

# Torfaen Supporting People Strategy

2012 – 2017



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## Section 1 Introduction

The Supporting People Programme provides essential **housing related support** to the most vulnerable people in our communities. The programme provides a cost effective alternative to intervention by statutory services and helps vulnerable people through the development of preventative solutions. Supporting People Services offer a number of benefits and contributes to the achievement of a range of positive outcomes for individuals and communities. Some examples of the benefits of the programme include preventing homelessness, reducing crime, reducing social exclusion and increasing independence of people who use the services. A recent review of the Supporting People Programme in Wales concluded that:

**Housing related support** can include activities such as help with arranging accommodation, paying bills and accessing other services. Housing related support does not include medical, personal or domiciliary care activities.

*The Supporting People Programme in Wales is highly regarded throughout the United Kingdom. There is compelling evidence that the Programme in Wales is providing commendable and sorely needed assistance, support and relief for the most vulnerable and disadvantage people who have either lost or are at risk of losing their homes.* (Aylward 2010)

Amidst a challenging climate of economic uncertainty and a changing political environment, this strategy establishes the medium to long term direction of Torfaen Supporting People Programme. Exploring the challenges ahead, the strategy aims to provide a focused pathway of priorities to maximise the value of housing related support services in the borough.

The strategic priorities underpinning this strategy have been developed through consultation with a broad range of stakeholders. The delivery of this five year strategy will be supported by an annual operational plan compiled by Torfaen Supporting People Team in partnership with Torfaen Supporting People Planning Group (SPPG) and Supporting People Inclusive Forum (SPIF).



## Sam's Story

Sam presented to the local authority as homeless following the breakdown of his relationship with his partner. This resulted in Sam living in his car and occasionally staying at his parents which created difficulties in seeing his children. Sam was also a regular user of drugs and dependent on alcohol which impacted severely on his mental wellbeing and physical health.

Due to a number of compounding issues, Sam was referred to the Torfaen Floating Support scheme to access housing related support to enable him to regain control of his life and circumstances.

Sam was introduced to Gwalia Care and Support through the Torfaen Floating Support Scheme. A support worker met with Sam to identify goals and develop a plan to enable him to take back control of his life, resolve his accommodation situation and reduce his substance dependency.

As a consequence of Gwalia's intervention, Sam:

- Was supported to register with Homeseeker, where he was allocated a property in an area of his choice with a local landlord
- Applied for a Community Care Grant and was awarded £729 to help furnish his home
- Was introduced to Kaleidoscope and has dramatically reduced his substance use and is working towards abstinence

Sam is now settling into his new accommodation and is still receiving support to help him set up bill accounts, maintain a home and develop mechanisms to deal with unexpected obstacles.

## Section 2 Background

Supporting People is a Welsh Government (WG) funded programme that provides housing related support for **vulnerable people** to maximise, maintain and sustain their independence through the provision of a range of innovative services and projects. The types of services available through Supporting People funding include housing related support at home and in supported housing projects such as refuge, extra care, hostels and shared housing.

**Vulnerable people**, as defined by the Welsh Government, eligible for supporting people funding can fall into one or more of the following groups: People experiencing domestic abuse, mental health problems, learning disabilities, substance misuse, homelessness, ex-offenders, physical disabilities, BME communities, vulnerable families, those with a chronic illness, young people or older persons.

The preventative focus of the programme supports local, regional and national policy objectives enabling vulnerable people to maintain their independence and reduce their dependence on other services.

Local Authorities in Wales are required to plan and commission housing related support services that are needs driven and service user focussed. To demonstrate this, each Local Authority is required to develop a comprehensive evidence base for the development of housing related support services. Through consultation with stakeholders over the past five years, the following client groups have been identified as local priorities for development of housing related support services:

- People at risk of homelessness
- Young People (including care leavers)
- Women experiencing domestic abuse

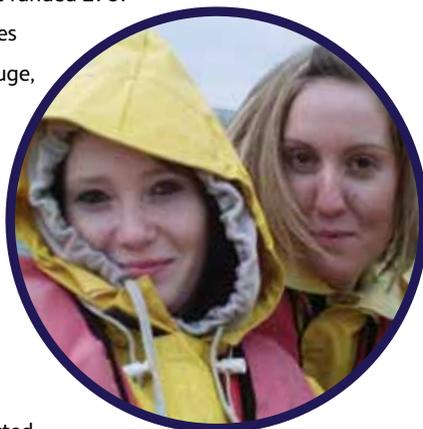


- People with mental health problems
- People with substance misuse issues
- Older persons and frail elderly people
- People with learning disabilities.

The evidence base relating to this document can be found on the Torfaen Supporting People website (The website address is detailed in Appendix 1).

### Torfaen Supporting People vital statistics

- At April 2011, Torfaen Supporting People Programme funded 2787 units across 47 schemes employing a range of services including community alarms, supported housing, refuge, extra care and floating support (please see evidence base for more detail)
- During 2010/11 the programme supported 3856 people to live independently through the provision of housing related support
- The current budget for housing related support in Torfaen stands at £3.6 million, however, in line with public sector policy cuts to the programme are expected.



Each Local Authority in Wales has established a Supporting People Team to administer the programme at a local level. If you would like further information about Supporting People in Torfaen please contact us. (The team structure and contact information can be seen in **Appendix 1**).

## Changing Lives

Often housing related support is required by people in difficult circumstances who need a little help to become or remain independent. The journeys travelled by people who are in need of support are often varied and filled with obstacles. Supporting People in Torfaen try and capture the ups and downs of people's journeys through their period of support to help understand the impact of the services on individual lives.

This approach, known as the Outcomes Framework has been used by many services in Torfaen as part of a national pilot since November, 2009. This framework is recognised as good practice by the Welsh Government and is mandatory in April 2012.

In 2010 the Supporting People Programme in Torfaen:

**Helped 397 people feel safer**

**Enabled 420 people to manage their money**

**Assisted 349 people to manage their relationships**

**Supported 327 people to feel part of their community**

**Aided 463 people to manage their accommodation**

\*Please note these figures are captured for services participating in the pilot only and individuals who identified a need in these areas.

## Section 3 The Context

The programme provides much needed support to the most vulnerable people in our community to encourage stability and independence, however, the influences on the circumstances of individuals are numerous.

### UK Government

The change of government in May 2010 and subsequent financial policy has significantly impacted on the delivery of public services. The national policy and legislative directions are expected to have substantial impact on demand and provision of housing related support for vulnerable groups. The public spending cuts and changing welfare system are expected to negatively impact on vulnerable groups and create an increase in demand for housing-related support services.

### Welsh Government

2010 was a critical year for the Supporting People Programme across Wales. The Welsh Government commissioned a review of the programme that examined and challenged the administrative conditions and effectiveness of housing related support services. Consequently, a number of recommendations, relating to the financial management, governance arrangements and quality management of the programme were established and are scheduled for implementation in the coming years (these are available on the [Welsh Government website](#)).

The positive outcomes of the review, completed by Sir Mansel Aylward, have effectively raised the profile of the programme and promoted the benefits and value of the programme for vulnerable individuals and wider society. Consequently, the Supporting People budget has secured some protection in the recent Welsh Government budget setting process. Whilst cuts are expected over the coming years, these will be implemented in line with a fairer redistribution of Supporting People funding.

### Torfaen County Borough Council

At a local level, Torfaen County Borough Council have recently published a suite of strategies and plans that include:

- The Community Strategy
- Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Plan
- Community Safety Plan
- Children and Young People's Plan.

The integrated suite of strategies and the local development plan, depicted in the following diagram, are linked and aligned to deliver the outcomes established by the local service board.



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These strategies are centred around the following outcomes shared by all public services in Torfaen:

- Torfaen has a healthy population with a good quality of life
- People in Torfaen are safe
- People in Torfaen are educated for life
- People in Torfaen enjoy a prosperous economy
- People in Torfaen live in quality affordable homes
- People in Torfaen live in clean, green, sustainable communities
- Frail people in Torfaen are happily independent.

The Supporting People Programme closely aligns to the priorities identified in Torfaen County Borough Council Corporate Plan II:

- Supporting families and children living in poverty to get through the recession
- Preventing Torfaen residents becoming homeless
- Safeguarding children, especially those with additional (special) educational needs and supporting positive attitudes towards education
- Protecting the most vulnerable adults and supporting those with disabilities and other long term conditions
- Targeting support to deprived communities and families suffering from crime and anti-social behaviour
- Using resources wisely, to include maintaining the highway infrastructure and reducing energy consumption and waste
- Supporting initiatives which generate employment and training for work opportunities.



## Tom's Story

Tom moved into Hales House in November 2010 when his relationship with his father became volatile and broke down due to alleged issues around domestic abuse. Tom's mum remarried and although the relationship is positive she was unable to accommodate him.

During his stay at Hales House, Tom actively participated in new things gaining new experiences and looked at different career opportunities. Tom attended workshops run by staff at Hales House and regular H2H sessions at Hales House on topics such as Drug and Alcohol Abuse, Sexual Health and Budgeting. During fortnightly key-working sessions, Tom identified that he had a lot of debt. Achievable goals were set with his key-worker and Tom was supported by staff to contact the agencies and set up repayment plans.

In February 2011 Tom completed the Torfaen Best Chance Programme, along with three other clients at Hales House. As part of this, Tom attended a work placement to gain new skills and experience for his CV. Following his work placement Tom recognised that he would like to pursue a career in Admin so he spoke to a Pathways Project Worker and through links was offered an assessment for a voluntary placement in the Corporate Law Admin department with a local organisation with an opportunity for an apprenticeship.

Tom is a keen sports player and through Hales House, attended football training every Wednesday with Torfaen Young Persons Support Service (TYPSS). Due to his commitment, Tom was offered a work placement via Solas Compass on the Green Grass Project run by Cardiff City Football Club. Tom attended two sessions a week for six weeks and achieved his Football Leaders Award (level 1) in coaching and an OCN Accredited course.

After a seven month stay at Hales House it was identified that Tom no longer needed the high support that Hales House offered, so in June 2011, Tom moved into accommodation to gain independent living skills, managing bills, dealing with neighbours and maintaining a training placement, with the support of his Floating Support Worker. Tom is now bidding for his own accommodation via

14 Homeseeker to be resettled back into the community.

## Section 4 Our Vision

In Torfaen we are committed to the development of housing related support services that meet the needs of the community. Our overarching vision for the programme in Torfaen is that:

### People in Torfaen live independently

To achieve the vision we will adhere to the following standards:

- Understand the housing related support needs of vulnerable people in Torfaen
- Adopt an inclusive framework for planning and commissioning services
- Ensure supporting people funded services are efficient and effective
- Place the service users at the heart of the programme.



Our vision links closely and aligns with Torfaen's Community Strategy outcomes. The alignment between the plans and strategies will ensure appropriate linkages are made across the variety of agencies involved in the delivery of the Torfaen Community Plan.

## John's Story

On the 4th of March 2003 and at the age of 46, I began my journey of recovery and independent living with Torfaen Mind. My journey started with a referral into the supported housing project. Within a very short time I had been assessed and offered a tenancy within Wern House in Pontypool. Prior to this I lived independently, but unfortunately my mental health had declined and I was unable to manage my own home. Things were not good for me I lost contact with my 3 children and my father; I became very isolated and withdrawn.

As soon as I moved into Wern House the staff began working with me to rebuild my life and helped me to manage my mental health. I have fond memories of living at Wern House and it is here that I made friends with two wonderful people who also lived there. We remain good friends to this day, they now also live independently. I have always been quite creative and with the encouragement of staff I would spend time writing poetry and creating decorative pillows.

Within 6 months I was ready to move into a lower support house, this was as a result of the intensive support given to me by the staff at Wern House, developing my independent living skills and providing me with emotional support. Things have not always gone smoothly for me and I have, in the past, relapsed. However, with the quick intervention and support from the housing team and other professionals I am soon back on track. On reflection, and if asked what I felt about living within a supported housing project, I can say the main thing for me was the way I was treated and how the staff made me feel safe.

‘ Within 6 months I was ready to move into a lower support house ,

I was given the time to heal. In the early days I accessed the drop-in centre daily, this allowed me to make friends and build a routine and reduce my isolation. I have warm memories of the drop-in days.

In 2009 I started to have discussions with my support worker about the options of me moving out of supported housing and moving into my own home. Over the next few months we worked together on a plan of action in preparation for me moving on, this was a huge step for me and at times I would become very anxious. However, my support worker worked with me so that my anxieties and fears could be identified and reduced throughout the move on process. With the help of my support worker I applied for “home seeker” and was given a gold banding for housing. My support worker encouraged me to start saving so that I could cover the costs of setting up and having my own home. We spent many hours looking for, and choosing, the furniture and household items for my new home.

In April 2011 I moved into my new home. This was a massive step for me. I am very happy and I love my independence. My life is very different now to how it was, with the help of my support workers over the years I have been able to establish new links with 2 of my 3 children. I have regular contact with them and also now my 2 grandchildren, I am very proud of all my children and how successful they have become now that they are adults. I have just recently attended my daughter's wedding ceremony and met up with long lost relatives. My world has become bigger and more enriched, I now manage my mental health successfully, I am stable financially, my confidence and self esteem is good and I am now able to manage my own home back out in the community.

## Section 5 Our Priorities

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Following consultation with a range of stakeholders a number of strategic priorities for the Supporting People Programme were agreed by the Supporting People Planning Group (SPPG) for delivery over the next five years.

### Our Priorities

These priorities will form the backbone of future Supporting People Operational Plans for the duration of this strategy.

We are committed to:

- The delivery of a range of services to cater for the diverse needs of vulnerable groups in Torfaen
- Ensuring that the Supporting People Programme in Torfaen is equipped to respond to the programme of public sector cuts and uncertain economic conditions
- Developing collaborative approaches with stakeholders, working across boundaries and sectors where appropriate
- Contributing to the development of national policy and remaining responsive to the changing political environment
- Promoting creativity and innovation in the commissioning of housing related support services.

Specific actions relating to the implementation of these priorities can be found in the annual report and operational plan (published annually during March).

## Emma's Story

Emma was referred to Hafan Cymru by her counsellor after years of living with an abusive husband (John). Whilst the physical violence had declined, John had been accumulating large debts through gambling and was using the household income to feed this habit.

Emma's physical and mental health had deteriorated over the past few years and her hearing disability meant that she often relied on John to help with their three children. John often used Emma's poor health and disability as a way to assert his control over her and the children.

During her contact with Hafan Cymru, Emma participated in the Freedom Programme which helped her gather the strength to leave the family home and the abusive relationship with her three daughters. Hafan Cymru supported Emma to:

- Apply for and bid for housing through Torfaen home seeker
- Move into and set up a new home
- Secure household furniture through grant funding
- Liaise with CAB to help with debt issues
- Access relevant benefits
- Establish a budget and stick to it
- Seek legal assistance to pursue a divorce.

Emma and her daughters have now settled into their new accommodation surrounded by the support of friends and family. Unable to work full time due to her disability and poor health, Emma is participating in the Bridges to Work programme and has gained computer and administration qualifications and hopes to one day secure a part time role in an office. Emma feels that she has made huge progress against the goals she established with Hafan Cymru at the start of her difficult journey and is more confident and in control of her own destiny.

## Section 6 Finance and Resources

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The Supporting People budget in Torfaen currently stands at £3.6 million, however further funding cuts are anticipated over the next 5 years as the government plan for economic recovery.

The cuts to public sector budgets are expected to severely impact on the delivery of Supporting People services. Although afforded some protection by the Welsh Government, forecasted figures suggest that further cuts will be implemented alongside the redistribution of Supporting People Grants and amalgamation of Supporting People funding streams.

Operating under conditions of extreme uncertainty the Supporting People Programme in Torfaen is equipped to respond to the challenging financial circumstances through adoption of:

- A robust planning framework detailing investment and disinvestment priorities
- Short, medium and long term planning mechanisms
- A programme of contract monitoring
- Schedule of service reviews
- An annual contract negotiation process
- Performance management measures
- Regional and collaborative approaches.

These processes allow the development of a comprehensive understanding of the housing related support needs within the borough to ensure that resources are appropriately targeted and meet the needs of vulnerable people in our communities.



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Appendix 1: Supporting People Team contact information and structure.

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