



RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20

**HEALTH AND WELLBEING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

DATE: 24th FEBRUARY 2020

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, PUBLIC
HEALTH , PROTECTION & COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

Agenda Item No. 6

**UPDATE ON THE RCT
HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2018-
2022**

Authors: Louise Davies, Service Director- Public Protection
Cheryl Emery, Supporting People and Housing Options Manager

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide Members with an update on delivery of the RCT Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 that was approved by Cabinet on the 18th December 2018.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

2.1 That Members scrutinise the content of the report and consider any further actions required as a result.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to undertake a homelessness review for its area. Based on the findings of that review, there is a further duty to formulate and adopt a Homelessness Strategy that will prevent homelessness and ensure suitable accommodation and satisfactory support is available for people who are or who may become homeless.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The RCT Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 is a four year strategic plan which is underpinned by an evidence based review of needs. The plan directs the development of regional and local actions to prevent homelessness. The Draft Strategy was subject to scrutiny by the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee on the 6th November 2018. The Final Strategy was approved by Cabinet on the 18th December 2018 and is available in full on the following link:

<https://www.rctcbc.gov.uk/EN/Council/CouncillorsCommitteesandMeetings/Meetings/Cabinet/2018/12/18/Reports/Item4HomelessnessStrategy20182022.pdf>

- 4.2 Current homelessness legislation in Wales became operational on the 28th April 2015 via Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. This Act placed new duties on Local Authorities to help anyone seeking housing advice and assistance, with an emphasis on prevention of homelessness via early intervention to tackle the causes of homelessness in a strategic and co-ordinated way.
- 4.3 Homeless prevention is defined as an intervention on the part of a service that enables a person who is threatened with homelessness to either remain in their current accommodation or to make a planned move to alternative suitable housing which is available for their occupation for at least 6 months.
- 4.4 The Homelessness Strategy 2018-22 outlines the strategic objectives which the Council, assisted by partners and stakeholders will strive to achieve over the next four years. Detailed actions have been identified under each of the three strategic objectives:
- **Objective 1:** Preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness from occurring, wherever possible, therefore reducing homelessness.
 - **Objective 2:** Ensuring that appropriate support and accommodation, including temporary and emergency accommodation, is available to meet the needs of homeless and potentially homeless people.
 - **Objective 3:** Ensuring people with housing support needs have these fully assessed and have access to services to maintain independent living.

The detailed actions are outlined in Appendix 1 of this report alongside the steps being taken to achieve the objectives.

- 4.5 Welsh Government introduced a national performance indicator (PI) that each Local Authority has to report on annually to give some measure of how effective they are at preventing homelessness across Wales. This PI asks Councils to calculate *“the percentage of clients (who are confirmed to be at risk of homelessness within the next 56 days) who have their homelessness successfully prevented following advice and assistance from the Council”*. In 2018/19, the Council’s performance was 71% and to

date at quarter 3 in 2019/20, the performance is 75% against a target of 70%. This compares with a performance of 75% in 2017/18, 63% in 2016/17 and 49% in 2015/16.

5 CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT

- 5.1 There are no consultation implications arising from this report. Members will note that in undertaking the review of homelessness, the Council consulted with service users at the Housing Advice Centre and clients in temporary accommodation to get views on their experiences of what works well in homeless services in RCT and what barriers they faced when seeking support. Wide engagement with stakeholders was also undertaken.

6 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no equality and diversity implications arising directly from this report. A full Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the development of the Homelessness Strategy.

7 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Funding commitments are already in place by way of homelessness funding in the Revenue Support Grant, Welsh Government Supporting People Grant and Homelessness Prevention Grant.
- 7.2 The new Housing Support Grant will be introduced from April 2020 and will amalgamate three existing grants i.e. Supporting People and Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rent Smart Wales enforcement funding. This funding will assist in the delivery of many of the actions identified in this Strategy. Other funding streams such as the Social Housing Grant from Welsh Government support delivery of increased social housing provision in the County Borough.

8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report however the duty on local authorities to prepare and deliver a Homelessness Strategy and to prevent homelessness are legal requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

9 LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.

- 9.1 Homelessness is a key national priority as demonstrated by the Welsh Government Strategy for Preventing and Ending Homelessness (October 2019). The RCT strategy supports that national agenda as well as local priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan. Homelessness services are person centred and are therefore wholly consistent with the "People" Priority of the Council which seeks to ensure that people are able to maintain independent and positive lives. Many of the actions in the Strategy also support the "Place" priority which aims to ensure that in RCT we "create neighbourhoods where people are proud to work and live".
- 9.2 The Strategy embraces an early intervention and preventative approach to homelessness and outlines a medium to long term commitment to improving the services and housing options available to people who are or are at risk of being homeless. The

Strategy has been developed following a review which involved service users as well as partners in formulating the objectives and key actions. The strategy can only be delivered collaboratively with our partners and stakeholders and its success requires an integrated approach over the four years of the strategy. The strategy is therefore made in full consideration of the sustainable development principles. The strategy will also support the Council to contribute to four of the seven well-being goals, namely:

1. A more equal Wales
2. A prosperous Wales
3. A Wales of cohesive communities
4. A healthier Wales

10 CONCLUSION

- 10.1 The homeless review found that our existing services and prevention activity have helped deliver effective results in the face of increasing demands on services. It is anticipated there will be further increasing demands on Housing Advice, Homelessness and Supporting People services going forward.
- 10.2 The Homelessness Review and the Strategy developed ensure the Council discharges its obligations under Section 50 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The key strategic objectives allow the Council to meet its statutory duties to homeless people and to prevent homelessness in accordance with the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and build on the good work already in progress.

Appendix 1: Rhondda Cynon Taf Homelessness Strategy 2018-2022 Delivery Plan

Objective 1: Preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness from occurring, wherever possible, therefore reducing homelessness.

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
1.1	Operating an effective 'triage' type systems in providing homeless services and also securing as many successful Section 66 outcomes as possible to prevent escalation to Section 73 and 75 duties	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager / Housing Solutions Manager / Team Manager	September 2020	In progress/ Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with the Shelter "Take Notice" Project to consult with service users on a new service model. Undertake Staff Consultation for the operation of a new frontline response to improve the customer experience. To action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement new model 	To ensure that front line services are responsive and co-ordinated to meet the needs of service users
1.2	Review of Personal Housing and Support Plans and homelessness decision letters	Housing Solutions Manager/ Housing Solutions Manager/ Shelter Cymru	April 2020	In progress/ complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure Housing and support (H&S) plans are in place for all households. Ensure H& S plans are referred to key worker service in a timely manner. Roll out new decision letters in conjunction with new client information on homelessness process 	Improve written information to all homeless households.
1.3	Develop pre-eviction protocols with all housing providers including private landlords.	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager	October 2020	In progress/ Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protocols in place Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NTQ's and evictions monitored across all forms of housing. 	Reduction in loss of accommodation.

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
1.4	Ensure target is met for Prevention outcomes	Housing Solutions Manager	Quarterly Reporting	Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of households successfully prevented from homelessness to exceed 75% 	Target met and reviewed annually.
1.5	Review the effectiveness of the Prisoner Pathway role	Housing Solutions Manager	May 2020	Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue with dedicated Offender Role located in Probation offices. 	Robust Prisoner Pathway and effective joint working arrangements in place with the Probation Service
1.6	Review current equalities monitoring systems	Housing Solutions Manager / Housing Solutions Manager	December 2020	In progress/ Complete <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult with the Councils Equalities Monitoring Officer. Areas for improvement identified Arrange Staff training 	Accessible Homeless and housing options service.
1.7	Monitor use of Prevention Fund to ensure that it successfully contributes to effective and sustainable prevention outcomes	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager.	On-going	Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profile spend Arrange information data to be received on a monthly basis, Set up monitoring framework 	Homelessness Prevention Fund is used effectively and can demonstrate effective sustainable outcomes.
1.8	Review and improve information available on line and in written format, Making better use of the Councils Website and social media.	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager / Homefinder Manager	December 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved website Easier access to online advice and information 	Reduced demand on homelessness service by the provision of clear on line housing advice.

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
1.9	Work with DWP and the Housing Benefit Team to identify and advise households who may be at risk of homelessness due to the impact of Welfare Benefit Reform and other financial difficulties they may be experiencing.	Housing Solutions Team Manager / Housing Solutions Team Manager.	October 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop information sharing protocols and working protocols. Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to maximise use of Discretionary Housing Benefit Payments. 	Improve early intervention and prevention for households affected by Welfare Reform.

Objective 2: Ensuring that appropriate support and accommodation, including temporary and emergency accommodation, is available to meet the needs of homeless and potentially homeless people

	Actions Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
2.1	To ensure that services are accessible to all households irrespective of their particular needs and backgrounds	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager	December 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with the Councils Equality Officer to develop best practice in service delivery. To action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide Equalities and Diversity Training to all frontline housing staff. 	Ensure service is accessible to all.
2.2	Ensure B+B accommodation is only used for families in an emergency	Housing Solutions Manager	ongoing	Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor temporary accommodation placements. Maximise use of Leased accommodation. 	Reduce the average time that families spend in B+B Reduce the need to use B+B for families.

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
2.3	Review the provision of temporary accommodation for households with complex needs experiencing domestic and sexual abuse	Supporting People Team	January 2021	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review to consider : Reasons for being asked to leave refuge No's placed in bed and breakfast accommodation. Client consultation for support services they would like to have in place. 	Reduction in the use of Bed and Breakfast for individuals with complex needs.
2.4	Complete review of temporary accommodation .	Housing Strategy Team	April 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify current models of provision. Make recommendations 	Reduce the need to use Bed and Breakfast accommodation
2.5	Prevent use of B+B for 16 and 17 year olds	Supporting and Housing Options Manager/ Housing Solutions Manager	March 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current shared property developed with a private landlord for young people aged 16 -24 Consider outcomes. Replicate model in other areas 	Bed and breakfast not used for young people.
2.6	Consider feasibility of establishing social letting agency for private sector properties	Housing Strategy Team / Supporting People and Housing Options Manager.	December 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liaise with PR landlord forum. Consider and cost financial implications linked with staffing resources and landlord incentives / payments. 	Increase the supply of good quality affordable private rented accommodation.

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
2.7	Carry out evaluation of the new locality based floating support project. .	Performance Support Officer / Supporting People and Housing Options Manager	June 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify clients who have ended support on project. Cross reference clients with Abritas records to confirm if a homeless application has been made when receiving support service or at the end of support. 	Reduce demand on homelessness service by ensuring a effective model of housing related support is in place.
2.8	Continue to develop a Housing First Approach to address the Housing and Support needs of Homeless people and rough sleepers with the most complex needs	Supporting People Team	Ongoing with full evaluation and way forward by January 2021	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure appropriate funding is in place for staffing arrangements. Implement model Evaluation 	Reduce levels of repeat homelessness and rough sleeping in RCT.

Objective 3: Ensuring people with housing support needs have these fully assessed and have access to services to help sustain independent living

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
3.1	Improve access to mental health support services to homeless people	Supporting People Team	December 2021	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out consultation with providers and service providers to identify issues. Work with health and other key services to improve access to services. 	Provide appropriate pathways and services for clients with a mental health need.

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
3.2	Update and Improve on line Supported Housing Directory	Supporting People Team	July 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake annual review to ensure Information is accurate and readily available. 	On –line directory providing up to-date information on support services in RCT.
3.3	Carry out a review of the Severe Weather Plan	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager	October 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete Annual Review Relevant improvements identified and Implemented 	Robust Severe weather plan in place to offer appropriate arrangements for rough sleepers.
3.4	Carry out local qualitative research with former and current rough sleepers to help identify the reasons that led to them becoming homeless	Supporting People Team / Street-smart Worker	September 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with service users. Write up research outcomes 	Better information to support the needs of rough sleepers.
3.5	Review with health colleagues and support providers the need for rough sleepers and vulnerable households to have better access to health services.	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager	June 2020	In progress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold discussions with Health and other key stakeholders. Consultation with service users Identify funding opportunities for additional staff resources 	Increased access to health services. More joined up working with Health.
3.6	Develop a training plan for Housing Solution Staff and support Providers	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager / Supporting People Team	April 2020	Ongoing/ Complete Training to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homeless prevention Options Domestic Abuse Housing / Homelessness Legislation Welfare Reform Updates 	Housing and Support Providers receive appropriate training to help them provide effective advice and assistance within their roles

	Action Required	Responsible Officer	By When	Key Activities and Progress	Outcome
3.7	Raise awareness of provision in place to support men who are experiencing or have experiences domestic abuse	Supporting People and Housing Options Manager/ Oasis Centre Manager / Women's Aid RCT	April 2020	Ongoing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure information on new service provision is made available through a range of channels to include website information leaflet. 	Provision of support services in place for men experiencing domestic abuse.