to help build confidence, employment skills and self-belief ready for when he wants to return to the workplace.

Good Practice Example - Engaging with people who have complex needs - Temporary Accommodation - Grove House.

A referral was received through the Gateway in mid-March. The client was contacted and an appointment set up to meet at Grove House. Upon arrival the Link Worker was informed that the gentleman had gone out. So, the Link Worker phoned him. He stated that he had forgotten about planned appointment. This happened on the next two planned appointments. The Link Worker, however, knew this gentleman from a previous role and was aware that he may prove difficult to engage. The Link Worker continued to phone him and he started to engage and attend planned appointments.

This enabled a comprehensive assessment of the gentleman's perceived needs to be carried out, a care plan agreed, and a plan of action set out for each support session. Through discussion and support from his Link Worker, initially through twice weekly appointments, the gentleman started to make positive changes to his lifestyle and choices. The positive changes he made were significant and have greatly improved his quality of life and his future prospects. They included: -

- Significant reduction in drug and alcohol use, developing strategies to avoid 'pay day' use and associating with other drug users;
- Increased confidence and self-esteem learning how to deal with conflict without resorting to violent and aggressive behaviour with both other residents and staff.
- Attended and successfully completed 3 separate sessions of 'Tenancy Ready Programme' at Grove House.
- Budgeting exercise enabled him to plan for saving money each fortnight ready for his 'move on' and bring his service charge payments up to date.
- Communicate effectively avoiding conflict with ex-partner regarding contact and care of his two young children.
- Reconcile and re-build positive relationships with his family who are now supporting him.
- Engaging with Tÿ Derbyn, adjusted to medication regime, taking medication as prescribed and attending 6 weekly appointments.
- Moved into own property, set up utilities and payment plans, up to date with bedroom tax.
- Caring for his two young children at weekends, enjoying a healthier lifestyle, diet and fitness regime.

At the end of September, the Link Worker and client revisited his care plan, discussing each action taken to date highlighting his achievements. Both agreed for the Link Service support to be ended. Resulting in the client stating he feels able manage and sustain his tenancy successfully. Adding he now believes he has the required knowledgebase, skills, more importantly the confidence to live safely and independently.

Strategic Priority 3

Adopt an early intervention approach to dealing with youth homelessness and enabling them to access suitable accommodation.

Without the appropriate provision of support, many young people can struggle to make the transition to independent living. This can result in failed tenancies and young people needlessly presenting as homelessness.

The number of referrals to the gateway for young people aged 16-17 and 18-25 during the last two quarters of 2020 - 2021 and the first two quarters of 2021 - 2022, indicate that over 20% of all referrals received highlighted a need for support due to the person being aged 25 or under. This highlights the need to make use of all available prevention services and to aim to engage with young people at the earliest opportunity so that they are aware of the skills and resources needed to live independently.

We will continue to work in partnership with colleagues in Children's Services and the Leaving Care Team to build on the initial successes achieved in producing the Care Leavers Accommodation Pathway. Further joint working will focus on developing more accommodation and support options for young people, including those leaving care. It will aim to reduce the risk of failed tenancies and achieve the recommendations of Welsh Government's Joint Social Services and Housing Group, to avoid children who have experienced the care system falling into homelessness.

Referrals to Gateway where the person requiring support was aged 16- 25 years

October 2020 to March 2021

- 642 referrals in total
- Aged 16-17 years - 3 referrals
- Aged 18-25 years - 140 referrals

April 2021 to September 2021

- 767 referrals in total
- Aged 16-17 years - 9 referrals
- Aged 18 -25 years - 162 referrals

To achieve this priority we will aim to:

- Make full use of mediation services to prevent breakdown in family relationships.
- Establish links with local schools, to promote the necessary skills needed to live independently, including budgeting skills.
- Housing Options, Social Care and Housing Tenancies will ensure that referrals for support are timely and that information is shared.
- The Housing Support Gateway will work with partners to identify appropriate accommodation and support and to promote information sharing and joint working.

Strategic Priority 4

Work with partners to explore the availability of suitable housing options for those who are leaving the Secure Estate.

The Housing Support Grant Needs Assessment identified a proportion of Council tenancies has failed due to the tenant being taken into custody. This leads to a risk of homelessness on release and potential reoffending without the appropriate support being in place.

Information from the Gateway indicates that on average 10% of referrals for support are related to having criminal justice issues, which includes having been released from prison. It also indicates that many of those referred also have additional support needs, reinforcing the fact that if support concentrates on one need to the exclusion of others, there remains a risk of people being unable to manage a tenancy and falling back into homelessness.

We are beginning to work with Prison Services so that Housing Options staff receive all relevant documents, including risk assessments prior to a person's release. This will enable the Council to:

- better identify and understand the needs of those leaving the Secure Estate,
- work in partnership with HMP (His Majesty's Prison) Berwyn, Probation and Resettlement Teams to seek to increase the supply of suitable supported housing for those leaving custody,
- work with partner organisations to source the best models of accommodation for prison leavers and;
- the Council will be a partner in discussions with HMP Berwyn and partner organisations to develop a strategy for prison leavers.

Referrals to Gateway - Where criminal justice issues/prison leaver was identified as a support need.

October 2020 to March 2021

- 642 referrals in total
- 54 primary, 21 secondary
- 3 tertiary need

April to September 2021

- 767 referrals in total
- 48 primary, 21 secondary
- 8 tertiary need

Strategic Priority 5

We will develop innovative housing models to offer a range of housing options, such as rapid rehousing and housing first to ensure the amount of time households spend in temporary or supported accommodation is brief.

To meet Welsh Government's expectation that homelessness should be brief and not recurring, we will rehouse those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as quickly as possible. We also realise, however, that a successful tenancy involves more than giving a person a property and so, we will work with all relevant agencies to put in place the appropriate support needed to make tenancies sustainable.

To help to achieve this aim we will:

- review the Council's Allocations Policy during the lifetime of the plan to ensure that we make best use of housing stock and that it contributes to the aims of this Strategy;
- increase the supply of suitable move-on accommodation for those ready to leave supported housing;
- aim to work with partners, including Welsh Government, to ensure that people are not rehoused without immediate and appropriate wrap around support. This will avoid tenancy failure and ensure that communities have a positive view of rapid rehousing; and
- work with partners to promote the aims and importance of the strategy, so that each organisation devotes the appropriate resources to ensure its success.

Strategic Priority 6

Develop the Local Lettings Agency to increase the supply and variety of accommodation in Wrexham County Borough.

Data gathered from both the Housing Support Grant Needs Assessment and the Council's housing register, indicate a mismatch between the profiles of the Council's housing stock and those who are applying for Council housing.

Profile of Council Stock

The majority of Council housing in the County Borough was built at a time when demographics and people's aspirations were different to those of today.

As a result, the focus was to build properties to accommodate families, with little provision for general needs 1-bedroom accommodation.

Over time, this has led to a growing mismatch between the properties that we can offer applicants and the needs of applicants who are registered for Council housing.

Currently, of those who are registered for Council housing, 969 applicants who are aged under 55 are requesting one bedroom accommodation. When the rates of turnover for this type of property are taken into account, demand outstrips supply.

As 146 of these single person households, will be homeless and currently living in temporary accommodation, this gives an indication of the pressures on 1 bedroom affordable accommodation in the County Borough.

The privately rented sector holds a far larger supply of accommodation that would suit the needs of these households but it can be difficult to unlock this resource. Service providers identified this during the Needs Assessments consultation process. Feedback included:

"Limited private rented accommodation available to Universal Credit claimants."

"Lack of affordable accommodation and private landlords not accepting housing benefits."

To help to achieve this aim we will:

- Expand the Local Lettings Agency to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation.
- Consider remodelling existing Council stock to reflect demand, within the financial opportunities available.
- Work with landlords to encourage participation in Welsh Government's Private Sector Leasing Scheme and to increase housing options for people in the County Borough.

Breakdown of Council Stock

Property Type	Number
Sheltered	660
Bedsit	42
1 Bed flat	1040
2 Bed flat	1323
3 Bed flat	84
1 Bed house	5
2 Bed house	2212
3 Bed house	4503
4+ Bed house	133
1 Bed house	849
2 Bed house	194
3 Bed house	11
4 Bed house	1

Strategic Priority 7

Ensure that we have a strong commitment across all departments and agencies to a multi-agency, partnership approach to preventing homelessness.

Issues such as complex needs and dual diagnosis are often cited as reasons for homelessness and a barrier to rehousing. To combat this, therefore, there must be a commitment amongst all partners that the causes of homelessness are more complex than a lack of a roof over one's head.

Suitable accommodation can often be lost due to problems arising from a person's illnesses, dependencies, or not having the skills necessary to manage a home.

To help to achieve this priority we will:

- Build on the work of the Homelessness Steering Group and Providers' Group to ensure that support providers are responsive to a person's needs, when their input has been identified as being needed.
- When commissioning services we will look for opportunities to promote joint working, so that issues of dual diagnosis or complex needs can be addressed holistically.
- Aim to expand links with the 3rd sector and identify where support services already exist that can be tapped into.
- Build on the existing joint work carried out by Housing Tenancies and Housing Options and ensure that when support needs are identified appropriate referrals are made at the earliest possible opportunity.
- The Housing Support Gateway will continue to promote and develop information sharing and joint working across sectors in supporting people with complex needs.

Example - Good Practice- Joint Working - The Wallich & Wrexham County Borough Council's Housing Gateway

Staff at The Wallich who are based in Wrexham, draw on the experience and knowledge that they have of working with people who are homeless. This enables them to work closely with the Gateway Officer to help put appropriate support plans in place for each person.

Joint meetings are also held in instances where a resident's behaviour may be putting their tenancy with The Wallich at risk. On a number of occasions, staff have found this joint working very successful and it has prevented a return to homelessness. This way of approaching a problem has enabled staff to find the root of a problem and put in place appropriate interventions, such as moving a person to another supported housing project, away from negative influences. As a result they have subsequently felt more happy, settled and secure.

Strategic Priority 8

Identify potential homelessness triggers to enable services to continue to offer early intervention/prevention as appropriate and work with partners to ensure that referrals for support are prioritised and seamless.

Homelessness prevention work when carried out in a coordinated and timely way can be the key to turning around failing tenancies.

Of the 64 Council tenancies that failed during 2019/20, with the exception of those who were taken into custody, it could be argued that the remaining 53 could have been prevented with timely and appropriate interventions being put in place.

To help to achieve this priority we will:

- continue to develop the role of the Housing Support Gateway and promote early intervention;
- work with partners to ensure that when referrals are made appropriate updates are received within agreed timescales. This will enable Housing Options and Housing Support staff to monitor cases, be aware that support is in place or re-refer, for example, in cases of non-engagement, provider capacity;
- ensure that initial assessments are as detailed as possible so that the most appropriate support can be provided for an individual;
- ensure that the Housing Support Service has the capacity to deal with referrals to prevent escalation of low-level problems;
- work with partners to assist in identifying key points, which should trigger referrals for support;
- work to identify and provide appropriate support as early as possible during the process of allocating Council housing; and
- work with partners registered with Dewis to promote and advertise the support services which are available locally, as widely as possible.

Good Practice Example - Independent Living - Swift Referral Process

Staff at Independent Living have been supporting Mr T since August this year. Prior to this, he had been living in his parents' home as an unlawful occupier, with no right to succession.

He was supported to complete housing application forms and his application was awarded Priority Band 2.

Whilst waiting to be rehoused, Mr. T's mental health began to decline. He was struggling to cope in unsuitable accommodation and was being harassed by local youths. The noise from outside was causing his PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) to escalate and he no longer felt safe. In response, Mr T's support worker contacted the Council's Single Point of Access (SPOA) at Adult Social Care. They acted quickly and carried out a telephone assessment. This was passed directly to Housing's Health and Social Care Panel and his application has now been placed into Priority Band 1. This will speed up Mr. T's rehousing.

Further joint working has ensured that the local PCSO (Police Community Support Officer) make regular patrols of Mr. T's neighbourhood, to deter further anti-social behaviour directed at him.

Strategic Priority 9

Ensure that services, such as assertive outreach, are in place to aim to end rough sleeping in Wrexham County Borough.

Since the start of the pandemic and the first national lockdown, we have made every effort to ensure that the Council has followed Welsh Government guidance. This has involved ensuring that we offered accommodation to everyone who was rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.

To help to achieve this aim we will:

- build on the success of our Phase 2 bid to provide a triage hub to ensure that homeless households receive the correct accommodation in the long term;
- ensure that post-pandemic, no one needs to return to rough sleeping, in line with Welsh Government expectations, we will;
- continue to provide additional accommodation with wrap around support, at the current premises;
- prepare for the relocation of this facility to purpose built accommodation following successfully bidding to Welsh Government for Phase 2 homelessness grant funding;
- build on the successes of the current outreach work to ensure that there are rapid interventions for all rough sleepers; and
- understand that some individuals may need more time to adjust to a life off the streets and that this may involve multiple referrals before a person succeeds.

Strategic Priority 10

Work with partners to strengthen housing related support that will enable individuals to sustain their homes and achieve financial independence.

To achieve this aim we will:

- Work with colleagues in Communities for Work to facilitate access to training opportunities.
- Liaise with partners in the local voluntary sector to promote volunteering as an initial step to acquiring work experience opportunities.
- Work to provide the skills that are essential to maintain a home successfully.
- Aim to engage with partners in Education Services to provide appropriate housing information to schools.

Good Practice Example - The Wallich - 24 hour support

Many residents referred to The Wallich's supported housing projects in Wrexham have a history of failing to maintain a tenancy, or manage in a Bed & Breakfast placement.

This is seen as an indication that they need 24 hour support. By providing support at this level, staff are able to notice the signs that a person may be struggling with an issue and arrange the appropriate support to help them prevent them going into crisis.

Good Practice Example - The Wallich Financial Inclusion Work

When entering supported accommodation many new residents were having their benefits paid into a friend's account. Staff gave advice and supported them to set their own account up and planned budgeting support sessions.

Many residents have been able to move from having little control over their own money to becoming financially independent, paying service charges on time, managing their money effectively to purchase good quality food and being able to save an amount for future move on.

In cases where a large proportion of a person's income has been used to finance substance misuse, staff have worked together with substance misuse services, GPs (General Practitioners) and mental health services. This has led to residents having a professional diagnosis and being prescribed appropriate medication. As a result, the money spent purchasing substances on the street has reduced and people have had more money to spend on things that will be of benefit to them and enable them to budget their money appropriately.

Good Practice Example - Joint Working - The Wallich & Specialist Support Services

Staff worked with residents with substance misuse issues who were accommodated in supported housing, to encourage them to engage with substance misuse services and then enter detox with a follow on recovery project.

Despite the national lockdowns put in place due to the Covid pandemic, space was made available for them to attend online meetings, which were a requirement of the recovery project, in privacy.

The residents' rooms were kept open while they were in detox to minimise risks should they leave. This was a decision made to reduce the risk of them returning to rough sleeping and substance misuse. This has not happened and residents referred have continued with their detox programme.

Good Practice Example - Wrexham County Borough Council Partnership Working

A referral was received via the Gateway at the end of June 2021. The client was contacted by phone and an initial risk assessment carried out. A home visit was arranged for 28/6/21.

The client was an anxious and agitated lady. She explained that she struggles meeting new people and holding conversations. Although the initial visit proved difficult, she was able to explain her current situation.

It was becoming clear that wraparound services would bring most benefit to the lady improving her quality of life. The Link Worker has reassured her at each stage when involving other support services. With the client's consent and agreement, the Link Worker has enlisted the services of several different professionals and provides support at initial meetings, assessments and ongoing appointments. The lady is growing in confidence, improved self-esteem, and is motivated to continue meeting the goals set out in her care plan.

Good Practice Example - Housing Justice Cymru - Citadel Project

Citadel is a homelessness prevention project, which uses volunteers to support people at risk of experiencing homelessness, to find and/or sustain tenancies.

It was initially set up to support guests following their move on from the Housing Justice Cymru Night Shelters. The need for further support, during the initial months of obtaining a tenancy was highlighted by those we support with lived experience of homelessness. Studies have also shown the benefit of support during the early months of a new tenancy, as tenancies that do fail, tend to do so between the second and sixth month.

We also recognised that similar traditional services, which relied on paid support workers, often provide support for a short period of time, without developing support networks and resilience for the individual being supported, resulting in tenancies failing once the initial intense support has been removed.

Furthermore, there is a wealth of research which shows the importance of the role of trusted adults and connection to one's community to enable people to settle into a new location, help them to regulate their lifestyle and prevent them engaging in health harming behaviors, this is relevant to, and vital for, the cohort of people we support.

How does Citadel work?

Citadel uses volunteers to support people, through an asset-based approach. The model uses volunteers for a number of reasons. Firstly, we know receiving support from adults who are not being paid, makes a significant difference to the people we support because of the genuine compassion and connection which is formed. Using volunteers from the communities we work in means they can easily connect people with services, amenities and support networks. Finally, using volunteers, means the support offered is not time bound because volunteers will continue to provide support for as long as it is needed, unlike some high intensity, short paid models.

Citadel uses a 'Circles of Support' model, to build a network of support for individuals, including any agencies already involved and other agencies who may be of benefit to the individual. This approach builds lasting networks for the individuals and prevents the development of a dependency on the volunteer.

Citadel Volunteers are trained, DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checked and then matched with an individual to support. They meet with individuals on a regular basis (in a public place, e.g. a café) over a period of 3-6 months to begin with and receive supervision with the Citadel Co-ordinator once a month to ensure that each pairing is successful.

The volunteers help individuals to source any essential living items for their home. Once the immediate practical needs have been met, the volunteers work with the individual to understand how they can help them to develop the life they want. This varies and can include, finding employment, developing hobbies, finding support for trauma and mental health issues or connecting to services such as the GP (General Practitioner), bank, job centre etc.

The success of Citadel is measured by the number of volunteers recruited, people supported, the new tenancies obtained and the length of time people have stayed in their tenancies with our support (up to 12 months).

Stakeholder Engagement

In developing this strategy, there has been consultation with a variety of stakeholders who provide support services in Wrexham County Borough.

These include:

- Wrexham Project Management/ Disability Team
- JustOne
- Hafan Cymru
- Voyage Care
- Cais
- Bawso
- Wrexham County Borough Council - Housing Options
- Clwyd Alyn
- Family Aid Team
- Nacro
- Wrexham County Borough Council - Housing Strategy
- Church in Wales/ Housing Justice Cymru
- VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence)

As the development of this Strategy took place whilst there were still restrictions on office based and face-to-face working; engagement and consultation with partners took place virtually by electronic methods or paper based questionnaires.

We also took into account the feedback received from stakeholders during the development of the Council's Housing Support Programme 1 year Implementation Programme.

We used this feedback to help shape our priorities as it focussed on where stakeholders saw gaps in the current provision of housing and support services.

In addition, issues were identified that whilst they are outside of the remit of this Strategy can help to inform other work within the Council, for example the lack of affordable accommodation in the privately rented sector and the fact that Council housing stock does not match the needs of applicants in terms of type and size.

Stakeholder Feedback

The feedback from stakeholders during the development of the Housing Support Grant Implementation Programme 1 year Implementation Programme, highlighted gaps in housing and support provision.

The main emerging themes were:

- The HSG funding is a valuable resource for enabling people who need support or accommodation with support to maintain their tenancies.
- When providing support many stakeholders felt that it was important to adopt a holistic approach. This could involve supporting the whole family.
- Post pandemic, support providers could work with local employers, businesses and educational establishments to not only assist the person but also to help revive the local economy.
- Lack of supported accommodation, including young people leaving care and those who are LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning).
- Lack of affordable accommodation in general as landlords in the private rented sector remain unwilling to accept tenants who are in receipt of housing benefit.
- There is a lack of support for those who have complex needs and/or dual diagnosis.
- Lack of supported accommodation for those who have mental health issues.
- There is a need for more services for those who have high support needs but who do not have a need for care.
- There are very limited options for accommodation or move-on for those who may not be ready for independent living for some time and those who may need a significant amount of time before they are ready to engage with the support that they need to gain independent living skills.
- There is a long waiting time for people who need to access mental health services.
- Available social housing stock does not fit the needs of those who need housing, in terms of property type and size.
- There is a need to deliver more wrap around support for people in their current homes.
- Referrals for support made earlier would help to prevent loss of accommodation.
- There is a need for more supported accommodation for those who have experience of the Criminal Justice system.
- There needs to be a smoother transition from Children's to Adult's Social Care Services.

- Delays in adaptations being carried for those who are being discharged from hospital can mean that suitable emergency accommodation has to be sourced.
- More services are needed to prepare people with learning disabilities for moving into accommodation.
- Properties in the privately rented sector are often too expensive and can trap people in poverty.
- Often support is provided during office hours rather than when the person needs it.
- There is a lack of specialist support to work with particular vulnerable or excluded groups people with communication, language or cultural barriers e.g. people with autism, dementia, black and minority ethnic people.
- There is a lack of general supported accommodation for those who are over the age of 25 years.
- Support models need to be flexible and able to adapt to meet a person's needs if they change.

Impact Assessments

The Council has an online Impact Assessment tool, which is used as part of the process when formulating, amending or withdrawing strategies, policies, procedures and services.

This captures the impact of strategic priorities on children, Welsh speakers and those who are at an economic disadvantage, in addition to those with protected characteristics.

The findings of the Impact Assessment carried out in the production of this Strategy are available as a separate document - Housing Support Programme Strategy Impact Assessment.

A copy is available free of charge upon request.

The key finds are as follows:

- The overall aims of the strategy and its action plan will have positive benefits on the residents of the County Borough.

Following consultation with internal and external partners, the following issues were raised and recorded within the Impact Assessment:

- Young People/ Children - There needs to be reference to undertaking outreach work with partners in Education to ensure that those in education, are aware of the challenges associated with having a tenancy and/or being a householder.
- Young People/Children - Reference should be made to mediation. This can often be a useful tool in preventing breakdowns in family relationships.
- The case studies in terms of employment and volunteering opportunities have highlighted how they can assist those who have mental health problems, in terms of an increased sense of self-worth and also being able to relate to those who are providing support.
- There is a role for the Housing Department in the strategic planning group that is being set up with HMP Berwyn, to manage the appropriate move on of prisoner leavers.

Implementation, Monitoring and Reviewing

Partnership Working

This strategy is underpinned by the realisation that without a partnership delivery approach, its aims and objectives will never be met. The reasons for many people's homelessness are often a mosaic of different issues, which often impact one upon the other. As a result, support often needs to be given by more than one agency simultaneously, depending upon the needs of the individual.

In the past, attempts to resolve a person's homelessness and inability to sustain a home have concentrated on addressing a main support need, at the exclusion of others. This has often led to failure.

Housing Support Providers will work with the Council to ensure that the aims of the strategy are delivered on the ground.

There is currently a Housing Support Providers Forum, which has been in operation since 2015. Although it was initially set up as a vehicle for delivering the necessary support services identified in the Council's Homelessness Strategy; its focus will remain on the delivery of support services but those services identified during the Housing Support Grant Needs Assessment and included in this strategy.

It will also serve as a place where the efficacy of support provision will be discussed and where any emerging trends in support needs can be identified, with a view to informing service delivery and future commissioning.

Funding Sources

The following sources of funding have been identified as being essential to the successful delivery of this strategy

- Council funding
- Housing Support Grant
- Welsh Government Homeless Prevention Grant
- Partnership funding with Adult Social Care
- Children's Services
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Monitoring, Implementation and Review

The Homelessness Steering Group will have responsibility for monitoring progress against the actions identified in the action plan and for ensuring that the principles and priorities of the strategy document are being achieved.

This group will also have a mandate to raise any issues with partner organisations, if it is felt that they are impacting upon the ability to deliver this strategy.

A review of the strategy will be carried out every 2 years, with a full revision taking place every five years, as set out in current Welsh Government guidance.

All partners will be involved in the review process, both at an operational and a strategic level. This will enable strategic aims to be aligned with the resources and support needs identified by front line service providers.

Appendix A - Action Plan

Strategic Priority 1

To deliver a robust and effective Housing Options service

Delivery Actions

- Develop a range of communication methods to suit the needs of the individual.
- Implement the recommendations of the Ombudsman's Own initiative investigation.
- To provide quality advice and assistance at first point of contact to prevent homeless taking place.
- Increase the number of recorded prevention cases
- Reduction in the number of review requests

Timescale

Year 2

Lead

LR

Outcome/Outputs

- Housing Options are equipped with Smart phone, laptops to carry out duties, can communication via teams/ zoom email and phone and reception area with interview rooms for customer facing assessments.
- Easy read documents have been implemented for all correspondence within the service
- Moved to a new building with its own reception, speaking to providers to present at the earliest opportunity. The service is now amalgamated offering a one point of contact
- Through the existing Housing Options team we now have specialist staff specifically looking at prevention, ie Nass and Prison Leavers
- Ongoing work being done to reduce numbers of cases being challenged with review requests, with a view of managing expectations.

Strategic Priority 2

Improve accommodation-based support services to ensure an integrated approach that meets the needs of people with multiple and complex needs, including mental health needs.

Delivery Actions

- Ensure temporary accommodation has the facilities to accommodate support services and agencies.

Lead

LR

Outcome/Outputs

- Where possible this has been implemented and is ongoing. All sites now have Housing Support Officers and any specialist support is allocated through the Gateway. Agencies are encouraged to work in partnership with each other to ensure the best outcomes for the individual.
- Any new temporary accommodation has this as a criterion.
- Wrexham County Borough Council are also moving to a person centred approach when accommodating with properties being self-contained.

Strategic Priority 3

Prevent youth homelessness.

Delivery Actions

- Work with partner organisations to maximise the uptake of mediation services to prevent breakdown in family relationships.
- Aim to establish links with local schools, to promote the necessary skills needed to live independently, including budgeting skills.

Lead

SJ/LR

Outcome/Outputs

- Referrals predominately come from Youth Services. We need to look to engage with the services and ensure they are allocated at the earliest opportunity.
- Housing Options have dedicated Officers who deal with Youth Homelessness and have previously piloted a talk in schools discussing homelessness. This was well received with the aim to expand should resources allow
- Housing Options staff attended a National Conference - Youth Homeless Prevention.

Strategic Priority 4

Work with partners to explore the provision of more suitable supported accommodation for those who are leaving the Secure Estate.

Delivery Actions

- Ensure attendance at strategic and operational level discussions to identify suitable accommodation.
- Work with Probation and Resettlement Teams to ensure that notification of a person's release is timely and contains all relevant information to enable Housing Options and Support staff to identify the most appropriate accommodation and support options.
- Begin conversations with partners to enable input into strategic working being undertaken with HMP Berwyn regarding the moving on of prison leavers.

Lead

LR

Outcome/Outputs

- Several properties have now been identified to enable individuals to live independently where possible. Support is linked in to try to ensure the licence agreement is upheld and move on options are explored in a timely manner.
- Stronger partnerships with Resettlement Teams and Probation despite increase from the Early Release Scheme (ERS) which has impacted on our ability to deliver the Prisoner Pathway.
- Further discussions to be held with colleagues and partners through the Area Planning Board.

Strategic Priority 5

We will develop innovative housing models, such as rapid rehousing to ensure the amount of time households spend in temporary or supported accommodation is brief.

Delivery Actions

- Reduction in the number of Bed and Breakfast placements.
- Review the allocations policy in line with any new legislation.

Lead

SJ/LR

Outcome/Outputs

- Rapid Rehousing Co-ordinator in post and is analysing all data.
- Allocations policy review is underway and progressing at pace. Finalised policy to be presented to Executive Board on 9th July 2024.
- A review of Wrexham County Borough Council nominations process into Registered Social Landlords.
- An Accommodation team has been set up to source suitable accommodation for all Wrexham Citizens.
- Repurposing accommodation in Council stock.

Strategic Priority 6

Develop the Local Lettings Agency to increase the supply and variety of accommodation in Wrexham County Borough.

Delivery Actions

- Promote the work of the Local Lettings Agency to maximise take up amongst landlords in the County Borough.
- Maximise take up of Welsh Government's Private Rented Sector Leasing Scheme.

Lead

LR

Outcome/Outputs

- Local Lettings Team have amalgamated with both Housing Options and Allocations Team offering a one stop shop approach.
- Designated Officer working with Welsh Government on the Private rented leasing scheme, along with Accommodation Project Manager to assist with Maximising take up.
- A review of the Management fees is underway to maximise income.
- Keeping abreast of possible grants available – Example – TACP (Transitional Accommodation Capital Funding Programme).

Strategic Priority 7

Ensure that we have a strong commitment across all departments and agencies to a joined up approach to preventing homelessness.

Delivery Actions

- Ensure relevant representation on the Homeless steering group.
- Undertake work to promote the Dewis database of support agencies.

Lead

SJ/LR

Outcome/Outputs

- Working in partnership with Area Planning Board regarding No Wrong Door agenda.
- Work both Strategically and Operationally whilst sitting on several multiagency groups.
- All providers are informed that they need to be inputting into the DEWIS database.

Strategic Priority 8

Identify the key triggers for homelessness and work with partners to ensure that referrals for support are timely and seamless referrals where necessary.

Delivery Actions

- Work with partners to ensure that when referrals are made appropriate updates are received within agreed timescales.
- Work to identify and provide appropriate support as early as possible during the process of allocating Council housing.
- Work with partners to assist in identifying key points, which should trigger referrals for support.

Lead

SJ

Outcome/Outputs

- Digital portal to be introduced to ensure a seamless transition to support services.
- Promote early referrals to meet preventative agenda.
- Promotion of the Gateway and having the required level of staffing will assist with this area.
- Strong communication with partners/ colleagues/providers in place.

Strategic Priority 9

Ensure that no person in Wrexham County Borough needs to sleep rough.

Delivery Actions

- Monitor rough sleeping figures to identify trends and patterns.
- Develop partnership working protocols for outreach services.

Lead

LR/SJ

Outcome/Outputs

- Rough sleeper figures are monitored daily, Assertive Outreach workers visit all known Rough Sleeping hot spots and new area of concerns raised.
- Identified the need for 1 more Assertive Outreach worker to support clients in a preventive way to help support clients with complex issues that could result in them losing their tenancy.
- Fortnightly providers meeting held for collaborative multiagency approach to help and support the most vulnerable.
- Introduction of Welsh Government Category 11 should result in no one having to rough sleep.

Strategic Priority 10

Work with partners to develop services to provide the necessary skills to manage a home and become financially independent.

Delivery Actions

- Make links with colleagues in Communities for Work, to provide training and volunteering opportunities for those in supported accommodation.

Lead

LR/SJ

Outcome/Outputs

- Partner agencies promote the opportunities for employment and volunteering. Work boards are placed in all temporary accommodation settings and Housing Support Officers will advise and support individuals to engage when the time is right.
- Residents have been successful in securing employment / volunteering opportunities.
- Work in partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council Financial Inclusion Officers.