



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

Strategaeth Rhaglen Cefnogi Tai Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-26

Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol, Iechyd a Thai
Social Services, Health & Housing

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1. Introduction

Local authorities are required to develop a Housing Support Programme Strategy every four years, with a mid-point review every two years. The purpose of this document is to outline the strategic direction of the local authority for housing support services and provide a single strategic view of Neath Port Talbot's approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services, including both statutory homelessness functions funded through the revenue settlement and non-statutory preventative services funded through the Housing Support Grant (HSG). In addition to this, the strategy will also take into account what we as a local authority will do to support the delivery of Welsh Government's visions and aims in the prevention of homelessness and further the transformational shift required in order to move to the new rapid re-housing approach.

The Housing Support Grant is an amalgamation of three existing grants, namely; Supporting People Programme, Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement, which merged in April 2019 following the Welsh Government funding flexibilities pathfinder project. The HSG is an early intervention grant programme, aimed at supporting activity which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilising individuals housing situations or helping those at risk of homelessness find suitable accommodation with the aim to support them in their own homes. The person-centred approach which supports vulnerable people with addressing the often-multiple problems they face, including poor mental health, debt, substance misuse and domestic violence, helps individuals to help improve their well-being and to acquire and progress with the skills they need in order to maintain suitable housing.

This strategy is based on:

- A comprehensive needs assessment, with key areas highlighted in the Statement of Needs
- A review of the Neath Port Talbot Homeless Strategy 2018-22, with priorities and action points carried over
- Feedback from stakeholders and clients.

2. Neath Port Talbot's Vision

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

The vision for housing, as outlined in the Housing Strategy is ***Housing in Neath Port Talbot will be appropriate, affordable, of good quality, in sustainable communities, offering people choice and support if they need it.***

Through partnership working with other agencies such as Registered Social Landlords, the private sector, the third sector, health and community organisations we will aim to prevent homelessness, and where it cannot be prevented, ensure it is rare, brief and unrelated. To do this we will aim to tackle the root cause of homelessness, to ensure ***Neath Port Talbot is a place where nobody is homeless and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish and live a fulfilled, active and independent life.***

3. What shapes our thinking

There is a wide range of law and national guidance influencing the planning and delivery of homelessness and housing support services.

3.1. National Legislation and Guidance

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

The Housing (Wales) Act looks to improve the supply, quality and standards of housing in Wales. It also imposes new legal duties on local authorities to ensure greater emphasis is placed on the prevention of homelessness.

Through the provision of preventative services, the Housing Support Grant makes a significant contribution to the implementation of Part 2 of the Act, which is focussed on homeless prevention. It also reduces or prevents the need for other costly interventions by public services, including health, social care or the criminal justice system.

Section 50 of the Act also places a duty on Local Authorities to carry out a review of homeless services within the county, and formulate a strategy based on those findings.

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The main aim of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act is to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act “requires public bodies in Wales to think about the long-term impact of their decisions, to work better with people, communities and each other and to prevent persistent problems, such as poverty, health inequalities and climate change”.

To make sure we are all working towards the same purpose, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals, and makes it clear that public bodies must work to achieve all of the goals. In addition to this, the act also sets out ‘five ways of working’ of which will help achieve the seven goals, these being; long term, integration, involvement, collaboration and prevention.

The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014

The Act aims to improve the wellbeing of people who need care and support, and carers who need support. It places individuals' wellbeing at the center of care, promoting choice and control, and requires Local Authorities and relevant partners to work in partnerships and co-operatively produce services for adults with care and support needs.

The Act required Local Authorities and health boards to undertake a joint population needs assessment for adults, children and carers. More information on the West Glamorgan Population Needs Assessment can be found [here](#).

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

The Act replaces an abundance of existing legislation and consolidates them into one clear framework, with the aim of make renting a home simpler and easier for individuals.

The main aim of the Act is to allow for greater security amongst those who rent properties, particularly those in the Private Rented Sector in Wales.

Housing Support Grant Guidance (HSG)

The Housing Support Grant Guidance was published in April 2020, and subsequently updated in March 2021. It sets out the governance framework in which Local Authorities should operate and administer the grant. Compliance with the guidance is monitored by Welsh Government through the grant terms and conditions and reporting requirements.

Ending Homelessness in Wales: A High Level Action Plan

The Ending Homelessness High Level Action Plan builds on Welsh Government's 2019 Strategy to End Homelessness and the work and recommendations of the Homelessness Task and Finish Group. It sets the direction for the work of the Welsh Government and its partners to end homelessness in Wales over the next five years.

Welsh Government Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Guidance

A key aspect of Welsh Government's strategy to end homelessness, and the recommendations of the Homelessness Action Group is a move to a rapid rehousing approach across Wales. In response to the pandemic, all Local Authorities have begun the journey of moving towards Rapid Rehousing. The Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Guidance provides advice on how to approach the task of transforming services over the five year transition period.

3.2. Local and Regional Context

The Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan 2021-23

The Neath Port Talbot Corporate Plan 2021-23 includes three well-being objectives to improve the wellbeing of people living in Neath Port Talbot.

- **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 improved**

‘The whole of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council will be a vibrant and healthy place to live, work and enjoy recreational time’

Neath Port Talbot Homeless Strategy 2018-22

The Neath Port Talbot Homeless Strategy aims to strengthen existing practices to focus on the continued development of preventative responses to homelessness and accommodation and specialist support for those who have complex needs and a history of repeat homelessness, therefore reducing the number of people experiencing crisis and needing emergency responses.

NPT Healthy Relationships for Stronger Communities Strategy 2020-23

This strategy provides a local plan for implementing the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2015, which looks to improve prevention, protection and support for people affected by violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The Act places a duty on Local Authorities and Local Health Boards to jointly prepare and publish a Local Strategy to meet local needs and to prevent all forms of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV). The strategy aims to ensure consistent consideration of preventative, protective and supportive mechanisms in the delivery of services. A copy of the Neath Port Talbot Strategy is available [here](#).

Homeless Cell Group

During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic Welsh Government directed local authorities to establish a Regional Homeless Cell to discuss Covid-19 related issues regarding current themes and trends. A Neath Port Talbot Homeless Cell was subsequently established, attended by Local Authority, Welsh

Government, South Wales Police, Probation and a range of other partners and service providers.

Neath Port Talbot Joint Housing Support and Homeless Forum

The Neath Port Talbot Housing Support and Homeless Forum brings together services in Neath Port Talbot who provide housing support or homelessness services, or actively work towards preventing homelessness within Neath Port Talbot. The Forum allows for information sharing between services, lobbying for housing and homeless issues and engagement in strategy and policy development.

West Glamorgan Regional Housing Partnership (RHP)

The Regional Housing Partnership provides strategic direction for the Housing Work stream of the Regional Partnership Board through meetings to define regional strategy, develop regional action plans commission regional activities. Its primary purpose is to co-produce a 5 year Regional Housing, Health and Social Care Strategy and instigate the work to implement the strategy across the West Glamorgan regions.

4. What do we want to achieve

Neath Port Talbot aims to end homelessness. Whilst this is a challenging ambition, it is our intention that we will focus our energies and resources to do all we can to prevent homelessness from happening, and if it does, that there is an appropriate and compassionate response to enabling all households to obtain secure and safe accommodation.

This strategy is being written using our experience of the impact of the Covid Pandemic. In March 2020, we secured an additional 95 units of temporary accommodation, to accommodate everyone who was homeless or inadequately housed so they could be safe. The Welsh Government amended the legislation relating to our duties to people applying for homelessness support by removing the requirement that a household is in Priority need. This has more than doubled the demand for emergency housing. We are assuming

that this will remain in place, so our strategy is based around planning for this increased demand.

To do this we need to work differently.

- We need to procure more housing to offer good quality temporary accommodation to quickly accommodate people who are literally homeless, and to facilitate the supply of permanent, affordable homes to move on to.
- We will transition to the development of a Rapid Rehousing model, so everyone in crisis can be housed and supported very quickly.
- We need to ensure our support model is fit for purpose, and can deliver tailored and appropriate support to everyone, including those with complex needs.
- We will build on our relationships with our partner housing associations, landlords and support agencies to co-create a housing pathway that works for our community, because we know we cannot end homelessness on our own.
- We will provide a personalised response to each person which considers their experience and the underlying causes of their crisis.

5. Statement of Need

We have utilised local and national information and data sets to inform our Statement of Need which addresses current and future service demands and how statutory needs will be met.

The Housing Support Grant Annual Update provides comprehensive information on referrals, service mapping and demand, clients' outcomes, service user surveys, funding streams and expenditure, commissioning activities and service developments. The Annual Update is available on request.

Key messages include:

The number of homelessness presentations has increased by about 15.7% between 2020/21 and 2021/22. Projections for 2022/23 indicate that there will be a 16% increase against 2021/22 figures.

There is currently no-one sleeping rough in Neath Port Talbot

Emerging trends include:

- The number of young people asked to leave home is increasing
- More properties reported as being in disrepair
- Evictions are increasing in the Private Rented Sector
- Financial hardship will likely lead to more evictions

Overall, the outcome areas that are most identified are:

- Managing accommodation (94%)
- Managing money (57%)
- Mental health (50%)

We will need an extra 600 affordable homes over the next 10 years to meet demand

The number of presentations where an assessment was made is relatively evenly split between males and females

The main reasons for homelessness are parents/family can't accommodate, or breakdowns in relationships

3,360 periods of support were provided to 2,107 individuals and families during 2020/21

Within long term services, the most identified outcome areas are:

- Feeling safe (78%)
- Managing accommodation (76%)
- Managing money (58%)

Within short term services, the most identified outcome areas are:

- Managing accommodation (98%)
- Managing money (57%)
- Mentally healthy (49%)

Nearly half (44%) of young people accessing accommodation cited mental health as an additional need

6. What is our focus?

The following section outlines the priority areas that we are planning to take forward over the next four years. A detailed delivery plan, co-produced with key stakeholders will be developed over the coming months outlining how we intend to implement these priorities.

6.1. Priority 1 - Strengthening approaches to early intervention and prevention

We will work with other agencies, including landlords, South Wales Police, (SWP) Social Services, Department of Works and Pensions (DWP), Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS), Swansea Bay University Health Board (SBUHB) and our local communities to ensure that we can identify issues at an early stage. This partnership working will ensure that those who are having difficulties managing their accommodation, or at risk of homelessness get the right support at the right time, and in the right place.

An increase in the Housing Support Grant has enabled the Housing Options Service to increase its capacity for both prevention and support work, to meet the increased demand as a result of the change in Covid-19 legislation.

There are a range of services in Neath Port Talbot that assist Housing Options to meet their statutory duties through the provision of support to those who are experiencing difficulties managing their accommodation, or at risk of homelessness. These include generic and specialist support services for those experiencing mental health issues, substance misuse or domestic abuse, and assertive outreach. The increase in Housing Support Grant in 2021-22 has seen additional services developed to support offenders on release from custody, women who are experiencing sexual exploitation and young people.

The Housing Support Gateway provides a single referral pathway for all externally commissioned floating support and supported accommodation, with the exception of Domestic Abuse Services. The comprehensive referral, assessment and allocation process ensures that individuals can access the support that best meets their housing and support needs.

What we will do

- We will review existing services to ensure that we are making best use of our available resources to deliver preventative interventions through the delivery of trauma informed support
- We will ensure services are available to deliver targeted prevention for high risk clients, including young people, ex-offenders, those with mental health issues and other complex needs.
- We will also look at how people currently access these services and explore the potential to shift more resources from crisis interventions to prevention.
- We will ensure all staff are appropriately trained to deliver a high quality trauma informed service that that is person centred and takes into account the specific needs and strengths of the clients.
- We will look to strengthen our current partnership working arrangements with key agencies to ensure a collective approach to homeless prevention.

6.2. Priority 2 – Working in Partnership

Homelessness is everyone's problem, and a collective approach is required to ensure these efforts are aligned to address the problem. To achieve this a multi-agency strategic board will be established involving statutory agencies, housing providers, support providers and people with lived experience to develop housing, advice and support solutions to work towards the goal of eradicating homelessness in Neath Port Talbot.

What we will do

- We will work in collaboration with Registered Social Landlord partners to continue to increase the supply of suitable and affordable accommodation.
- We will work with Private Sector Landlords, social housing landlords and other partners to implement the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan to provide more sustainable models of accommodation and support.

- We will build on, and further develop strategic partnerships with agencies to help us develop and implement robust responses for those threatened with, or experiencing homelessness, including high risk clients, such as young people, ex-offenders, those with mental health issues and other complex needs.
- We will work with service users and stakeholders to implement mechanisms for co-production and engagement to inform the development of services.

6.3. Priority 3 – Rapid Rehousing

Wherever possible homelessness should be prevented and person-centred, timely solutions make this feasible. If homelessness cannot be prevented, it should be rare, brief and un-repeated. Rapid Rehousing approaches, within a housing-led system, are critical in making this happen. A housing-led system provides stable, appropriate housing and any necessary multi-agency support should be provided as quickly as possible to people who are homeless or at risk of it. This housing-led approach, when properly applied, means the need for many forms of temporary accommodation will diminish.

What we will do

- In line with Welsh Government’s policy direction, we will work with stakeholders to develop and take forward our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan outlining how we will move to a Rapid Rehousing approach over the next five years.

6.4. Priority 4 – Strengthening or improving access to support services

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.

What we will do

- We will explore how IT could be better used to help deliver information, advice, and assistance.

- We will continue to develop the HSG Gateway to facilitate equitable access to support services.
- We will explore the development of online referrals to increase the ways in which people can access support.
- We will continue to improve the way we use data on clients and services to make sure we have the best support available.

6.5. Priority 5 – Commissioning

The Housing Support Grant is an amalgamation of three existing grants, namely; Supporting People Programme Grant, Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement, which merged from April 2019 following the Welsh Government funding flexibilities pathfinder project.

Additional funding to support the delivery of homelessness services in Neath Port Talbot include the Welsh Government's Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG), paid directly to a range of third sector organisations to deliver services. From April 2022, funding and oversight of a number of 'Main Programme' projects will be transferred to the Housing Support Grant, and ring fenced for a transitional period of 2 years. During this time we will work closely with the project providers to gain a deeper understanding of how the projects operate and how they complement our existing HSG-commissioned services. The HPG funded Bond Scheme is not expected to transfer to HSG in 2022-23, pending further work by Welsh Government.

Funding for the Youth Innovation Project will not transfer to the HSG until at least 2023-24, subject to a Welsh Government formal evaluation.

A number of externally commissioned services are jointly funded by Housing Support Grant and either Children's Services, Adult Services or the Western Bay Substance Misuse Area Planning Board.

The existing framework for monitoring HSG funded services allows us to understand the impact of the services we commission, and will be further enhanced by Welsh Government's HSG Outcomes Framework.

What we will do

- We will look to strengthen our current partnership working arrangements with those agencies that can help support our planning, commissioning and delivery of support.
- We will establish a robust programme of Service Area Reviews, working with Children and Adult's Social Services, and other key funders to identify further opportunities for joint commissioning or funding.
- We will update our current monitoring arrangements for HSG to ensure the services we deliver are of high quality and provide value for money.
- We will work with all support providers to implement the outcomes framework to ensure we are effectively deploying resources.
- We will review all services using an evidence-based approach to ensure they meet the ambitions of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, and realign funding as necessary to better meet identified needs.
- We will work with our regional partners to develop and take forward a regional strategy that sets out areas for regional working, regional commissioning and regional approaches.

7. Stakeholder Engagement

The Regional Housing Forum provides a channel for strategic engagement through regular meetings, communications and stakeholder engagement events. The Forum brings together stakeholders, organisations, citizens, service users and carers from across West Glamorgan and allows for open and honest conversations about housing, health and social care transformation, to inform the development of the Regional Housing, Health and Social Care Strategy.

Stakeholder events and surveys during 2021 identified the following as key themes for housing and housing related support:

- Rapid Rehousing / Housing First
- Collaborative working
- Co-production
- Funding
- Housing Provision and standards

- Evidence based commissioning
- Timely, appropriate and adequate support

8. Impact Assessments

An Integrated Impact Assessment was undertaken to identify any potential inequalities arising from the development and delivery of this Strategy and is available to view [here](#).

9. How will we know how well we are doing?

This is a four year strategy which will be subject to a mid-point review. It will be supported by a detailed delivery plan which sets out how we will achieve our priorities.

The delivery plan is intended to be a live document, with progress being reported annually to the Social Care, Health & Wellbeing Cabinet Board.

10. References

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

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

Neath Port Talbot CBC Corporate Plan 2021-23

- [Corporate Plan 2021-2023 \(npt.gov.uk\)](http://npt.gov.uk/corporate-plan-2021-2023)

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

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

Western Bay Population Needs Assessment 2016 - 2017

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

Housing Support Grant Practice Guidance 2020

- <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-04/housing-support-grant-practice-guidance.pdf>

Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015

- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/2/contents/enacted>

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2016/1/contents/enacted>

Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2015

- [national-strategy-2016-to-2021.pdf \(gov.wales\)](#)

NPTCBC Corporate Plan 2021-2023

- <https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/15783/corporate-plan-2021-23.pdf?v=20210818155043>