

Neath Port Talbot Council Homelessness Strategy 2018-22



"Our Vision is that Housing in Neath Port Talbot will be appropriate, affordable, of good quality, in sustainable communities, offering people choice and support if they need it"

Building Safe & Resilient Communities

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FOREWORD

We are pleased to share with you the Council’s Homelessness Strategy for the period 2018 to 2022. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the organisations and individuals that have been involved in the review of how the Council currently prevents and responds to homelessness, which informed this document. In particular we would especially like to thank those involved who have themselves used homelessness services.

The strategy outlines in straightforward terms the key issues in Neath Port Talbot and sets out priorities for action in addressing those issues.

In Neath Port Talbot we have an active and productive multi-agency homelessness partnership and the prevention and relief of homelessness is a fundamental element of the partnership members’ ongoing collaborative endeavour.

We are determined that the Council will continue to work as effectively as possible with all these partners, across the public, private and voluntary sector, to maximise opportunities to deliver on this Strategy.



<p>Councillor Peter D. Richards Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and Health</p>	<p>Angela Thomas Head of Commissioning Support & Direct Services</p>
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December 2018

WHAT IS OUR VISION?

Shaping NPT is Neath Port Talbot Council's Corporate Plan. It sets out what we are going to do to help the county borough become a better place for people to live, learn, work and bring up their families.

The Council's vision is to create a Neath Port Talbot where everyone has an equal opportunity to be healthier, happier, safer, and prosperous.¹

This will be achieved by working in partnership with other agencies such as social care, health, education, the third sector, Registered Social Landlords, community organisations, religious organisations and the private sector.

Through partnership working, we will focus on preventing homelessness by ensuring people receive timely, evidence based interventions and can be supported to live in long term sustainable accommodation.

To that end the work of the Social Services, Health and Housing Directorate will embrace the following wellbeing objectives set out in our Corporate Plan 2018-2022:

- **To improve the well-being of children and young people.**

"All of our children and young people have the best start in life, so they can be the best they can be"

- **To improve the well-being of all adults who live in the county borough**

"Everyone participates fully in community life - socially and economically"

- **To develop the local economy and environment so that the well-being of people can be improve**

"The whole of Neath Port Talbot county borough will be a vibrant and healthy place to live, work and enjoy recreational time"

¹ NPT CBC Single Integrated Plan 2013-2023

The homelessness strategy has a role to play in achieving all these overarching objectives but it is the first two which are most pertinent.

If we all work together to prevent people becoming homeless, the well-being of children, young people and adults will all be improved. In addition, people will have the support they need to contribute to the local economy.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

In Spring 2018, the Council commissioned an independent review of how it responds to people facing homelessness in order for us to see how we could build on our current practice and develop new ways of working. This review involved extensive engagement with a variety of stakeholders in order to identify opportunities for change.

This strategy sets out how we intend to act on the findings of the review so that we are best placed to meet the needs of those experiencing or at risk of homelessness over the next four years and beyond.

The Council's aim is to implement an approach that will prevent homelessness wherever possible and effectively support the household when it occurs. A detailed action plan, will now be co-produced with all relevant stakeholders over the coming few months.

In order to achieve our aim the Council intends to focus on:

1. Developing effective and proactive partnership working with agencies, including community organisations, so that problems can be identified early and support accessed as quickly and as easily as possible.

2. Exploring opportunities for implementing a multi-agency approach, so that those who have experienced repeat episodes of homelessness and have multiple and/or complex needs are supported to live in their own homes. This will be achieved through the delivery of targeted and individualised intensive specialist support: a way of working often referred to as the 'Housing First' model.
3. Reviewing our current temporary accommodation service models and exploring the development of a 'temp to perm' approach to avoid households having to move so often.
4. Development of specific housing plans/strategies that focus on those people that may be at most risk of experiencing homelessness, for example accommodation for single people aged under 35 and veterans.
5. Considering the use of pooled budgets where this may be beneficial - one example where we feel this may offer benefits is the commissioning of accommodation for 18-25 year-old former care leavers and 16/17 year-olds.
6. Strengthen our links with agencies such as the Jobcentre Plus, in order to explore the impact of wider national welfare reform to help inform planning.
7. Looking at how we can utilise information technology to quickly help people and agencies access the support, information and advice they need and for commissioners to gather better intelligence to inform planning.
8. In response to our homelessness strategy, review the current monitoring arrangements for Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) funded housing related support services, so that the Council can understand and assess how the services we provide deliver on the aims of this strategy.

We propose to shift the focus from emergency responses and fulfilling our homelessness duties to households in crisis, by exploring the following:

- 1.** More focussed community based support to prevent homelessness, before it becomes a crisis.
- 2.** Evidence based support and accommodation options for people with complex needs, who have experienced repeat episodes of homelessness, and require a range of services.

and

- 3.** Helping people to achieve permanent housing and reduce demand for temporary accommodation.

WHAT SHAPES OUR THINKING?

There is a wide range of law and national guidance influencing the planning and delivery of homelessness services, including:

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

The Act consolidates existing laws and has an emphasis on prevention and ensuring people have choice and control

Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action 2011

The Welsh Government's agenda for regional commissioning and collaboration in service provision

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

There is a strong focus on homelessness prevention imposes new legal duties on Local Authorities

Neath Port Talbot CBC Corporate Plan 2018-2022

Sets out our well-being objectives and priorities

Western Bay Population Needs Assessment

Looks at current and estimated future demand for services

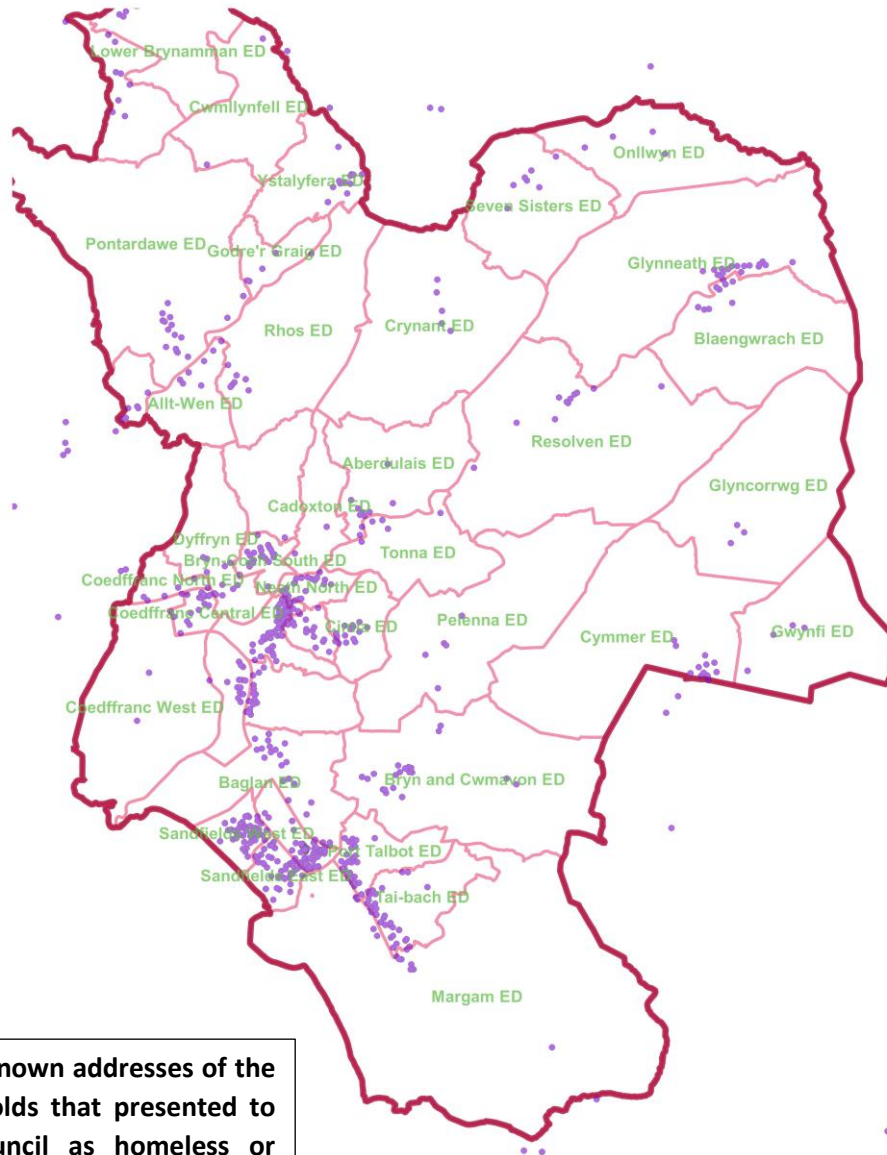
The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 significantly influences the way in which local authorities support those people threatened with or experiencing homelessness. In order to respond to this legislation the Council has shifted its approach to focus on homelessness prevention.

This strategy aims to strengthen our current practice, so that our focus is on the continued development of preventative responses at the heart of our communities, and accommodation and specialist support for those people who have complex needs, and a history of repeat homelessness. In this way we hope to reduce the number of people experiencing crisis and needing emergency responses.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT HOMELESSNESS IN NEATH PORT TALBOT?

- The number of households who have been found homeless and who the Council has a duty to help find accommodation for has risen by 21% since 2015-16. (537 households over 2015-16, rising to 652 households in 2017-18).
- This has led to increasing pressure on the resources provided to meet the Council's duties.
- The number of households in temporary accommodation has also seen an increase.
- This increase has led to far more use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation for single people.
- The issues faced by single people with complex needs have led to more demand on services: not just housing, but a variety of other services including criminal justice, substance misuse services, mental health, and other health services.
- The Community Safety team have developed the Street Vulnerable Multi Agency Risk Assessment Committee (SVMARAC), chaired by South Wales Police, which brings agencies together to discuss potential solutions.
- A large proportion of the cases discussed are either street homeless or very vulnerably housed.

- The Council utilises a large proportion of its Supporting People budget to provide services that support people in their homes with the aim of preventing them becoming homeless.
- The number of people found homeless in the County Borough is predominantly coming from a small proportion of Council Wards, as indicated below:



• Last known addresses of the households that presented to the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness during 2017/18.

WHAT DO WE PLAN TO DO?

We are an ambitious Council and there is much we want to achieve to make sure that those threatened with or experiencing homelessness get the right support and accommodation, at the right time, and that those with the most complex needs are supported to secure long term accommodation.

The following section outlines the areas of priority that we are planning to take forward over the next four years and beyond. These priorities will be the focus of a detailed implementation action plan that will be developed over the coming months.

Priority One: Early intervention and Prevention

Strengthening approaches to early intervention and prevention

We will work with other agencies and our local communities to ensure that we can identify issues at an early stage. By working in partnership with other agencies we will make sure that those at risk of homelessness get the right support at the right time and in the right place.

Where are we now?

We have a number of different services to support those threatened with or experiencing homelessness. We are reviewing these services to ensure that we are making best use of our available resources, including local communities. We will continue to build on our current work to implement more preventative interventions, which will result in a reduction in the number of people requiring short-term emergency accommodation.

Where are we going?

We will look at how we can work with and within our local communities to help prevent homelessness and make sure the services we purchase deliver the right outcomes. We will also look at how people currently access these services and explore the potential to shift more resources from crisis interventions to prevention.

Priority Two: Implementing a Multi-Agency Approach

Targeted support for those with the most complex needs to prevent repeat episodes of homelessness

We know that some people have a range of complex needs and require help to maintain sustainable long-term housing. The *Housing First* model seeks to provide people with permanent housing and specialist targeted support. This model aims to reduce the need for temporary emergency housing and prevent people from experiencing repeat episodes of homelessness.

Where are we now?

We currently have high numbers of people in temporary accommodation and B&B provision. In addition, the review there are a significant number of people in Neath Port Talbot that have complex needs and a history of repeat homelessness. These people require a variety of services.

Where are we going?

We will work with our Housing Associations partners who are implementing the Housing First model in Neath Port Talbot and help them to utilise the expertise of a range of key partner organisations, such as the Local Health Board.

Priority Three: Review of temporary accommodation service models

Help people to access secure permanent accommodation

We will undertake a review of our temporary accommodation offer and explore the possibilities of implementing a 'temp to perm' model.

Where are we now?

There is a high demand for temporary accommodation and so we are having to use B&B. Some people are leaving temporary accommodation unable to sustain longer-term accommodation, resulting in them returning to temporary accommodation.

Where are we going?

We want to help people that leave temporary accommodation maintain a long-term tenancy and so reduce the number repeatedly being threatened with or becoming homeless. To do this we will explore how we can work with landlords to implement a model that can offer those in temporary accommodation more permanent options.

Priority Four: Development of specific housing plans/strategies

Focusing on helping people most at risk of experiencing homelessness

There is a need to review the range of accommodation options for our most at risk client groups; including single people under the age of 35 and other priority need groups.

Where are we?

We know that we need to look at how wider changes, such as welfare reform influence our planning and inform the development of accommodation options and services.

Where are we going?

The development of specific housing plans will help us to better understand and address the housing needs of our local communities. These plans will set out how we intend to respond to our current and future challenges in order to ensure that our local residents have a range of suitable and affordable housing models.

Priority Five: Pooled Budgets

Making best use of our financial resources

Pooled budgets may help us to achieve better value for money and streamline processes for accessing support. In particular there is potential to consider the use of a pooled budget for the delivery of accommodation and support solutions for 18-25 year-old care leavers and 16/17 year-olds threatened with or experiencing homeless.

Where are we?

Although there is good partnership working between children and young people's social services and our housing options team, each currently commissions responses for young care leavers with housing needs separately.

Where are we going?

We will explore the possibility and potential benefits of implementing a pooled budget for services provided to 18-25 year-old care leavers and 16/17 year-olds threatened with or experiencing homelessness

Priority Six: Partnership Working

Further strengthening links with partner agencies to better understand needs and demands

There has been considerable change nationally, including recent welfare reform and there is a need for us to work closely with other organisations such as the Jobcentre Plus in order to help inform our planning, commissioning and delivery of support.

Where are we now?

There is still potential to further build on our current partnership working with agencies to help us develop robust responses for those threatened with or experiencing homelessness.

Where are we going?

We will actively seek to strengthen our current partnership working arrangements with those agencies that can help support our planning.

Priority Seven: Information Technology (IT)

Enhancing the use of information IT

Increased and improved use of IT can help ensure that people and agencies have quick access to the right support, information and advice. In addition, improved systems support commissioners in data-gathering to inform planning

Where are we now?

We recognise the importance of accurate data to ensure that commissioners can better understand the needs of those accessing homelessness services. Robust digital systems will also help to streamline processes and provide people with timely access to accurate information and advice.

Where are we going?

We will review our current digital systems and reporting processes and consider options for improvement. We will also explore how IT could be better used to help deliver information, advice, and assistance.

Priority Eight:

Monitoring Supporting People Programme Grant (SPPG) funded services

Ensuring that our commissioning helps us to deliver our strategy

In order to ensure successful delivery of our strategy, we will update our current monitoring arrangements for SPPG so that we can understand how the services we commission meet the aims of our strategy.

Where are we now?

We have robust monitoring arrangements in place to understand the impact of the services we commission. These tools need to be refreshed to reflect the implementation of our strategy.

Where are we going?

New monitoring standards will be developed and implemented so that we can understand how the services we commission help us to achieve our objectives.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

This document represents a medium term strategy which will be implemented over the next four years. We will work with our stakeholders to develop a detailed action plan setting out how we will achieve our priorities. This action plan will include accountable leads and outline how we will can evidence that the objectives have been achieved.

Progress against this action plan will be reported annually to the Social Services Health & Housing Scrutiny Committee.

CONCLUSION

The needs of people threatened with or experiencing homelessness are often complex and multiple, as such we aim to strengthen partnership working to help prevent and reduce homelessness.

To do this we will explore new models and approaches so that we can shift the focus from managing emergencies and crisis towards a way of working that supports prevention and sustainability of long-term accommodation.

This document is intended to be an open statement for our residents and providers of services to understand our intentions and our ambitions. The development of this draft strategy will allow our stakeholders, including those who use or have previously used homelessness services, to influence and contribute to our future developments.

Our strategy will be a working document that will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and focus on the changing needs of people in Neath Port Talbot.

REFERENCES

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

<http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/legislation/housing-act/?lang=en>

Neath Port Talbot CBC Corporate Plan 2017-2022

<https://www.npt.gov.uk/15847>

Neath Port Talbot CBC Strategic Business Plan for Adult and Children's Services

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s34372/People%20Directorate%20Strategic%20Business%20Plan%202018-2019%203.pdf>

Sustainable Social Services for Wales: A Framework for Action 2011

<http://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/guidance1/services/?lang=en>

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

<http://gov.wales/topics/health/socialcare/act/?lang=en>

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

<http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act/?lang=en>

Western Bay Population Needs Assessment 2016 - 2017

<http://www.westernbaypopulationassessment.org/en/home/>