

**TORFAEN
COUNTY
BOROUGH**



**BWRDEISTREF
SIROL
TORFAEN**

Housing Support Grant

Needs Assessment



Table of Content

Table of Figures.....	4
The County of Torfaen	6
Data Sources	8
Office of National Statistics.....	9
Torfaen Well – being assessment	13
Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (WIMD)	15
Gwent Population Needs Assessment	18
Children and Young People.....	21
Older People	21
Health and Physical Disabled People	23
People with Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders.....	23
Mental Health	24
Sensory Impairment.....	24
Carers who need support.....	25
Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence	25
Local Homelessness and Housing data	27
Homelessness	27
Levels of Homelessness	27
Household Demographics.....	28
Ethnicity	28
Age	28
Household Type	30
Homeless Prevention and Relief	30
Rough Sleeping.....	31
Future levels of Homelessness.....	32
Resources.....	32
Housing Solutions Service	32
Housing Support Grant Gateway	32
Housing First Pilots.....	33
Temporary Accommodation	33
Non-Engagement	34
Housing Demand and Affordability.....	36
Social Housing Register and Affordable Housing Provision	38
Housing Support Gateway	40
Void Utilisation.....	41
Waiting times.....	42
Support Extensions	43

Demographics	43
Rejected Referrals	43
Gap Matrix Analysis	44
Housing Support Programme Outcomes	46
Lead Needs.....	46
January to June 2020	46
Key Outcomes	46
July to December 2020	47
Key Outcomes	47
Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Needs Assessment	49
Funding	49
Demands	50
Recommendations	50
Feedback from Service Users and Stakeholders.....	51
Gwent Service User Survey Feedback 2020 & 2021	51
Gwent Stakeholder Feedback 2020 & 2021	52
Local Stakeholder Engagement.....	53
Service Review Feedback.....	53
Service Monitoring Feedback	54
Housing Related Support Survey	54
Housing Solutions Service	54
Research and National Publications	56
Preventing rough sleeping in Wales and reducing it in the short-term October 2019.....	56
Report from the Homelessness Action Group for the Welsh Government March 2020	56
Report to Welsh Ministers from the Homelessness Action Group July 2020.....	57
Rough Sleeping Action Plan February 2018	57
Key Local and Regional Strategies.....	58
Torfaen Wellbeing Plan.....	58
Gwent Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018 - 2023	58
Strategy for Older People Phase 3: Torfaen Delivery Plan (2015 to 2023).....	59
The Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2022	59
Phase II homelessness plan.....	60
Summary	61
Statement of Need.....	62
Current and Future Demands	62
Regional Needs	64
Statutory Needs	65

Table of Figures

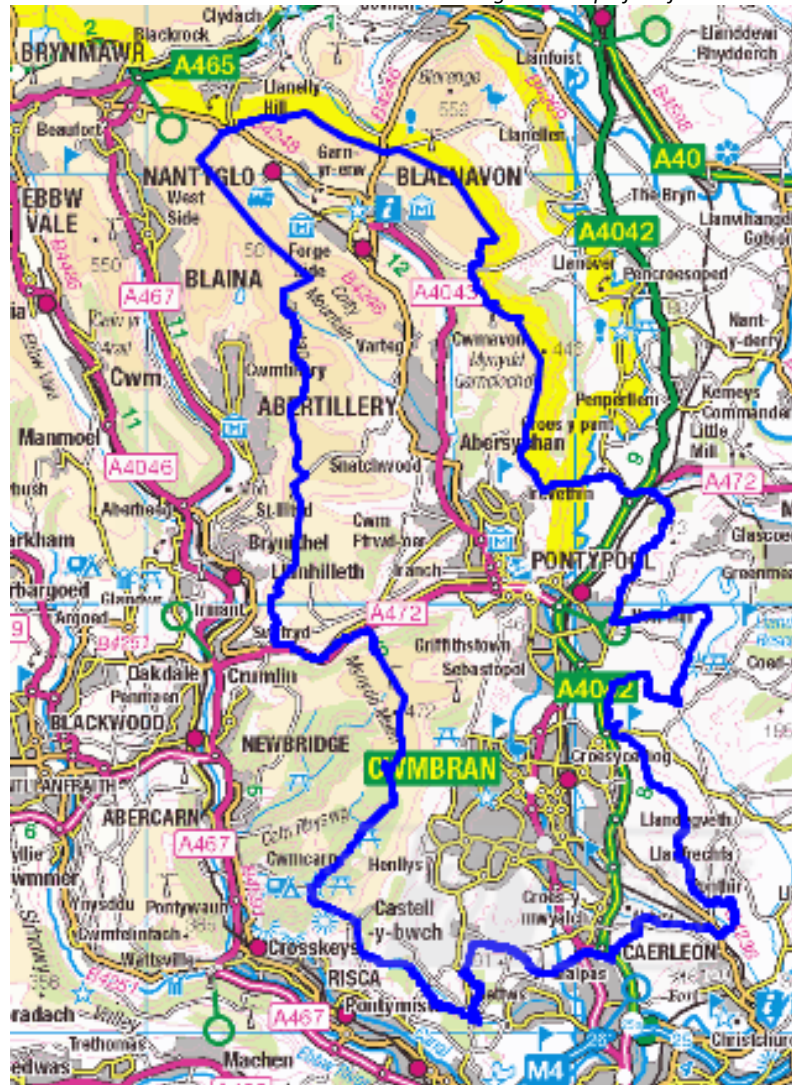
Figure 1 Map of Torfaen	6
Figure 2 View from Big Pit Coal Mine	7
Figure 3 Aerial View of South Torfaen	7
Figure 4 Working Age Population of Torfaen	9
Figure 5 Employment Status of Working Age Residents	9
Figure 6 Economic Inactivity in Torfaen.....	10
Figure 7 Food Bank Usage across Gwent	11
Figure 8 Food Bank Usage 2019 (All recipients)	11
Figure 9 Workless Households in Torfaen	11
Figure 10 Levels of Qualification in Torfaen	12
Figure 11 Median Weekly Earnings in Torfaen	12
Figure 12 Torfaen Well-being Objectives.....	14
Figure 13 Map of Deprivation Levels in Torfaen.....	15
Figure 14 Number of most deprived LSOAs in Torfaen	16
Figure 15 Most deprived LSOAs in Torfaen	16
Figure 16 Population Projections in Torfaen	18
Figure 17 Looked After Children	21
Figure 18 Predicted number of people aged 65+ with dementia.....	22
Figure 19 Predicted number of people over 65 who are unable to do a domestic task	22
Figure 20 Limiting Long-term illness	23
Figure 21 Learning Disabilities amongst over 65s.....	23
Figure 22 Sight Impairments amongst the over 65s	24
Figure 23 Unpaid Care.....	25
Figure 24 Rate of sexual offences	25
Figure 25 Number of recorded incidents of domestic abuse	26
Figure 26 Welsh Government Homeless Return	27
Figure 27 Ethnicity of Applicants	28
Figure 28 Homeless Applicants Aged 16 – 24.....	28
Figure 29 Homeless Outcomes by Age	29
Figure 30 Social Housing Stock in Torfaen	30
Figure 31 Eligible, threatened with homelessness, prevention assistance provided (Section 66).....	30
Figure 32 Eligible, homeless, subject to duty to help to secure (Section 73)	30
Figure 33 Section 75 Successful Discharge Reason.....	31
Figure 34 Loss of Temporary Accommodation	31
Figure 35 Rough Sleeper Figures.....	31
Figure 36 Temporary Accommodation in Torfaen.....	33
Figure 37 Households in Temporary Accommodation at end of financial year	33
Figure 38 Households placed in Temporary Accommodation.....	33
Figure 39 Temporary Accommodation Placements by Household Type.....	34
Figure 40 Temporary Accommodation Placements by Multiple and Single Household Type.....	34
Figure 42 Homeless Service Levels of Non-Engagement	35
Figure 43 Average House Prices in Torfaen (2020).....	36
Figure 44 Private Sector Rents (2019)	36
Figure 45 Average weekly rents in stock at social rents by area, accommodation and provider type	37
Figure 46 Average Waiting Time for Social Housing by size and area (Days)	37
Figure 47 Average Waiting Time for Social Housing by Priority Band	37
Figure 48 Age of Homeseeker Applicants	38

Figure 49 Social Housing Stock	38
Figure 50 Annual Supply of Affordable Housing 2016 - 2021	39
Figure 51 Housing Support Grant Service Provision	40
Figure 52 Highest Support Referrals	40
Figure 53 Referrals for a LPMHSS assessment	41
Figure 54 Void Utilisation per Quarter	41
Figure 55 Referral Waiting Times 2020/21	42
Figure 56 Referrals by Age	43
Figure 57 Referrals by Gender	43
Figure 58 Referral Rejection Reasons	43
Figure 59 Rejected Referrals by Client Group	44
Figure 60 Rejected Referrals by Age	44
Figure 61 Service Matrix	45
Figure 62 Lead Needs – Jan to June	46
Figure 63 Lead Need by Outcome – Jan to June	46
Figure 64 Most Prevalent Outcomes – Jan to June	47
Figure 65 Lead Needs - July to Dec	47
Figure 66 Lead Need by Outcome - July to Dec	47
Figure 67 Most Prevalent Outcomes – Jul to Dec	48
Figure 68 HSG Funding	49
Figure 69 Rate of sexual offences per 1000 people	50
Figure 70 Word Cloud of Responses	51
Figure 71 Barriers to support	54
Figure 72 Outcomes of Support	54
Figure 73 Torfaen Public Services Board well-being objectives	58

The County of Torfaen

Torfaen is a former industrial valley located in south-east Wales. It borders the city of Newport in the south, the county of Monmouthshire to the east and the counties of Caerphilly and Blaenau-Gwent to the west and northwest.

Figure 1 Map of Torfaen

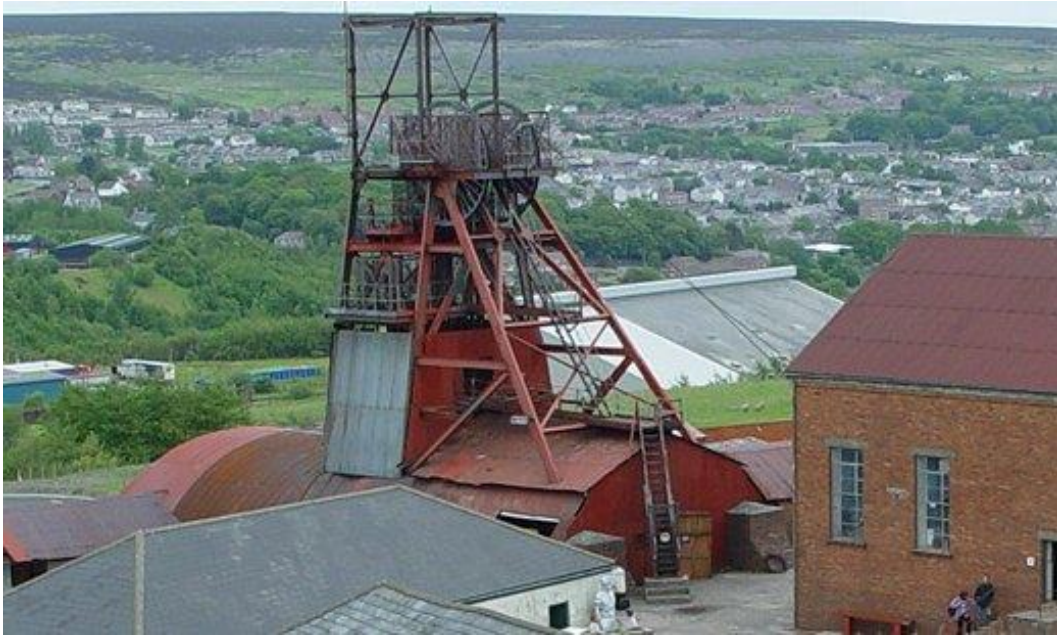


Torfaen has a geographic area of 126km² and is the 3rd smallest borough in Wales; with a population of circa 93,961 (ONS midyear estimate 2019). The borough begins at the Heads of the Valleys in the north of the county and runs down the Afon Lliwy valley coming to an end just before the M4 motorway in the south.

Within Torfaen there are three main settlement areas; Blaenavon in the north, Pontypool in the centre and Cwmbran in the south. Despite the short distance between them, these 3 towns have their own unique character and needs.

Torfaen is the most easterly of the industrial valleys of South Wales, with settlements in the north and mid of the borough originally established to exploit the abundant non-renewable charcoal, coal and iron resources within the area.

Figure 2 View from Big Pit Coal Mine



Over the past 100 years, as these heavy industries declined, so did the prosperity of these northern communities, resulting in higher levels of unemployment, more poverty and worse deprivation.

The effects of this economic decline are still being felt in some of these communities today, whilst other parts of the borough have diversified and developed their economy and transport links, making them popular and vibrant places to live.

As a result, Torfaen has become a place of mixed and diverse need, containing areas of relative affluence often in close proximity to areas of significant poverty and deprivation.

Figure 3 Aerial View of South Torfaen



Data Sources

To inform this needs assessment, data from a wide range of sources was analysed, to better understand the demands and pressures that are currently being faced by local residents and communities.

Data sources used in the assessment included:

- Office of National Statistics (ONS)
- Food Bank usage and Free School Meals
- Torfaen well - being assessment
- Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)
- Gwent Population Needs Assessment 2018
- Local Homelessness and Housing data
- Housing Support Gateway data
- Housing Support Programme Outcomes
- Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Needs Assessment
- Feedback from Service Users and Stakeholders
- Research and National Publications
- Key Local and Regional Strategies
 - Local Wellbeing Plan,
 - Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV)
 - Strategy for Older People Phase 3: Torfaen Delivery Plan (2015 to 2023)
 - Gwent Homeless Strategy 2018
 - Phase II Homelessness Plans

Office of National Statistics

The population of Torfaen is diverse and the social and economic circumstances of its residents wide ranging.

With good transport links to the cities of Newport, Cardiff and Bristol, especially in the south of the borough, Torfaen has become a popular place to live and the local economy has benefitted. However, as previously noted, the decline of some heavy industries, especially further north is still being felt, resulting in areas of poverty and deprivation.

The following data obtained from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Official Labour Market Statistics website; Nomis, provides an overview of the current Labour Market in Torfaen and helps to identify some of the needs that currently exist.

Torfaen has a population of approximately 94,000, with a working age population of 57,100 residents:

Figure 4 Working Age Population of Torfaen

Population aged 16-64 (2019)		
	Torfaen (Numbers)	Torfaen (%)
All People Aged 16-64	57,100	60.7
Males Aged 16-64	28,000	61.1
Females Aged 16-64	29,100	60.4
Source: ONS Population estimates - local authority based by five year age band		
Notes: % is a proportion of total population		

42,900 working age residents in Torfaen are economically active, inclusive of circa 1,600 who are currently unemployed. This equates to 75% of the working age population who are either in employment or seeking employment.

Figure 5 Employment Status of Working Age Residents

Employment and unemployment (Jan 2020-Dec 2020)		
	Torfaen (Numbers)	Torfaen (%)
All People		
Economically Active†	42,900	74.9
In Employment†	41,400	72.1
Employees†	36,600	64.2
Self Employed†	4,400	7.3
Unemployed (Model-Based)§	1,600	3.8
Source: ONS annual population survey		
# Sample size too small for reliable estimate (see definitions)		
† - numbers are for those aged 16 and over, % are for those aged 16-64		
§ - numbers and % are for those aged 16 and over. % is a proportion of economically active		

However, a further 13,900 (25.1%) residents of working age are economically inactive, which will inevitably bring challenges. Some residents are economically inactive because they are students or because they have retired early. But other residents are unable to work and this remains a concern.

Figure 6 Economic Inactivity in Torfaen

Economic inactivity (Jan 2020-Dec 2020)		
	Torfaen (Level)	Torfaen (%)
All People		
Total	13,900	25.1
Student	3,300	23.5
Looking After Family/Home	1,400	10.2
Temporary Sick	!	!
Long-Term Sick	5,800	42.1
Discouraged	!	!
Retired	1,600	11.6
Other	1,700	11.9
Wants A Job	2,000	14.6
Does Not Want A Job	11,800	85.4
Source: ONS annual population survey		
! Estimate is not available since sample size is disclosive (see definitions)		
Notes: numbers are for those aged 16-64.		
% is a proportion of those economically inactive, except total, which is a proportion of those aged 16-64		

Over a third (42%) of all economically inactive residents in Torfaen are long term sick. Residents who are long term sick and unable to work are more likely to experience poverty, which can further exacerbate their poor health and lead to other support needs. The negative impacts that poverty can have on a household are well documented and include a greater risk of fuel poverty, poor housing conditions and poor diet.

Fuel poverty and property conditions can lead to a range of health problems, including respiratory or circulatory conditions and cardiovascular disease, whilst food poverty can lead to poor physical and mental health. It is estimated that **8%** of households in Torfaen are currently in fuel poverty,¹ meaning that these residents are spending more than 10% of their income on energy costs.

In recent years, food poverty has become one of the most pressing of issues in the UK and Torfaen is no exception. In 2017, the Trussell Trust stated that increased use of food banks across Wales is a result of *“the inadequacy of income levels and issues with benefit payments”* with Torfaen ranked highest in Gwent and the fourth highest local authority across Wales, – behind Cardiff, Carmarthenshire and Swansea.²

¹ Welsh Housing Conditions Survey (WHCS) 2017-18: Local area Fuel Poverty estimates modelling and results summary, Stats for Wales, <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-03/welsh-housing-conditions-survey-whcs-2017-18-local-area-fuel-poverty-estimates-modelling-and-results-summary-071.pdf> [Accessed 01.12.2020]

² Free Press Article - Foodbank Usage in Torfaen on the Rise amid Concerns over Universal Credit Roll Out 17.11.17

Figure 7 Food Bank Usage across Gwent

Number of People Assisted	Blaenau Gwent	Caerphilly	Monmouthshire	Newport	Torfaen
2017-18	4275	5626	2509	3041	6320
2016-17	4405	5895	2358	2896	6527

Source: Trussell Trust Foodbank End of Year Figures

In 2019, updated figures gathered from local food banks operating in Torfaen identified that there has been very little change in the situation, with circa 6500 people still being in receipt of food parcels during the year, of which 2331 were children.

Figure 8 Food Bank Usage 2019 (All recipients)

Torfaen	Requests	Total Recipients	Children
North	506	1295	500
Mid	1093	2502	933
South	1205	2649	898
Total	2804	6446	2331

Source: Local Torfaen Foodbanks

Another indication of poverty within an area is the number of children that are entitled to Free School Meals (FSMs). FSMs are means tested, taking into consideration the income or benefits that are being received by the pupil's parents / guardians. In 2016, the Torfaen well-being assessment identified that 17% of school pupils were eligible for free school meals³, whilst a more recent analysis of the school census found that this figure had increased to nearly 23%.⁴

The reasons for food poverty can vary, but low income, unemployment and a reliance on benefits will inevitably be factors. During 2019, the ONS identified 5,500 households in Torfaen (containing someone of working age) that were classed as workless households; closer analyse found that 2700 of these workless households contained children.⁵

Figure 9 Workless Households in Torfaen

Workless Households (Jan-Dec 2019)

	Torfaen
Number Of Workless Households	5,500
Percentage Of Households That Are Workless	19.6
Number Of Children In Workless Households	#
Percentage Of Children Who Are In Households That Are Workless	#

Source: ONS annual population survey - households by combined economic activity status

Sample size too small for reliable estimate ([see definitions](#))

Notes: Only includes those households that have at least one person aged 16 to 64.

Children refers to all children aged under 16.

A possible reason for the number of workless households in Torfaen is a lack of qualifications. The table below shows the levels of qualification for working age residents in Torfaen. 4600 residents currently have no qualifications.

³ Stats Wales 2016, Pupil Level Annual Census (PLASC)

⁴ Stats Wales 2020 Pupil Level Annual Census (PLASC)

⁵ ONS annual population survey - households by combined economic activity status - Workless Households (Jan-Dec 2019) 16 – 64 year olds

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157402/report.aspx?town=torfaen> [Accessed 26.11.2020]

Figure 10 Levels of Qualification in Torfaen

Qualifications (Jan 2020-Dec 2020)		
	Torfaen (Level)	Torfaen (%)
NVQ4 And Above	16,600	30.1
NVQ3 And Above	29,000	52.4
NVQ2 And Above	41,500	75.1
NVQ1 And Above	48,200	87.2
Other Qualifications	2,500	4.5
No Qualifications	4,600	8.3

Source: ONS annual population survey

A lack of skills and qualifications would significantly limit the ability of residents to access employment and may be a contributory factor in the number of workless households in the area.

Yet despite having pockets of deprivation and areas of need, earnings amongst some residents in Torfaen are fairly positive. The table below records the median earnings for residents in Torfaen, which are currently above the national average.

Figure 11 Median Weekly Earnings in Torfaen

Earnings by place of residence (2020)		
	Torfaen (Pounds)	Wales (Pounds)
Gross Weekly Pay		
Full-Time Workers	545.8	541.7
Male Full-Time Workers	564.4	562.4
Female Full-Time Workers	490.4	515.4
Hourly Pay - Excluding Overtime		
Full-Time Workers	14.06	13.83
Male Full-Time Workers	14.75	14.12
Female Full-Time Workers	13.07	13.49

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis

Notes: Median earnings in pounds for employees living in the area.

However, it is important to recognise that whilst £545.80 is the median pay, many residents will be earning below this figure.

Key Points:

- Unemployment and economic inactivity places additional pressures on statutory and voluntary services supporting the most vulnerable and deprived residents of Torfaen.
- Low skills and long-term health problems limit opportunities for residents to access training and work, causing many households to experience poverty.
- Fuel poverty can lead to poor housing and associated health risks, placing greater pressure on Health, Social Care and Housing services.
- Food poverty remains an area of need within Torfaen

Torfaen Well – being assessment

The Torfaen well-being assessment identified that no two communities in Torfaen are the same, but that the communities are complex and dynamic places, which have their own set of social, economic, environmental and cultural experiences.

The assessment identified that there is a widening inequality across Torfaen, which impacts on every aspect of wellbeing. Alongside pockets of deprivation, there are areas where well-being is good, but some households within these areas will still experience challenges.

Some key themes emerged from the well – being assessment which will help to inform this assessment:

- The number of young people aged 0 -25 is expected to fall over the next 20 years, whilst during the same period, the number of residents aged over 65 is expected to rise and the number of 85 year olds expected to double.⁶ This is likely to lead to an increased demand on public services related to an ageing population, which will need to be considered in service planning.
- Average weekly pay in Torfaen is lower than Wales⁷, 1 in 5 households are in material deprivation⁸ and Torfaen is an area increasingly affected by the welfare reform programme, due to the number of low paid, low hour contracts, which is leading to more people moving into poverty.
- People living in Torfaen have lower levels of qualifications and skills (Office for National Statistics) compared to the Welsh average⁹ and Torfaen has a high proportion of residents who are employed in the public sector and manufacturing¹⁰.
- The percentage of children living in workless households in Torfaen was higher than the Welsh average between 2010 and 2014¹¹. There are a higher percentage of children living in low income families in Torfaen and 17.4% of Torfaen school pupils are eligible for free school meals¹².
- The house price to earnings ratio in Torfaen is 5:1¹³, the private rented sector in Torfaen is relatively small (8.6%)¹⁴ and social housing demand significantly outstrips supply¹⁵.
- Life Expectancy is not equally distributed across Torfaen, with approximately a 7 year difference between the life expectancy of people living in the most and least deprived areas in Torfaen.¹⁶ According to the Welsh Health Survey (2014/15), over half of the Torfaen adult population report being treated for a mental or physical chronic illness, the majority of which is likely to be in our most deprived communities.

⁶ Population based projections (2014), Welsh Government

⁷ Gross weekly pay of males v females. Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - workplace analysis, 2015, via NOMIS.

⁸ Data Unit Wales (2016). Understanding Local Well-being Summary Data, October 2016

⁹ Data Unit Wales (2016). Understanding Local Well-being Summary Data, October 2016

¹⁰ Workforce employment by Industry Source KS605EW, Census 2011

¹¹ Data Unit Wales (2016). Understanding Local Well-being Summary Data, October 2016

¹² Stats Wales 2016, Pupil Level Annual Census (PLASC)

¹³ Hometrack Nov 2016

¹⁴ Census 2011

¹⁵ Torfaen Common Housing Register and Affordable Housing Provision WG Data Return

¹⁶ PHW Observatory, using PHM & MYE (ONS), WHS & WIMD 2014 (Welsh Government)

A key message to emerge from the well-being assessment was one of widening inequality. The assessment helped to identify the location of the most deprived communities in Torfaen and confirmed existing knowledge that people in these areas will often experience multiple difficulties. However, even in less deprived areas, families and individuals are struggling with poor health, limited or no qualifications and unemployment or low-income levels, which has meant that their well-being is of a lower quality than that of others around them.

To effectively address the issues identified in the well-being assessment, the following 7 objectives were developed:

Figure 12 Torfaen Well-being Objectives

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Develop a functional, connected network of natural areas that support the current and future well-being needs of local populations.	Develop mitigation and adaptation responses to the impacts of climate change.	Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life.	Support healthy lifestyles and enable people to age well.	Tackle the inter-generational patterns of poverty and develop economic resilience.	Improve local skills through work-force planning, training, apprenticeships, and volunteering opportunities.	Create safe, confident communities and promote community cohesion.

Key Points:

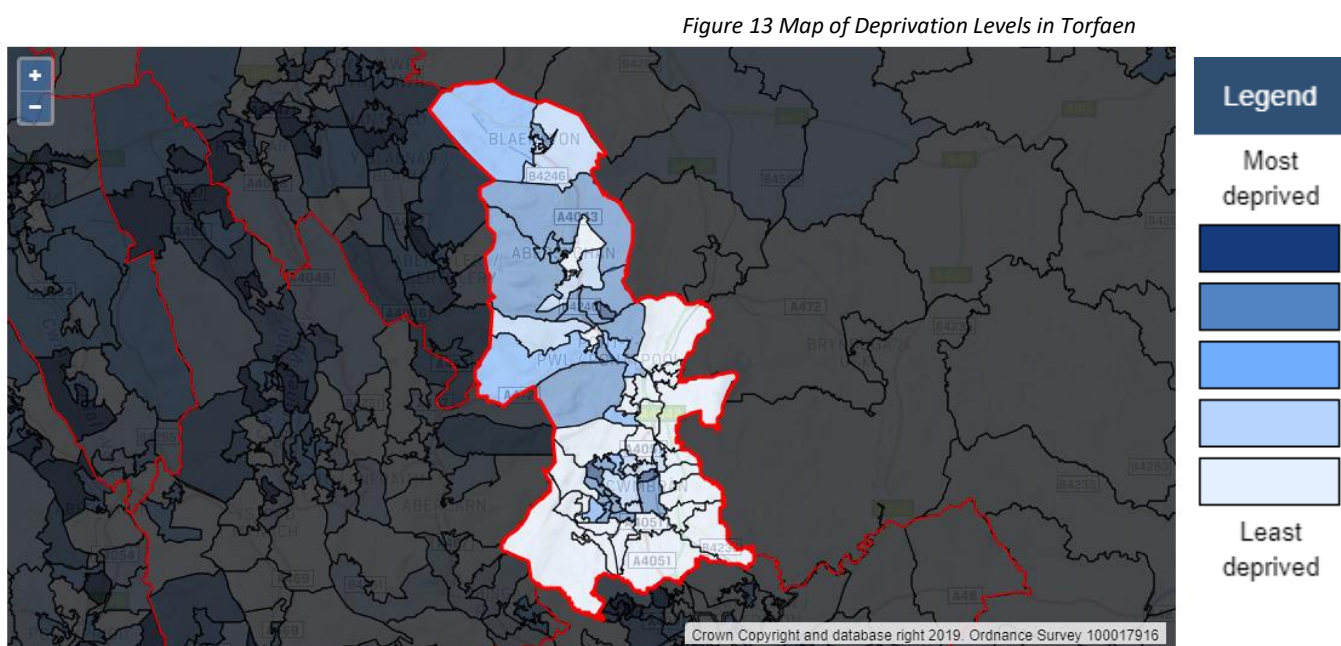
- Inequality in Torfaen is widening.
- Some key issues emerge from the assessment which will impact on the well-being of residents. These include population projections, employment levels, income, qualifications, deprivation and health.
- Levels of well-being amongst residents in Torfaen is not determined by particular geographic locations, but vary across the borough. As a result, some residents living in less deprived areas will still have a lower quality of wellbeing than those living around them.

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (WIMD)

The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) categorises deprivation by Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs); geographical areas containing approximately 1500 people. The index has an overall domain, as well as other domains that look at more specific factors such as income, health and education.

The 2019 WIMD shows that Torfaen contains pockets of deprivation, with certain LSOAs being identified as some of the most deprived in Wales.

In the overall domain, 3 of Torfaen's LSOAs are ranked in the 10% most deprived in Wales, whilst 19 are ranked in the 20% most deprived. The following map ranks levels of deprivation in each LSOA within Torfaen (based on the overall domain)¹⁷:



Source: Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

The map shows that there are high levels of deprivation in some parts of North and mid Torfaen, especially in areas where heavy industry no longer exists. However, it is important to acknowledge that 2 of the 3 most deprived LSOAs in Torfaen are located in the south of the borough.

South Torfaen is often considered to be the more prosperous part of the borough, where house prices are generally higher, transport links are better and employment opportunities are greater. However, the population is also larger and so demand for services is also greater. Deprivation, therefore, cannot be attributed to one or more geographical area within Torfaen; levels of need vary across the whole borough.

When other domains within the WIMD are examined, it shows that Torfaen has several areas of concern. Figure 14 identifies how many LSOAs in Torfaen (across each domain) are ranked in the 10% most deprived in Wales, followed by how many are in the 20% most deprived.

¹⁷ <https://wimd.gov.wales/geography/la/W06000020?lang=en#&min=0&max=10&domain=overall>
[Accessed 01.12.2020]

Figure 14 Number of most deprived LSOAs in Torfaen

Most Deprived LSOAs in Torfaen		
Domains	10%	20%
Overall	3	19
Income	5	14
Employment	3	13
Health	5	18
Education	8	17
Access to Services	0	3
Community Safety	9	23
Physical Environment	4	8
Housing	0	8

Source: Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

Further analysis of the domains also showed that in many cases, the same LSOAs were appearing on more than one occasion.

19 LSOAs were ranked as being in the 20% most deprived within the overall domain, but many appeared again in the income, employment, health and education domains, indicating that areas of deprivation often face multiple challenges and are not limited to one or two issues.

The following table lists 6 LSOAs that are ranked in the 20% most deprived overall, but which appear again in 5 or 6 other domains.

Figure 15 Most deprived LSOAs in Torfaen

LSOA	Number of Occurrences
Cwmyniscoy	6
Pontnewydd 1	6
Greenmeadow 1	5
St. Dials 1	5
Trevethin 1	5
Upper Cwmbran 1	5

Source: Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019

More detailed analysis has recently been carried out on protected characteristics and WIMD. This found that across Wales, individuals with certain characteristics were more likely to live in deprived areas than others.¹⁸

- Females from all age groups are more likely to live in deprived areas than males; 52.1% of those living in the 10% most deprived LSOAs are female.
- Younger people are more likely than older people to live in the 10% most deprived LSOAs; circa 21% of people aged 24 or under live in the most deprived 20% of LSOAs in Wales compared with around 14% of those aged 65 or over.
- People who are disabled are more likely to live in the 10% most deprived areas than people who are not disabled (13.8% compared to 8.1% respectively). Disabled people make up 1 in 3 of all people living in these areas.
- Single people are more than twice as likely to live in the 10% most deprived LSOAs compared with those who are married or in a civil partnership (12.1% and 5.8% respectively).

¹⁸ Statswales, https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation/analysis-of-protected-characteristics-by-area-deprivation?_ga=2.217283670.1719134972.1607342499-444583793.1568619322, [Accessed 07.12.2020]

respectively). Nearly half of all people living in the most deprived 10% of LSOAs are single.

Whilst these figures relate to Wales as a whole, they help to highlight some key areas of concern when analysing levels of need and deprivation in Torfaen.

Key Points:

- Deprivation often incorporates a range of issues, leading to multiple or complex needs.
- Deprivation affects people in different parts of Torfaen and is not limited to specific geographies. However, there are some areas that experience multiple signs of deprivation.
- Some groups in society are more likely to live in areas of deprivation than others, including young people, single households, people with a disability and women.

Gwent Population Needs Assessment

The Gwent Health Social Care and Well-being Partnership published the region's first Social Services and Well-being Act Population Needs Assessment, which set out the level of need across the region, the region's response to the identified need and the steps that were required to meet those needs.

The assessment focused on the needs of a wide range of the population to establish a better understanding of current and future demands and where further work was required.

The assessment considered the following key groups:

- Children and Young People
- Older People
- Health & Physical Disabled People
- People with Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Mental Health
- Sensory Impairment
- Carers who need support
- Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Wales has an ageing population, which will inevitably present challenges and bring additional pressures. Population projections between 2011 and 2036 within the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board area are set to increase by 4.1%.¹⁹ Whilst the population aged under 16 decreased by 2,700 (1%) between 2005 and 2014, from 114,100 to 108,300.²⁰

When population projections are analysed on a local level, it is expected that the number of people aged over 65 in Torfaen will have increased 15% by 2028, whilst the number of 16 – 64 years olds is projected to decrease slightly.

Figure 16 Population Projections in Torfaen

Torfaen	2018	2028	Change
Aged 16 to 64	56,826	56,482	-344
Aged 65 and over	18,973	21861	2888

Source: 2018-based projections for local authorities in Wales, Welsh Government²¹

Age is not the only factor that needs to be taken into consideration when considering levels of need across a population, with a range of factors impacting on a person's general health and wellbeing.

As part of the population needs assessment, extensive consultation was carried out with individuals who have a protected characteristic and with those groups who can sometimes become marginalised, to identify their needs and some of the core issues that they face.

¹⁹ Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

²⁰ Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

²¹ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Population-and-Migration/Population/Projections/Local-Authority/2018-based/populationprojections-by-localauthority-year> [Accessed 02.12.2020]

Veterans	Gypsy Traveller (GT)	Black Minority Ethnic (BME) groups	Asylum Seekers, Refugees & Migrants	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender (LGBT) community	Children and young people in contact with the Youth Justice System	People in secure estates and their families
Accessing suitable housing and preventing homelessness.	Infant mortality rates are up to 5 times higher among this minority group when compared to the national rate.	Certain ethnic groups have higher rates of some health conditions.	The numbers of asylum seekers and refugees increased when Wales became a dispersal area.	Illicit drug use amongst LGB people is at least 8 times higher than in the general population	Can have more health and well-being needs than other children of their age.	Ex-offenders often require additional support to prevent needs arising.
Supporting veterans into employment.	Immunisation rates among GT children are low compared with the rest of the population. Use of health services much lower than the rest of the population.	More likely to come from low income families, suffer poorer living conditions and gain lower levels of educational qualifications.	The number of asylum applications in 2016 has seen an increase of 8% compared to the year before.	Around 25% of LGB people indicate a level of alcohol dependency.	Often face entrenched, difficulties e.g. school exclusion, fragmented relationships, poor or harmful parenting.	Access to healthcare facilities
Accessing appropriate financial advice and information about relevant benefits.	High accident rate, directly related to the hazardous conditions on many sites, with poor safety standards and unhealthy conditions.		Service provision by has decreased significantly in recent years, adversely impacting on people's health and Well-being.	Nearly half of LGBT individuals smoke, compared with a quarter of their heterosexual peers	Many are often known to social care and are not in education, employment or training.	Access to mental health and healthcare
Accessing health and support services.	Travellers have lower levels of breastfeeding.		No recourse to funds and safeguarding issues e.g. honour based violence and trafficking are key emerging themes.	At higher risk of mental disorder, suicidal ideation, substance misuse and deliberate self-harm.	Well-being is also about children feeling secure about their personal identity and culture.	Substance Misuse including smoking

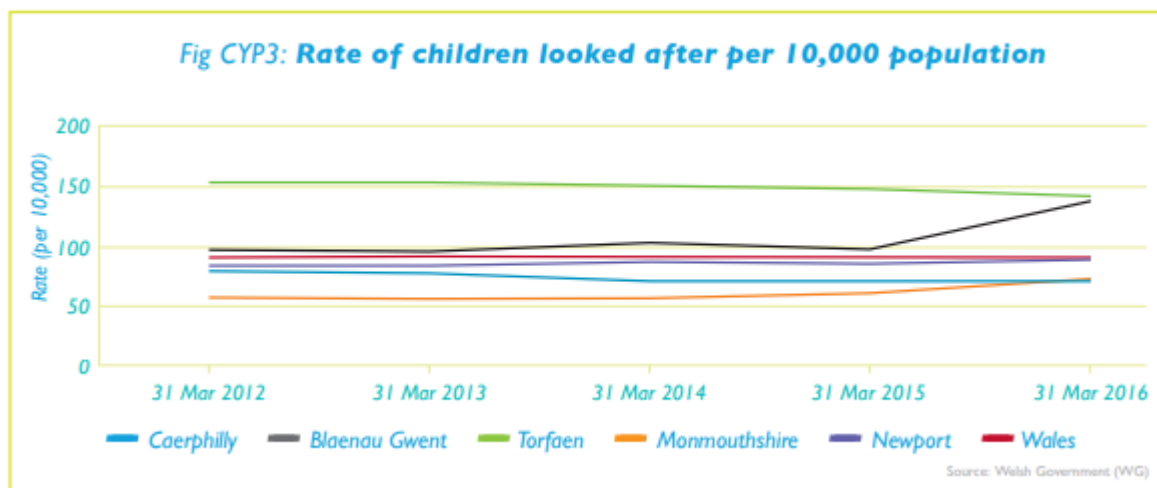
Supporting veterans who have been in the criminal justice system.	Higher prevalence of medical conditions compared to the general population, e.g. miscarriage, cardiovascular disease, depression.		Lack of, or limited access to information and tenancy support appear to be the key emerging themes.	41% of trans people reported attempting suicide compared to 1.6% of the general population.	Well-being is about strengthening protective factors and improving their resilience to factors that have an adverse impact on their long-term development.	Oral health
Loneliness and isolation.	Alcohol consumption often used as a coping strategy, and drug use among GT young people is widely reported.		Good communication is essential and determining the language and support available,		Attention to their health and well-being needs should help reduce inequalities and the risk of re-offending by young people.	Infections disease
Ready access to services to ensure early identification and treatment (physical & mental health).	Cultural beliefs, e.g. health problems should be kept within the extended family unit.		Need for more advocacy and floating support for migrants.			Support following release
Supporting a veteran's wider family.	Face challenges in accessing services due to site location, access to transport, not understanding what they are entitled to use or how to access them.		Lack of a strategic approach to information and service provision. Lack of coordination between services.			
	Low expectations regarding their health and life expectancy.					

The following section looks at some of the core themes that were covered by the population needs assessment and some of the key areas of need.

Children and Young People

The following chart details the rate of looked after children per 10,000 population aged under 18, across the Gwent region over the period 2012 to 2016 and how Torfaen compares to its neighbouring local authority areas.

Figure 17 Looked After Children



Source: Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

Blaenau Gwent saw the highest increase over the period, while the biggest decreases were in Caerphilly and Torfaen.

The assessment identified that there is a need for more joint working when planning and commissioning services for children with varying needs and that a multi-agency response would produce better outcomes. It is anticipated that this way of working will help deliver:

- A focus on prevention of crises and support at an earlier point in their development.
- Support nearer to their own community
- A focus on meeting children's needs in a more integrated way and jointly commissioned across health and social care

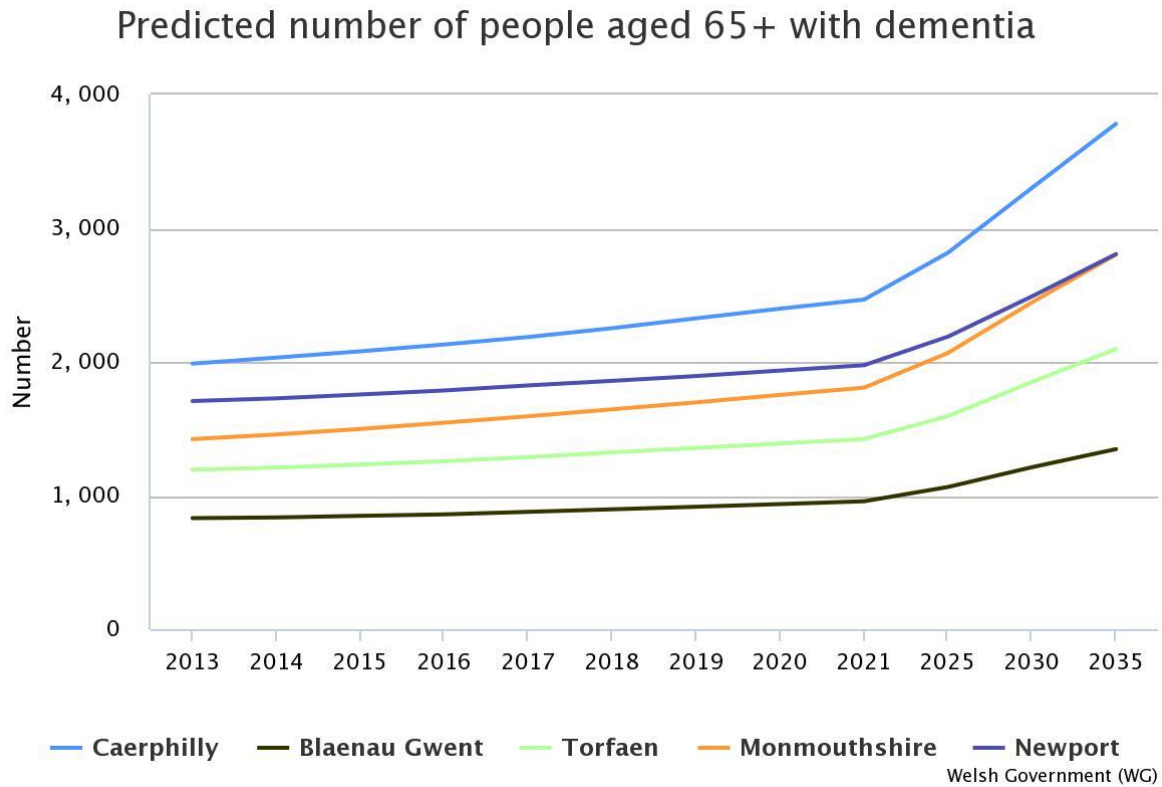
Older People

An ageing population is an area of concern, because it will bring age-related challenges; increased prevalence of chronic conditions, dementia and mobility issues, all of which put pressure on the local authority and other statutory services.

The number of Torfaen residents who will experience dementia is estimated to rise in the future from circa 1400 residents over 65, to around 2100 by 2035;²² an increase of 50%. Such a dramatic growth will inevitably put pressure on existing budgets, with more dementia related support services and health care services required to meet demand.

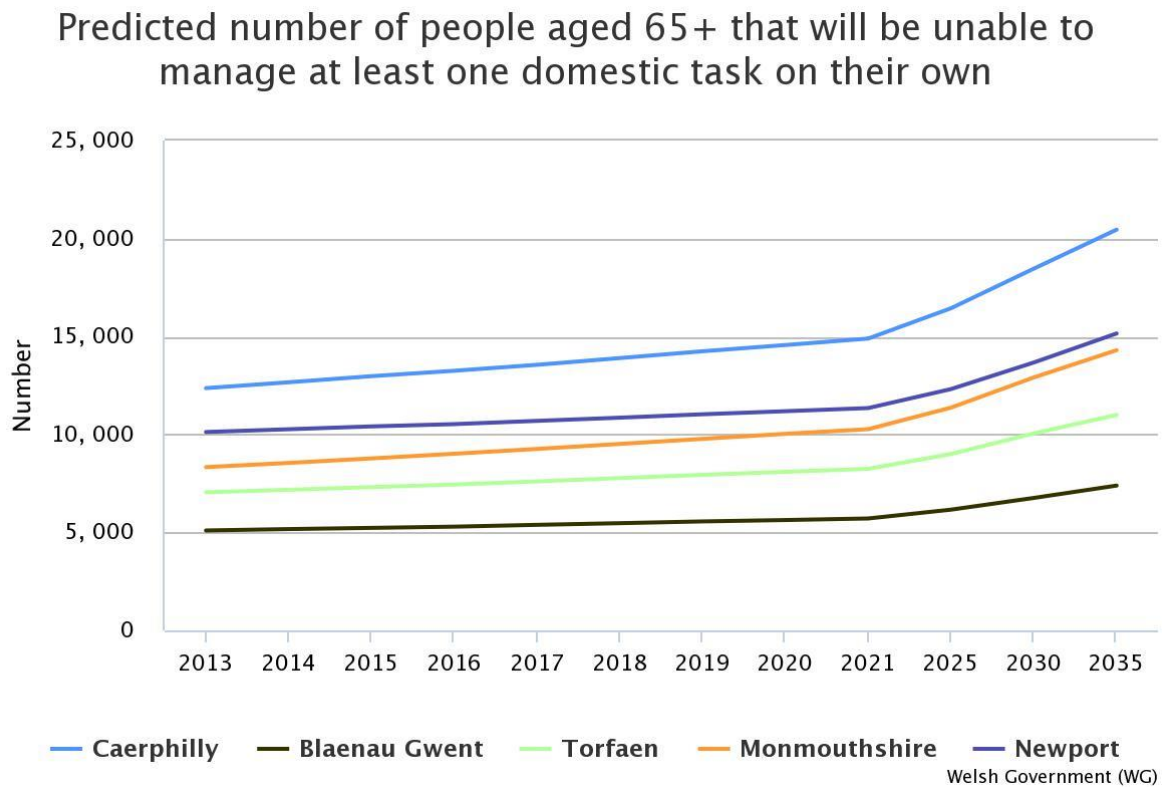
²² <http://www.gwentrpb.wales/older-people> [Accessed 03.12.2020]

Figure 18 Predicted number of people aged 65+ with dementia



A further area of growth is the number of over 65s who will no longer be able to manage at least one domestic task on their own. This is set to increase from 8000 people to circa 11,000 people by 2035.²³

Figure 19 Predicted number of people over 65 who are unable to do a domestic task



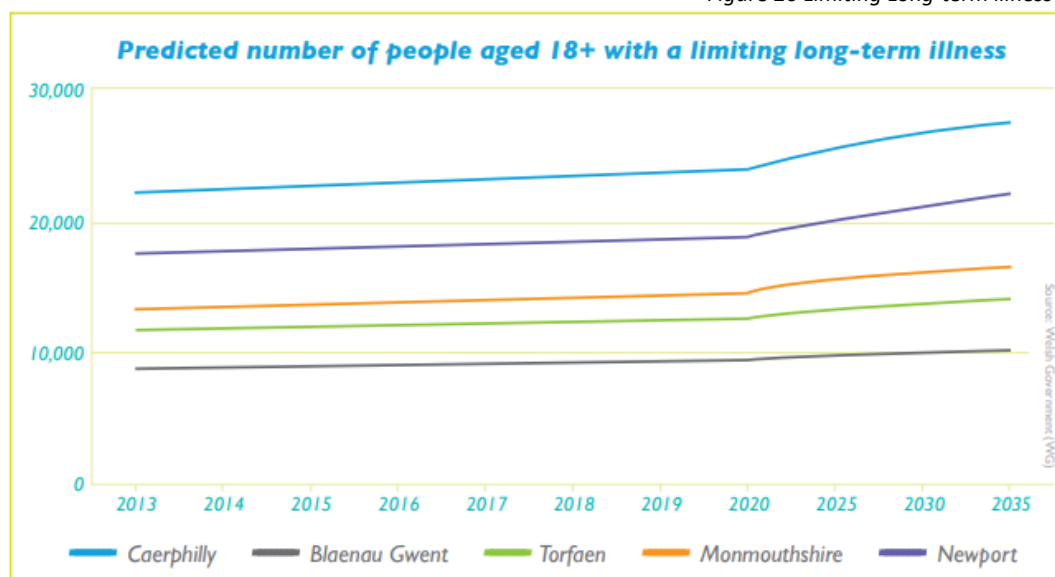
²³ <http://www.gwentrbp.wales/older-people> [Accessed 03.12.2020]

As the population continues to age, demand is likely to diversify as well as increase, placing more pressure on the local authority to deliver suitable accommodation and support solutions, to complement the work of other services seeking to meet the needs of older residents.

Health and Physical Disabled People

The number of people predicted to have a limiting long-term illness in Torfaen is estimated to rise by 2035, but compared to other local authorities in Gwent, this rise is set to be more gradual. However, ensuring that services remain available and accessible to support independent living is essential.

Figure 20 Limiting Long-term illness

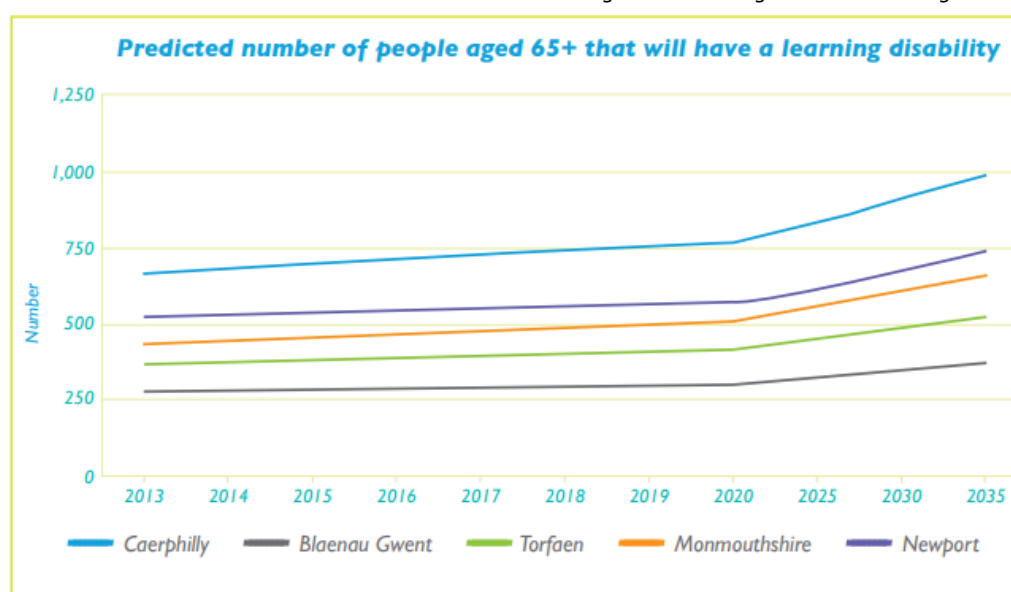


Source: Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

People with Learning Disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorders

Each local authority is predicted to see an increase in the number of people with a learning disability and, with the exception of Blaenau Gwent, each local authority is predicted to see an increase in the number of people aged 18+ that will have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

Figure 21 Learning Disabilities amongst over 65s



Source: Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

Mental Health

The following Welsh Government figures provide a snapshot of Mental Health across Wales²⁴:

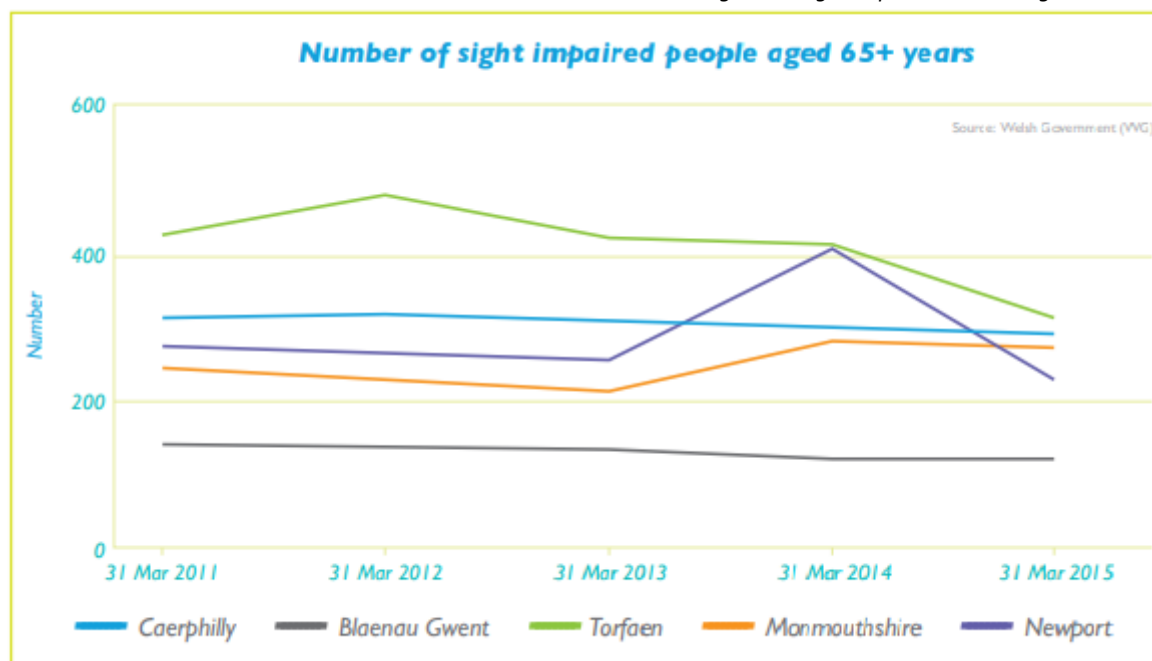
- 1 in 4 adults experiences mental health problems at some point during their lifetime.
- 2 in 100 people will have a severe mental illness e.g. schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.
- 1 in 10 children between the ages of 5 and 16 has a mental health problem and many more have behavioural issues.
- Approximately 50% of people who go on to have serious mental health problems will have symptoms by the time they are 14 and many at a much younger age.
- 1 in 14 people over 65 and 1 in 6 over the age of 80 will be affected by dementia.
- 9 in 10 prisoners have a diagnosable mental health and/or substance misuse problem.

In Torfaen, as in other areas, demand for mental health services remains high and meeting people's needs cannot be achieved by one organisation alone, but through a concerted, multi-agency approach.

Sensory Impairment

The number of people aged over 65 in Torfaen with sight impairment decreased between 2011 and 2015 by 27%.

Figure 22 Sight Impairments amongst the over 65s



Source: Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

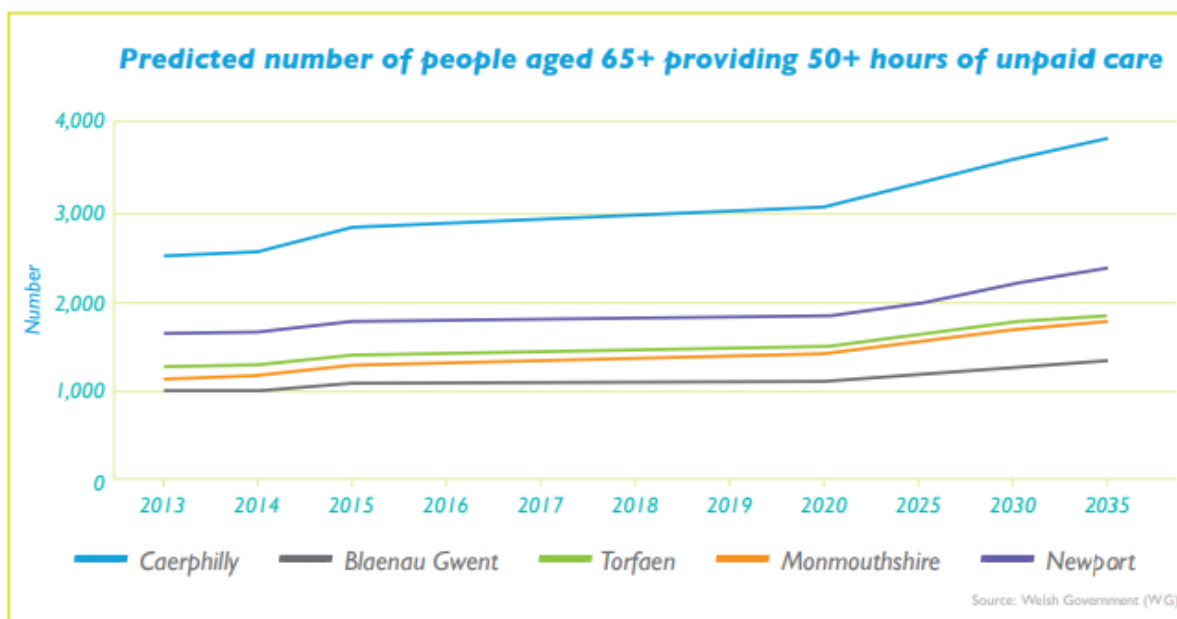
²⁴ Welsh Government

Carers who need support

The chart shows the predicted number of people aged 65 years or older providing 50 hours or more of unpaid care over the period 2013 to 2035. All local authority areas across the Gwent region are predicted to see an increase in the number.

One of the early intervention actions recommended by the population needs assessment includes engaging with informal community networks via the 'community connector' roles, in order to identify carers at the earliest opportunity and signpost to support services and peer to peer groups.

Figure 23 Unpaid Care

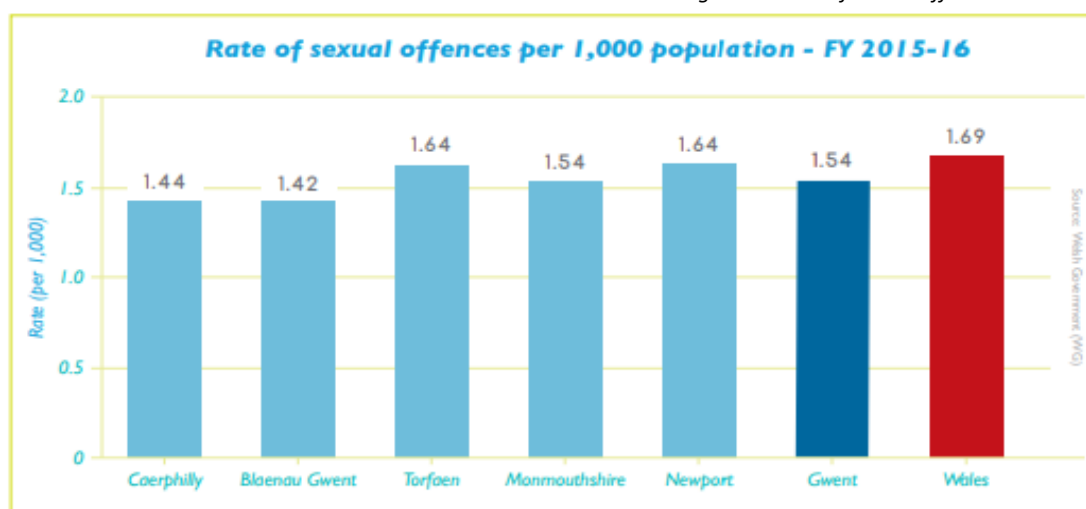


Source: Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

Violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence

The following charts and tables provide a snapshot of incidents across Gwent in 2015/16. Figure 24 records the rate of sexual offences per 1,000 population in 2015-16 across Gwent, with Torfaen and Newport experiencing the highest levels; 1.64 per 1,000 compared to a Gwent average of 1.54 per 1,000 population. However, this remains below the Welsh average of 1.69 per 1,000 population.

Figure 24 Rate of sexual offences



Source: Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

The following chart shows the number of recorded incidents of domestic abuse and discussions between Gwent Police, ABUHB and local authorities [(Domestic Abuse Conference Call (DACC))] over the period 2014-15 to 2015-16. Torfaen saw a small increase over the period of 0.1% and 1.4% respectively.

Figure 25 Number of recorded incidents of domestic abuse

	Caerphilly	Blaenau Gwent	Torfaen	Monmouthshire	Newport
FY 2014-15	3,805	1,778	2,192	1,059	3,882
FY 2015-16	3,782	1,595	2,223	973	3,920

Source: Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report 2018

Key Points:

- Demand for services across most service areas is set to increase bringing new and additional challenges.
- Vulnerable or marginalised groups often struggle more than others to access services, leading to poorer levels of health
- Vulnerable groups often experience increased levels of poverty and are more at risk of substance misuse and mental health.
- Torfaen had high levels of looked after children which will continue to place increased pressure on the local authority.
- Torfaen has one of the highest cases of sexual offences and recorded incidents of domestic abuse across Gwent
- Preventative approaches should be further explored, and existing practices reviewed, to ensure that all available options are considered.
- The importance of joined up working and multi-agency approaches to addressing need was highlighted.
- Building on existing good practice and further enhancing and developing existing mechanisms and support services remains crucial.

Local Homelessness and Housing data

Homelessness

Homelessness is one of the most serious and damaging problems facing society today and the impacts it has on a household can be severe. Each year Torfaen continues to support a significant number of households who are either at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, as well as a growing number of rough sleepers who have been identified as sleeping out in the borough.

Many of the households who contact the Housing Solutions Service contain children, who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of homelessness and can often suffer adversely from the experience. Therefore, working to alleviate their situation as quickly as possible and ensure that adequate support and assistance is available, remains a priority.

Levels of Homelessness

Figure 26 shows the number of households that contacted the local authority for assistance over the last 4 years. They either contacted due to being at risk of homelessness (Section 66), or because they were already homeless (Section 73) and seeking help to relieve their situation.

Figure 26 Welsh Government Homeless Return

Section 66 - Prevention	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Total Households	426	435	299	281
Single Person Households	225	222	150	181
Single Person Households (%)	53%	51%	50%	64%
Households with dependent children	174	165	124	82
Section 73 – Homeless Relief	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Total Households	396	411	270	346
Single Person Households	294	285	197	274
Single Person Households (%)	74%	69%	73%	79%
Households with dependent children	90	102	62	63

Source: StatsWales & Torfaen Housing Service

The figures show that whilst there has been some reduction in the number of households presenting at Section 66 in the last 2 years, the numbers of households experiencing homelessness has not changed significantly, with figures dipping in 2019/20 but rising again in 2020/21.

The most common reasons why households sought assistance via the Housing Solutions Service and some of the main factors that contributed towards households being at risk of homelessness were:

- Families no longer being willing to accommodate,
- Relationship breakdown
- Loss of accommodation
- Rent arrears

Household Demographics

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of Torfaen residents is predominantly white, which is reflected in the homeless households who contacted the local authority for assistance in the last 4 years.

Figure 27 Ethnicity of Applicants

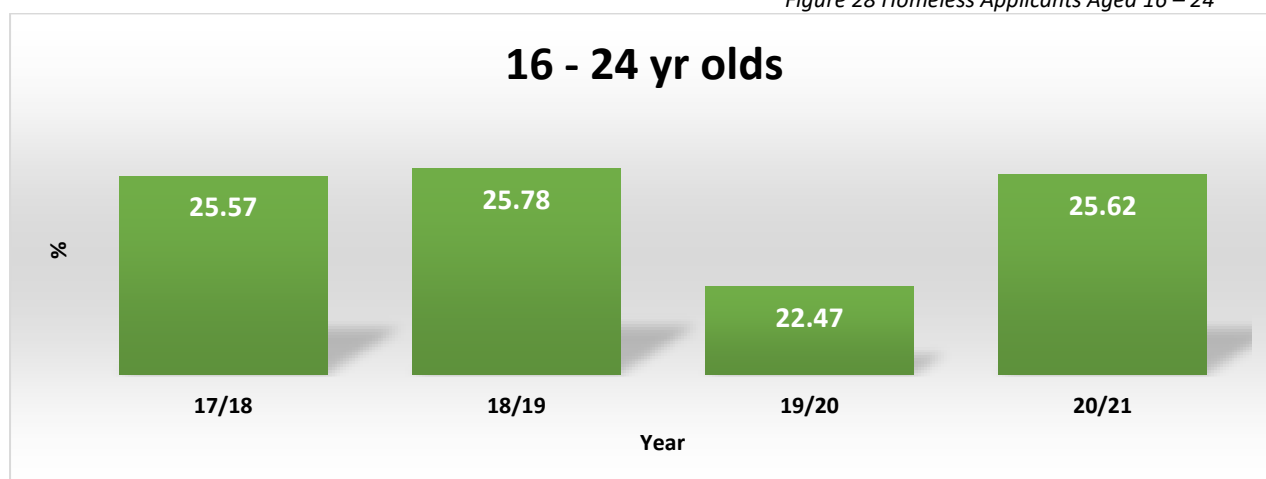
	White	Mixed/ multiple ethnic groups	Asian or Asian British	Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British	Other ethnic group	Unknown
2017/18	97.06	0.27	0.27	0.53	0.27	1.34
2018/19	73.67	3.14	7.49	0.24	3.14	12.32
2019/20	97.35	0.22	0.77	0.22	0.22	1.22
2020/21	97.23	1.00	0.00	0.22	0.22	1.33

Source: Torfaen Housing Service

Age

Each year about 25% of all homeless applicants are aged between 16 and 24, indicating that youth homelessness remains an area of concern within Torfaen.

Figure 28 Homeless Applicants Aged 16 – 24



Source: Torfaen Housing Service

The main reasons why young households were experiencing homelessness included;

- Parents or other relatives no longer able to accommodate,
- Breakdown of a relationship
- Loss of rented accommodation
- Young people leaving care or another form of institution

When household type was analysed, the results mirror those in Figure 26; with single person households' accounting for the highest proportion of applications received. The high levels of young single homeless applicant's is a concern due to the limited availability of suitable and affordable accommodation; a situation that has been further exacerbated by the spare room subsidy, a small private rented sector and a limited number of shared housing options.

Figure 29 Homeless Outcomes by Age

	2017/18			2018/19			2019/20			2020/21		
	16 - 17	18 - 24	25+	16 - 17	18 - 24	25+	16 - 17	18 - 24	25+	16 - 17	18 - 24	25+
Ineligible households		21	57		15	54		2	3		4	12
Eligible, but not homeless or threatened with homelessness		6	18		9	21		6	14	2	29	45
Eligible, threatened with homelessness, prevention assistance provided (Section 66)	15	132	282	6	114	315	17	92	192	8	54	222
Eligible, homeless, subject to duty to help to secure (Section 73)		102	291		102	309	3	57	212	1	83	263
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need		33	99		51	114		20	73		5	38
Eligible, homeless and in a priority need but intentionally so		6	18		6	27			12			3
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (Section 75)		6	33		15	84		11	77		33	102
Total	15	306	798	6	312	924	20	188	583	11	208	685
Percentage (%)	1.34	27.35	71.31	0.48	25.12	74.40	2.53	23.77	73.70	1.22	23.01	75.77

Source: StatsWales & Torfaen Housing Service

Household Type

Single person households accounted for approximately 50% of all applications received at Section 66 and between 70% - 80% of all applications at Section 73. This is significant and highlights why the local authority has difficulties in sourcing long term housing solutions for single person households.

Allocations data from the last 3 years showed that approximately 33% of all social housing properties allocated each year are 1 bed properties (excluding retirement housing), but that circa 60% of applicants currently on the register require a 1 bed property.

Torfaen has a relatively large social housing sector, but 1 bed properties only account for 25% of it, which is currently insufficient to meet existing levels of demand.

Figure 30 Social Housing Stock in Torfaen

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	Total
North	244	787	640	21		1692
Mid	648	1028	1203	52	1	2932
South	1689	1601	2124	218	12	5644
Total	2581	3416	3967	291	13	10268
%	25.14%	33.27%	38.63%	2.83%	0.13%	

Source: Registered Social Landlords in Torfaen

Torfaen has a relatively small private rented stock, so is limited in its ability to secure suitable accommodation for single person households within this sector. A situation which has been further exacerbated by welfare benefit reforms.

Homeless Prevention and Relief

The following table identifies how many households (at risk of homelessness) were prevented from becoming homeless each year.

Figure 31 Eligible, threatened with homelessness, prevention assistance provided (Section 66)

Section 66 Prevention Cases	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total Number of Cases	426	435	300	284
Successful prevention (No.)	246	237	177	154
Successful prevention (%)	58%	55%	59%	54%

Source: StatsWales & Torfaen Housing Service

50% – 60% of households each year were successfully prevented from becoming homeless. The most common forms of intervention included;

- Resolving rent or service charge arrears
- Debt and Financial Advice
- Mediation and conciliation
- Financial payments

If homelessness could not be prevented, it was still possible (in some circumstances) to relieve the applicant's situation.

Figure 32 Eligible, homeless, subject to duty to help to secure (Section 73)

Section 73 Relief Cases	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Total Number of Cases	396	411	270	347
Successful relief (No.)	78	63	60	58
Successful relief (%)	20%	15%	22%	17%

Source: StatsWales & Torfaen Housing Service

15% - 20% of households had their homelessness relieved and the most common forms of relief included:

- Accessing a social housing tenancy
- Accessing the private rented sector, sometimes with the use of a landlord incentive
- Accessing accommodation arranged with friends or relatives
- Accessing supported housing

If homelessness could be neither prevented or relived, and the applicant had a qualifying priority need, then a Section 75 duty to provide secure accommodation was owed. Each year over 70% of applicants who were owed a Section 75 duty were successfully discharged.

Figure 33 Section 75 Successful Discharge Reason

Section 75 Discharge Reason	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Accepted a private sector offer	4.08%	5.83%	8.42%	2.24%
Accepted an offer of accommodation through the allocation scheme	74.49%	65.00%	75.79%	72.39%
Total	78.57%	70.83%	84.21%	74.63%

Source: Torfaen Housing Service

However, a significant proportion of cases were not successfully discharged. This was for several reasons, including the applicant refusing an offer of suitable accommodation, refusing to cooperate with the Housing Solutions Service, or withdrawing their application. One of the most common reasons though, was due to the applicant losing their temporary accommodation or failing / ceasing to occupy it.

Figure 34 Loss of Temporary Accommodation

Section 75 Discharge Reason	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
04. Became homeless intentionally from accommodation made under section 75	6%	5%	3%	5%
07. Voluntarily ceased to occupy accommodation made available under section 75	2%	5%	2%	10%
Total	8%	10%	5%	14%

Source: Torfaen Housing Service

Rough Sleeping

In recent years Torfaen has seen an increased number of rough sleepers in the borough. Outreach work is currently being undertaken through a HSG scheme, to provide support to these households and many have been accommodated in temporary accommodation during the coronavirus pandemic. Most of the rough sleepers that the local authority worked with, were single person households.

A snapshot of rough sleepers taken at the end of each month showed that over the last 6 months the Housing Solutions Service were accommodating between 2 and 7 rough sleepers or households at risk of rough sleeping every month (due to coronavirus legislation), whilst the outreach team had between 3 and 9 cases open at any one time.

Figure 35 Rough Sleeper Figures

Rough Sleepers	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	Mar 2021	Apr 2021
Accommodated in temporary housing	4	6	5	3	7	2
Sleeping Rough	9	5	3	6	3	4

Source: WG Homeless Temporary Accommodation Return

The additional funding from Welsh Government and the guidance clarifying the Priority Need status of people sleeping rough during the pandemic, has helped to address the levels of rough sleeping in Torfaen and assist households who previously would not have been entitled to the same level of housing support.

However, some of the underlying issues that have led to the rise of rough sleeping in recent years, such as a significant lack of suitable and affordable housing, remain prevalent. Greater levels of investment, more support provision and continued cohesive planning of housing provision and housing delivery is required, if some of the root causes of rough sleeping and homelessness are to be eradicated.

Future levels of Homelessness

Levels of homelessness over the last 4 years have remained consistent and whilst there has been a reduction in presentations at Section 66, (possibly as a result of some of the preventative measures implemented by the HSG programme and Housing Solutions Service), homelessness remains an area of significant demand.

With the impact of the coronavirus still to be felt, it is anticipated that future levels of homelessness in Torfaen are likely to remain similar or continue to rise in the foreseeable future. However, Torfaen have been making extensive use of available resources and exploring new and innovative approaches for further addressing homelessness within the borough.

Resources

There are a wide range of resources available in Torfaen to assist with the prevention and alleviation of homelessness:

Housing Solutions Service

A dedicated team consisting of Housing Solutions Officers, a specialist Mental Health Support Worker and a dedicated Young Persons Housing Officer deal with most of the households who require statutory assistance to meet their housing need.

The team will work with individuals to assess their needs and identify the most suitable options for them, making use of all available tools and resources e.g. homeless prevention grant, landlord incentives, housing related support referrals (including financial inclusion).

Housing Support Grant Gateway

A good referral process already exists between the Housing Solutions Service and the HSG Gateway, to ensure that any household who requires additional support can quickly and easily referred for support. In 2020/21, 3171 referrals were made to the Gateway.

Drop In Services

The HSG programme has implemented drop - in services as a first point of contact for residents experiencing housing difficulties. These have been extremely effective in ensuring that households receive the information and support they require, before their situation escalates.

Since their introduction in 2019, the number of Section 66 cases has decreased and there has been some reduction in the number of Section 73 cases, although presentations did increase again during 2020/21, possibly as a result of the pressure from the coronavirus pandemic, when it was not possible to provide face to face services.

Reductions in homeless presentations cannot be attributed solely to the drop-in services, but they do form part of a wider preventative approach that seeks to address some of the root causes of homelessness at the earliest possible stage.

In 2020/21, the drop-in service was used over 912 times by residents. Some of the main reasons for accessing drop-in surgeries were;

- Housing Advice,
- Help with Housing
- Having nowhere to live

Housing First Pilots

The HSG programme already funds a wide range of services to support young people and they have been working with partners across the region to explore and develop housing first pilots and other suitable accommodation schemes that assist the rapid re-housing transition.

Temporary Accommodation

With continued pressure on the Housing Solutions Service, there is inevitably a demand for more temporary accommodation.

Figure 36 Temporary Accommodation in Torfaen

Location	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	Total
North		4		4
Mid	7	2	3	12
South	58	8	3	69
Total	65	14	6	85

Source: Torfaen Housing Service

Torfaen has a good supply of accommodation to assist households experiencing homelessness, however, data collected through the Welsh Housing Quarterly Return has shown that at any given time, demand remains high.

The following table records how many households were in temporary accommodation on the last day of each financial year.

Figure 37 Households in Temporary Accommodation at end of financial year

Time Frame	2018	2019	2020	2021
Number of Households	57	60	60	87

Source: StatWales & Torfaen Housing Service²⁵

There has been a consistent demand for temporary accommodation over the last few years, but a sharp rise occurred during 2020/21, due in part to the requirements placed on local authorities during the coronavirus pandemic.

This increase can also be seen when comparing the number of individual households placed into temporary accommodation over the year; with significantly more placements in 2020/21.

Figure 38 Households placed in Temporary Accommodation

Time Frame	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of households	190	177	238

Source: Torfaen Housing Service²⁶

²⁵ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/Temporary-Accommodation/householdsaccommodatedtemporarily-by-accommodationtype-householdtype> [Accessed 05.05.2021]

²⁶ The total number of placements each year will be slightly higher as some households were placed on more than one occasion

When these figures are broken down by household type, it is evident that single person households have also risen significantly in recent years and now account for the most placements received.

Figure 39 Temporary Accommodation Placements by Household Type

Household Type	18/19	19/20	20/21
1. Couple with dependent child(ren)	15	15	7
2. Single parent household with dependent children - male applicant	4	4	7
3. Single parent household with dependent children - female applicant	69	43	31
4. Single person household - male applicant	59	42	124
5. Single person household - female applicant	34	56	57
6. All other household groups	9	17	12
Grand Total	190	177	238

Source: Torfaen Housing Service

Figure 40 Temporary Accommodation Placements by Multiple and Single Household Type

Household Type	18/19		19/20		20/21	
Multiple Person Households	97	51%	79	45%	57	24%
Single Person Households	93	49%	98	55%	181	76%
Total	190		177		238	

Source: Torfaen Housing Service

In 2018/19 the number of single person households was approximately half, but this increased in 2019/20 and by 2020/21 single person households accounted for over 75% of all temporary accommodation placements during the year, highlighting a need for more single person accommodation. The local authority continues to work with landlords to source suitable housing options when necessary to ensure that an adequate supply of temporary accommodation is available.

Non-Engagement

Despite the demand for temporary accommodation, there are a significant number of households who are losing their temporary accommodation, which is a concern and raises questions about the suitability of the accommodation, the level of support available, and the specific needs of the individual.

Torfaen has in place a range of resources and services that are available to assist households who are at risk of homelessness, experiencing homelessness, or those who may be living in temporary accommodation.

The Housing Solutions Service and the HSG Gateway work together effectively to ensure that households requiring additional help can access the support they require. However, for a small proportion, non-engagement appears to be an issue, which makes their ability to ultimately secure long-term accommodation difficult.

Over the last 4 years, a significant number of applicants who contacted the local authority for assistance either refused assistance, failed to co-operate with the local authority, withdrew their application or had their application withdrawn due to a loss of contact.

The following table shows the overall proportion of non-engagement at Section 66, Section 73 and Section 75:

Figure 41 Homeless Service Levels of Non-Engagement

Non - Engagement (%)	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
Section 66	25.35%	23.45%	19.00%	23.94%
Section 73	6.82%	2.19%	4.44%	7.20%
Section 75	14.29%	15.15%	12.00%	12.59%

Source: StatWales & Torfaen Housing Service

Approximately a quarter of applicants disengaged at Section 66 and nearly 15% disengaged at Section 75.

At Section 66 the most common reason for non-engagement was a loss of contact, but at Section 75, the main reason was assistance being refused. This is a concern and raises some queries about the reason for these refusals and whether more needs to be done to support households at Section 75.

Key Points:

- Prevention of homelessness remains crucial for ensuring a long-term reduction in the number of people requiring assistance.
- Young single households account for a significant proportion of homeless cases.
- Maintaining services to support young homeless households in Torfaen is vital
- Mediation services, tenancy support and financial inclusion services appear to be working and remain essential for ensuring that people have the skills and support to manage and maintain their accommodation.
- Relationship breakdown and families unwilling to accommodate households is one of the main reasons for homelessness
- Levels of housing need remain high but drop-in services are making a positive impact.
- Rough sleeping has increased across the borough
- Demand for temporary accommodation rose during 2020/21, especially for single person households
- Non engagement of applicants remains a concern and an area for greater exploration

Housing Demand and Affordability

Despite the support and assistance that is available in Torfaen, one of the underlying reasons for homelessness and housing need, is a lack of suitable and affordable accommodation options, making access to long term housing unattainable for many households.

Average house prices in Torfaen are now beyond the financial capabilities of many residents, especially first-time buyers. The average cost of a home in Torfaen during 2020 was **£178,749**, whilst the average annual income for a full-time worker is currently **£32,619**²⁷ making the average house price to income ratio for a single income household, 5.5:1.

Figure 42 Average House Prices in Torfaen (2020)

Torfaen ²⁸	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Flat /maisonette	Average
2020	£ 284,213	£ 169,834	£129,570	£86,798	£178,749

Source: HM Land Registry

Even an average priced terraced property, the largest property type in Torfaen, would have a house price to income ratio of 4:1 for a single income household. Flats and Maisonettes are a more affordable option, but they only account for 10% of the housing stock in Torfaen and a high proportion of them are in the social sector, so are not available to purchase.

Low Cost Home Ownership (LCHO) has been able to assist some households that are currently priced out of the open market and demand for this service has grown, with over 500 applicants currently on register. However, this is not suitable for all households, which inevitably places greater pressure on the rental markets.

Torfaen has a relatively small private rented sector (circa 10%) and despite efforts to make it more accessible and develop intermediate rental products, it has not grown significantly and remains an expensive option for many households, especially those under 35 years old and in receipt of benefits.

In 2019, the average cost of a 1 bed property in Torfaen was £415.48 per month:

Figure 43 Private Sector Rents (2019)²⁹

	Sample size	Average Rent	Rent (Median)	Rent (Lower Quartile)	Rent (Upper Quartile)
Room	17	£348.34	£346.67	£346.67	£346.67
1 Bedroom	80	£415.48	£400.00	£376.50	£450.00
2 Bedroom	333	£495.98	£495.00	£450.00	£550.00
3 Bedroom	355	£571.97	£560.00	£522.50	£600.00
4 Bedroom	48	£754.11	£750.00	£650.00	£850.00

Source: Rent Officers Wales - Lettings Information Database

Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is currently **£378pm (£234pm** for single households under 35), so tenants in receipt of benefits would struggle, making social housing their only viable

²⁷ Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings - resident analysis Nomis:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157402/report.aspx?town=torfaen#tabearn>
[Accessed 20.04.2021]

²⁸ HM Land Registry <https://landregistry.data.gov.uk/app/standard-reports/download-report?utf8=%E2%9C%93&report=avgPrice&areaType=county&area=TORFAEN&aggregate=none&period%5B%5D=2020&period%5B%5D=2019&age=any> [Accessed 20.04.2021]

²⁹ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Private-Sector-Rents>

option. However, even in the social sector, rents have continued to rise, with an average rent of £95.14 per week in 2019/20; an increase of circa 20% since 2013/14.

Figure 44 Average weekly rents in stock at social rents by area, accommodation and provider type

	General needs stock	Supported including sheltered stock	Sheltered stock	Other supported stock	Extra care stock	Total stock at social rent
2013/14	£79.93	£76.53	£68.95	£78.08	£127.55	£79.9
2019/20	£95.14	£83.23	£82.75	£83.33	£161.22	£94.42

Source: Social landlord stock and rents data collection, Welsh Government

Welfare benefit reforms have also meant that single person households under 35 and in receipt of benefits are only entitled to a shared room rate of housing benefit, further hindering their ability to access affordable accommodation.

Yet despite these issues, social housing remains the only viable option for many households, as evidenced by the high number of people applying each year.

Waiting times for social housing will inevitably vary depending on the individual circumstances of the applicant and the type of property they require. However, the average waiting time (based on a 3-year average), is approximately 1.5 years, but can be higher for 1 bed properties and increases even more for properties located in the South of the brough.

Figure 45 Average Waiting Time for Social Housing by size and area (Days)

	North	Mid	South	Total
1 Bed	394	536	602	563
2 Bed	291	345	529	405
3 Bed	319	362	551	450
4 Bed	No Lets	422	453	444
5 Bed	No Lets	No Lets	190	189
Total	320	415	566	477

The applicant's individual needs will also impact on the length of time that they will wait for accommodation, with applicants in Gold and Homeless bands having a lower average waiting time than those in Bronze or Silver band.

Figure 46 Average Waiting Time for Social Housing by Priority Band

	Bronze	Silver	Gold	Homeless	Total
Days	834	446	432	148	477

Key Points:

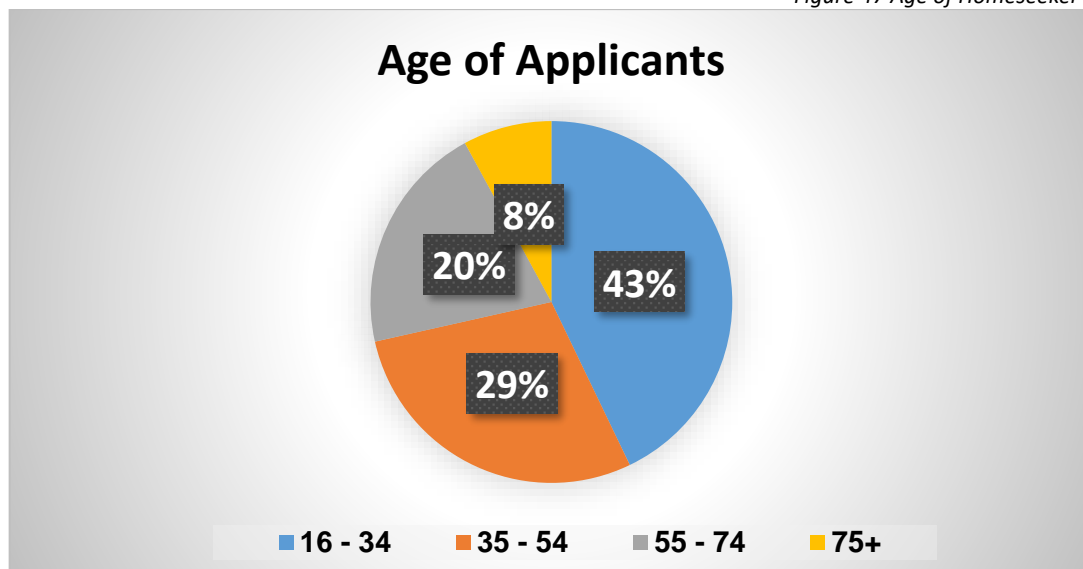
- Demand for housing is very high, especially in the social housing sector
- Home ownership is not viable for many young working households
- The private rented sector in Torfaen remains small and often unaffordable
- Despite remaining the most affordable option, social housing rents have increased quite significantly in recent years

Social Housing Register and Affordable Housing Provision

There are over 3000 households on the common housing register in Torfaen.

The age of applicants ranges from 16 through to 97, but the greatest proportion of applicants are those under the age of 35:

Figure 47 Age of Homeseeker Applicants



Source:

Torfaen Common Housing Register

Over 60% of applicants on the housing register are currently single, (22% are single and under 35 years of age), which inevitably increases demand for smaller units of accommodation. The following table shows the proportion of social housing properties in Torfaen by the number of bedrooms:

Figure 48 Social Housing Stock

Bed Size	Number	%
1	2581	25.14
2	3416	33.27
3	3967	38.63
4+	304	2.96
Total	10268	

Source: Torfaen Homeseeker partners

With 1 bed and studio properties making up only a quarter of all social housing stock, providing an adequate supply of smaller accommodation remains a challenge. Joint tenancies and shared housing options have been encouraged locally, especially amongst young people, whilst work with local Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners has also taken place to promote and develop suitable shared options. But despite these efforts, demand remains high.

Torfaen continues to develop new affordable housing options across different tenures and works closely with its partners to ensure that access to these schemes remains equitable and fair. Even so, demand continues to outstrip supply and each year approximately 1500 new applicants successfully apply to join the social housing register, whilst circa 100 applicants apply to join the LCHO scheme; Help2Own Plus.

The following table details the number of new affordable homes built each year in Torfaen (inclusive of social rent, intermediate rent and low cost home ownership), the number of applicants housed each year via the social housing register, the number of new applications

received each year to join the social housing register and the number of applicants on the housing register at the start of each year.

Figure 49 Annual Supply of Affordable Housing 2016 - 2021

	16-17	17-18	18-19	19 - 20	20 - 21
Affordable Housing Delivery³⁰	97	132	121	141	---
Number assisted by Help to Buy³¹	33	96	131	137	62
Number housed via Homeseeker	805	749	730	791	611
New Homeseeker Applications	1637	1492	1709	1590	1611
Homeseeker Register (1st April)	2626	2513	2684	2881	2894

Source: Torfaen Common Housing Register

The table illustrates that each year supply of affordable housing (new and existing) is insufficient to offset the demand from new social housing applicants, let alone address the backlog on the housing register. In addition, welfare reforms have meant that even when someone accesses social housing, there is no longer the same level of security that once existed, with benefit caps, spare room subsidies and housing benefit reductions (for the under 35s) having significant consequences.

A further pressure is that many households seeking housing now experience additional pressures and, in some cases, have more complex needs. The housing register currently contains:

- 652 single applicants under 35 (impacted by spare room subsidy)
- 286 applicants requiring an adapted property
- 450 applicants who need help and support due to mental health
- 226 applicants who need to move because of a medical need
- 87 applicants who need help and support due to domestic abuse
- 145 applicants who are lacking a bedroom
- 17% of applicants currently requiring social housing are over the age of 65;
- 68% of applicants waiting for an adapted property are over 55.

Pressures have been further exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic and are predicted to increase further due to unemployment, worsening financial circumstances and a deterioration in mental health and wellbeing amongst the population.

Key Points:

- Access to housing is unaffordable and unattainable for many young households
- Affordable housing provision is not keeping pace with demand
- Social housing no longer provides the same security for young people
- Housing applicants often have more complex needs, which can increase the time it takes for suitable housing to become available
- Alternative solutions need to be considered to increase the availability of suitable housing options

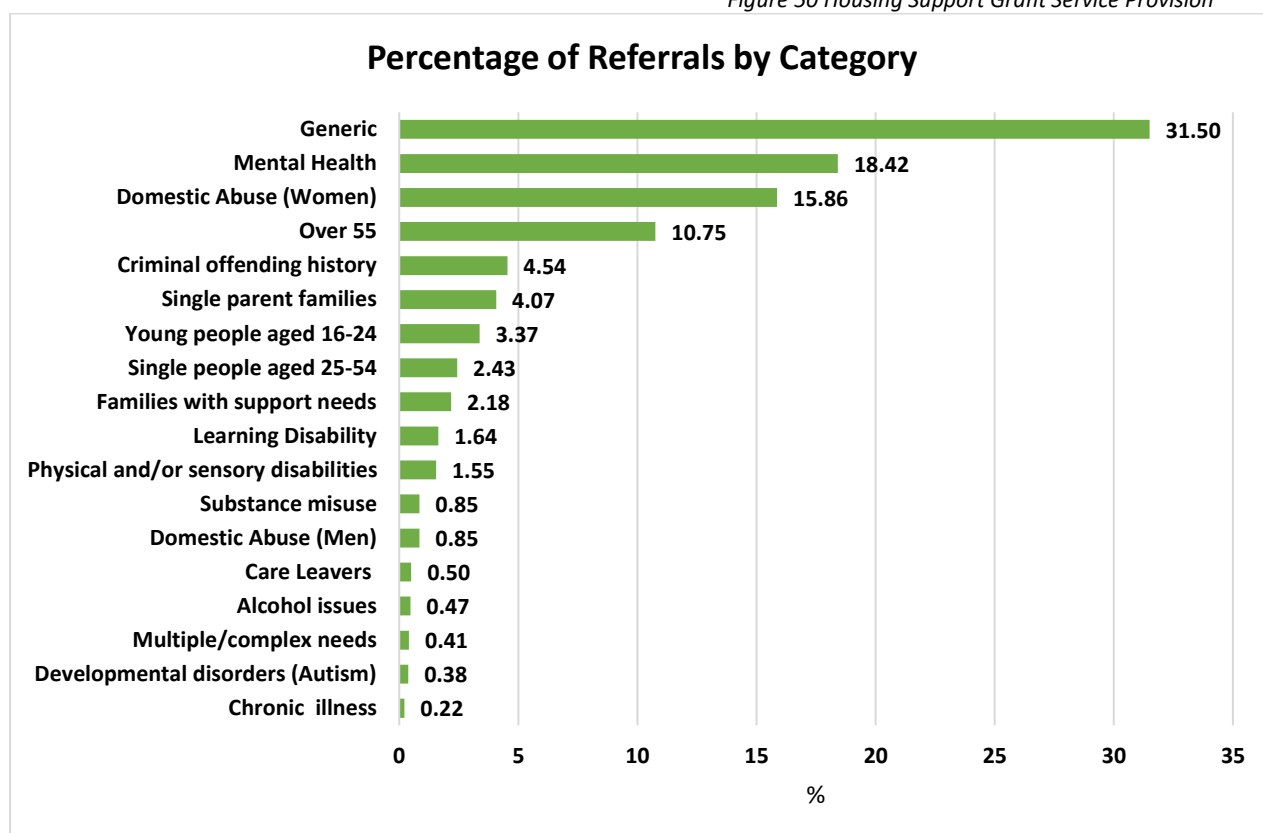
³⁰ Additional affordable housing provision by location and year,
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Affordable-Housing/Provision/additionalaffordablehousingprovision-by-location-year> [Accessed 04.12.2020]

³¹ Help to Buy - Wales completed purchases by local authority and date
<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Help-To-Buy/completedpurchases-by-la-date>
 [Accessed 10.06.2021]

Housing Support Gateway

During 2020/21, the Housing Support Gateway in Torfaen received 3171 referrals for support. These were broken down into the following categories:

Figure 50 Housing Support Grant Service Provision



Demand for services has remained high, particularly for mental health, domestic abuse, over 55s and generic support, which includes financial inclusion, homelessness and rough sleeping.

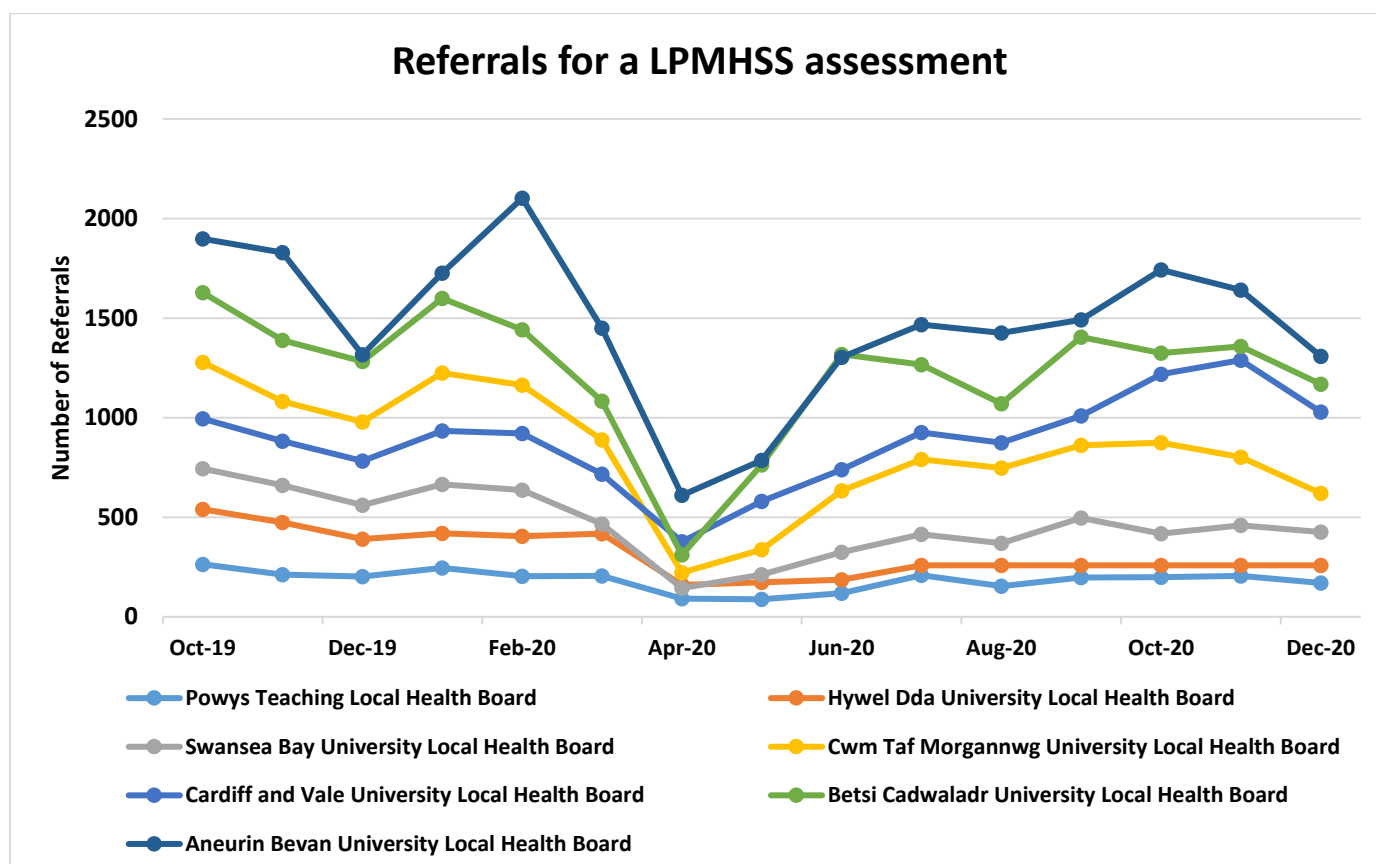
Figure 51 Highest Support Referrals

Category	%	Total
Over 55s	10.8	341
Domestic Abuse (Women)	15.9	503
Mental health	18.4	584
Generic Support	31.5	999

The demand for mental health services in Torfaen is also reflected in monthly data from Local Primary Mental Health Support Services (LPMHSS),³² which showed that Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB) had the highest level of referrals for LPMHSS assessments in Wales. However, it is important to note that ABUHB also has the second highest number of residents, after Betsi Cadwaladr, so this will inevitably have some impact on the number of referrals received.

³² Statswales, <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Mental-Health/Mental-Health-Measure/Part-1/referralsforalpmhssassessment-by-lhb-month>, [Accessed 07.12.2020]

Figure 52 Referrals for a LPMHSS assessment



Source: Mental Health (Wales) Measure data collection, Welsh Government

Void Utilisation

With some exceptions, utilisation levels across the HSG programme have been very high, with most services supporting over their contracted number of units.

The following table details the levels of utilisation for each service by quarter during 2020/21:

Figure 53 Void Utilisation per Quarter

2020/21	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Provider Name	Voids	Utilisation	Voids	Utilisation	Voids	Utilisation	Voids	Utilisation
Cyffannol Women's Aid Community Intervention	0.00%	803.23%	0.00%	938.71%	0.00%	667.74%	0.00%	445.16%
Cyffannol Women's Aid Refuge	0.00%	381.82%	0.00%	409.09%	2.37%	218.18%	0.00%	200.00%
Hafan TFS	0.00%	130.00%	0.00%	152.00%	0.00%	154.00%	0.00%	280.00%
Platform Floating Support	0.00%	134.07%	0.00%	134.07%	0.00%	125.19%	0.00%	125.19%
Platform Housing	0.62%	106.25%	1.56%	100.00%	0.00%	150.00%	0.00%	200.00%
Platform MH & Homelessness	0.00%	280.00%	0.00%	340.00%	0.00%	340.00%	0.00%	340.00%
Platform STEP	0.00%	193.33%	0.00%	166.67%	5.17%	126.67%	20.82%	113.33%
Pobl G&T Floating Support	0.00%	225.00%	0.00%	245.00%	0.00%	445.00%	0.00%	305.00%
Pobl Gwent Pathways	0.00%	210.71%	0.00%	178.57%	0.00%	203.57%	0.00%	189.29%
Pobl Vulnerable Adults	0.00%	145.00%	0.00%	121.25%	0.00%	120.00%	0.00%	133.75%
Pobl Substance Misuse Floating Support	0.00%	162.50%	0.00%	137.50%	0.19%	137.50%	3.85%	112.50%
Pobl YP Complex Needs Resettlement Service	0.00%	133.33%	0.00%	150.00%	0.00%	156.67%	0.00%	126.67%
Solas Hales House	0.00%	100.00%	0.33%	155.00%	0.92%	105.00%	2.75%	130.00%

The Wallich Crisis	27.77%	102.50%	28.88%	120.00%	29.18%	97.50%	39.04%	100.00%
The Wallich Floating Support	0.00%	137.33%	0.00%	164.00%	0.00%	180.00%	0.00%	145.33%
Torfaen CBC Financial Inclusion	0.00%	130.00%	0.00%	122.50%	13.62%	120.00%	15.19%	117.50%
Torfaen CBC Housing Options Homeless Prevention Service	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	200.00%
Torfaen CBC Housing Options Mental Health Pilot	0.00%	130.00%	0.00%	200.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	200.00%
Torfaen CBC YPHO	1.35%	237.50%	0.00%	262.50%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	362.50%
Torfaen OP Service	0.00%	117.60%	0.00%	112.40%	4.02%	151.20%	1.29%	113.60%

It is worth noting that during 2019/20, the Gateway received 4394 referrals, but in 2020/21, this had dropped to 3171; a reduction of nearly 30%. There were also voids for crisis and financial inclusion, which received lower numbers of referrals during the pandemic compared to other years.

The reason for this drop in referrals is thought to be attributable to the coronavirus pandemic, which led to a reduction in face to face services and drop-in sessions. In addition, temporary government policies, which gave tenants and those experiencing housing difficulties greater protections, have meant that service users may not have engaged with support, because the threat of them losing their accommodation was not imminent. However, discussions with local registered social landlords have indicated that rent arrears are rising and when these temporary government protections are removed, there is likely to be a significant surge in demand for assistance, especially for crisis services and financial inclusion.

Yet, even with the reduction in referrals during 2020/21, the table clearly shows that other services; particularly Cyfannol Women's Aid, have utilised a significant number of units and that demand for services remains high.

Waiting times

Despite high levels of demand in some areas, the Gateway has managed to keep pace with referrals and in 2020/21, it has an average waiting time of approximately 13 days. However, this varies depending on the support service required, with domestic abuse and criminal offending higher than some of the other services:

Figure 54 Referral Waiting Times 2020/21

Service	Time
Generic	8 days
Domestic Abuse	35 days
Criminal Offending	28 days
Mental Health	14 days
Substance Misuse	14 days
Learning Disability/Physical Sensory	12 days

It should be noted that mental health services are also in very high demand, but this is not reflected in the waiting times. The reason for this is that support workers have been taking on additional capacity and the HSG programme has increased the provision of support in this area to help manage the demand. In some instances, the inability to carry out home visits which are more time consuming, meant that that support workers were able to pick up additional clients but support them remotely. Despite these efforts, mental health remains an area of significant need and this looks set to continue rising in the future.

The Gateway has also worked proactively with service providers to best address the needs of clients. This has included referring clients for immediate support with a service provider who could address some of their low-level needs first, whilst they waited for more dedicated support to become available. By utilising this approach, the Gateway has ensured that all clients were receiving some level of help and were not being left on the waiting list for long periods of time without any contact or assistance.

Support Extensions

During 2020/21, the Gateway had more requests for support extensions.

- In 2019/20, 69 support extensions were processed
- In 2020/21 151 support extensions were processed

This was an increase of 55%, indicating that whilst there was a reduction in the overall number of referrals during 2020/21, some of those accessing support had more complex needs or required assistance for longer periods of time.

Demographics

Referrals for the Gateway came from applicants of all ages, but there were significantly more requests for those age 16 – 34 than those over the age of 55.

Figure 55 Referrals by Age

Age	Count
16 - 34	1528
35 - 54	1095
55 - 74	456
75+	92
Total	3171

Figure 56 Referrals by Gender

Gender	Count	%
Female	1827	57.62
Male	1344	42.38
Total	3171	

Rejected Referrals

688 (21%) of the 3171 referrals received during 2020/21 were rejected. The reasons for rejection varied, but the most common cause was not being able to make contact.

Figure 57 Referral Rejection Reasons

Rejection Reason	Total	%
Returned to family home, service closed	2	0.29
Temporarily excluded from project	2	0.29
Gone into Hospital	3	0.44
Gone to prison	6	0.87
Didn't understand service criteria	8	1.16
Not in a suitable geographic area	11	1.59
Support needs too high / low	13	1.89
Accepted at assessment but wouldn't engage for support	14	2.03
Moved / moving out of the area	20	2.9
Issues already addressed by time support starts	23	3.34
Already being supported by another agency	44	6.39
Service not suitable for client	50	7.26
Didn't want support / changed mind	133	19.3
Signposted to a more appropriate service	160	23.22
Not able to make contact	200	29.03
Total	689	100%

Closer analysis of the rejected referrals has shown that applicants in certain client groups had a higher rejection rate than others. This may be relative to the number of referrals for this client groups; with generic support and mental health having both the highest number of referrals and the highest number of rejections. Even so, the number of rejections for mental health remains a concern, because it accounts for approximately 1/3 of all rejections.

Figure 58 Rejected Referrals by Client Group

Client Group	Number	%
Young people aged 16-24 with support needs	36	5.22
People with criminal offending history	48	6.97
People aged 55+ with support needs	53	7.69
Women experiencing domestic abuse	93	13.50
Generic (range of support needs)	102	14.80
People with mental health problems	225	32.66

When rejections were analysed by age range it showed that approximately half of the rejections were from younger clients (16 – 34 year olds).

Figure 59 Rejected Referrals by Age

Client Group	16 - 34	35 - 54	55 - 74	75+	Total
Accepted at assessment but wouldn't engage for support	7	7			14
Already being supported by another agency	24	15	4	1	44
Didn't understand service criteria	3	4	1		8
Didn't want support / changed mind	61	42	26	4	133
Gone into Hospital		1	1	1	3
Gone to prison	4	1	1		6
Issues already addressed by time support starts	11	6	4	2	23
Moved / moving out of the area	10	9	1		20
Not able to make contact	78	103	17	2	200
Not in a suitable geographic area	3	6	2		11
Returned to family home, service closed	2				2
Service not suitable for client	23	18	7	2	50
Signposted to a more appropriate service	102	45	10	3	160
Support needs too high / low	6	7			13
Temporarily excluded from project	1	1			2
Total	335	265	74	15	689

Gap Matrix Analysis

The HSG programme in Torfaen aims to provide a wide range of support services to meet the different needs of the population and the different levels of support required.

An analysis of available support services was conducted, as detailed in the chart below:

Figure 60 Service Matrix

	12+ Long Term	3- 12 Months	3 Months
Very High	Hostel (24/7) Accommodation	Hostel Accommodation	Hostel Accommodation
High	Refuge Mental Health (supported accommodation) Homelessness Housing First Young Person (supported accommodation) Probation / Ex - Offending	Refuge Mental Health Homelessness Rough Sleeping (semi supported accommodation) Probation / Ex - Offending	Refuge Mental Health Homelessness Rough Sleeping (semi supported accommodation) Assertive Outreach – Rough Sleeper Crisis Drop In Domestic Abuse Drop In Substance Misuse Prisoner Release
Medium	Domestic Abuse Vulnerable Families Substance Misuse Young Person Complex Need Gypsy & Traveller Mental Health Housing First	Probation / Ex - Offending Housing Intervention Financial Inclusion Domestic Abuse Vulnerable Families Substance Misuse Young Person Complex Need Gypsy & Traveller Financial Inclusion LGBTQ+ Families First Vulnerable Adults Young Person Mental Health Generic	Prisoner Release Housing Intervention Domestic Abuse Drop In Financial Inclusion Mental Health Young Person Mental Health Drop In Hospital Discharge
Low	Alarms	Generic Temporary Accommodation Support	Mental Health Financial Support
Very Low/Don't Know	Alarms	Housing Related Support Activity	Housing Related Support Activity

The chart clearly shows that Torfaen has a wide range of support provision available at all levels and covering a range of timescales.

Key Points:

- Housing Related Support remains vital for assisting households.
- Generic support was required most in 2020/21, which included financial inclusion, homelessness and rough sleeper services. It is likely that these will continue to be in high demand in the next 12 months, as the aftermath of the Covid Pandemic are felt.
- Demand for Mental Health and Domestic Abuse services also remains high, a trend that has been mirrored across the UK during the Covid 19 Pandemic
- Rejection rates are high, raising concerns about engagement and the ability of clients to access services, especially those with complex needs and chaotic lifestyles.
- More referrals came from younger clients than those aged over 55, but there were also more rejections from this age group
- The number of referrals requesting an extension has increased.
- It is anticipated that there may be an increase in support referrals once the protection protections implemented for renters during the coronavirus pandemic are removed.

Housing Support Programme Outcomes

Lead Needs

Gateway data has highlighted that the following 'lead needs' were most prevalent amongst service users in Torfaen during 2020/21:

- Generic Support
- Mental Health
- Over 55s
- Domestic Abuse (Women)

The following section now looks in more details at the benefits that service users have gained from support and the outcomes that have been achieved.

January to June 2020

During January to June 2020, a total of 1668 service user outcomes were recorded. As expected, the majority of outcomes achieved were in relation to the 4 lead needs which have already identified as the most prolific.

Figure 61 Lead Needs – Jan to June

No. Outcomes	(Jan – Jun 20)	%
Generic	329	20%
Mental Health	367	22%
Over 55s	394	24%
Domestic Abuse (W)	136	8%
Sub Total	1226	74%
Total Outcomes	1668	

Key Outcomes

The following table looks at these 4 lead needs and then compares them by the 11 outcomes to see which were relevant.

Figure 62 Lead Need by Outcome – Jan to June

Outcome Relevant ³³												
	Outcomes (Total)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Generic	328	103	93	325	106	64	259	21	21	83	121	37
Mental Health	367	86	76	339	73	71	326	26	28	60	367	113
Over 55	394	158	43	303	233	62	266	23	21	138	113	136
DV (W)	136	133	121	125	113	78	90	26	18	50	94	69

There were clearly some outcomes that were more relevant to service users than others. For example, within Generic, 325 of the 329 services users specified that Outcome 3 - Managing Accommodation was a relevant outcome, whilst only 21 identified Outcome 7 and Outcome

³³ 1 - Feeling safe, 2 - Contributing to the safety and well-being of themselves and of others, 3 - Managing accommodation, 4 - Managing relationships, 5 - Feeling part of the community, 6 - Managing money, 7 - Engaging in educational learning, 8 - Engaging in employment/voluntary work, 9 - Physically healthy, 10 - Mentally healthy, 11 - Leading a healthy and active lifestyle

as a relevant outcome. Figure 63 looks in more detail at the most prevalent outcomes within these 4 lead need groups.

Figure 63 Most Prevalent Outcomes – Jan to June

Outcomes	Generic	Mental Health	Over 55	Domestic Abuse (W)
1. Feeling safe	31.40	23.40	40.10	97.80
2. Contributing to safety	28.40	20.70	10.90	89
3. Managing accommodation	99.10	92.40	76.90	91.9
4. Managing relationships	32.30	19.90	59.10	83.10
6. Managing money	79	88.80	67.50	66.20
9. Physically healthy	25.30	16.30	35	36.80
10. Mentally healthy	36.90	100	28.70	69.10
11. Leading a healthy and active lifestyle	11.3	30.8	34.50	50.70

Some outcomes are more relevant to the specific lead needs i.e. mentally healthy for those with a lead need of mental health. However, managing accommodation and managing money were consistently high outcomes across all 4 lead needs.

July to December 2020

During July to December 2020, a total of 1699 service user outcomes were recorded, of which 1285 (75.6) were against the same 4 lead needs:

Figure 64 Lead Needs - July to Dec

No. Outcomes	(Jul - Dec 20)	(%)
Generic	364	21.4%
Mental Health	358	21.1%
Over 55s	410	24.1%
Domestic Abuse (W)	153	9%
Sub Total	1285	75.6%
Total Outcomes	1699	

Key Outcomes

The following table looks at these 4 lead needs and then compares them by the 11 outcomes.

Figure 65 Lead Need by Outcome - July to Dec

Outcome Relevant ³⁴												
	Outcomes (Total)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Generic	364	99	92	353	100	70	268	29	25	84	138	45
Mental Health	358	104	68	338	60	69	322	25	28	57	357	89
Over 55	410	177	40	323	225	68	248	24	17	152	109	128
DV (W)	153	150	131	139	40	22	88	31	25	55	94	79

³⁴ 1 - Feeling safe, 2 - Contributing to the safety and well-being of themselves and of others, 3 - Managing accommodation, 4 - Managing relationships, 5 - Feeling part of the community, 6 - Managing money, 7 - Engaging in educational learning, 8 - Engaging in employment/voluntary work, 9 - Physically healthy, 10 - Mentally healthy, 11 - Leading a healthy and active lifestyle

The findings are very similar to those in January to June, with managing accommodation and managing money being important outcomes for most of the service users and other outcomes remaining more relevant to certain lead need groups. For instance, feeling safe, mental health and leading a healthy lifestyle are more relevant to women experiencing domestic abuse, than they are for the over 55s.

Figure 66 Most Prevalent Outcomes – Jul to Dec

Outcomes	Generic	Mental Health	Over 55	Domestic Abuse (W)
1. Feeling safe	27.2	29.1	43.2	98
2. Contributing to safety	25.3	18.9	9.8	85.6
3. Managing accommodation	96.9	94.4	78.8	90.8
4. Managing relationships	27.5	16.8	54.9	26.1
6. Managing money	73.6	89.9	60.5	57.5
9. Physically healthy	23.1	15.9	37.1	35.9
10. Mentally healthy	37.9	99.7	26.6	61.4
11. Leading a healthy and active lifestyle	12.4	24.9	31.2	51.6

Key Points:

- The 4 most common areas of need are representative of findings in other areas of research within this assessment.
- Outcomes achieved are often reflective of the lead need of the applicant
- Managing accommodation and managing money remain consistently high across the 4 main lead need groups.

Gwent Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) Needs Assessment

The needs assessment analysed information from different partner agencies, as well as consulting with survivors and support staff to;

- better understand the needs of those affected by VAWDASV,
- to help identify any gaps in provision,
- to inform decisions relating to the commissioning of services and
- measure the impact of the VAWDASV (Wales) Act 2015

The assessment identified areas of concern and gaps in provision:

- Limited provision of supported emergency accommodation in all local authority areas, except Torfaen
- Consideration for service support which extends across local authority boundaries
- Evidence based perpetrator interventions across Gwent
- The Gwent Independent Domestic Abuse Adviser (IDVA) Service was highlighted as an area of concern in relation to commissioning and funding
- Waiting times and limited availability of specialised sexual violence counselling
- Lack of VAWDASV information on offer for those affected by VAWDASV
- Extending Ask and Act training to all public facing staff, particularly those in Housing and services providing substance misuse and mental health support.

Funding

The funding and commissioning of specialist services in Gwent is complex and provided by various agencies. Most funding is provided by HSG as detailed in the table below:

Figure 67 HSG Funding

Local Authority Area	Services funded	Annual budget
Blaenau Gwent	Temporary Supported Housing Floating Support & Target Hardening	£375,650.35
Caerphilly	Floating Support Temporary Supported Housing	£477,437.00
Monmouthshire	Floating Support Direct Access	£229,095.00
Newport	Floating Support Direct Access	£430,291.03
Torfaen	Floating Support Direct Access	£410,771.28
Total		£1,923,244.66

Families First, Welsh Government direct revenue and capital funding and the Gwent Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner also contribute and agencies bid and receive funding from other sources such as National Lottery, donations, training revenue, spot purchased interventions and other fund raising activities.

The funding complexities can make it difficult for practitioners in partnership organisations to understand who provides services in each local authority area and there is also a risk that services can be missed or duplicated causing confusion and gaps in support, which increases the risk of services not effectively meeting the needs and safety of those accessing support.

Demands

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) 2019, 24,533 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes were recorded in Gwent. This equates to 41 incidents and crimes for every 1,000 of the population.

In 2019/20, Torfaen had a rate of 1.64 sexual offences per 1,000 people, making it one of the highest levels in Gwent and higher than the Gwent average of 1.54 per 1000.³⁵ Torfaen has had a consistently high rate of sexual offences in recent years, as evidenced in the table below:

Figure 68 Rate of sexual offences per 1000 people

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Caerphilly	1.3	1.44	1.31	2.21
Blaenau Gwent	1.25	1.42	1.55	2.23
Torfaen	1.65	1.64	1.45	2.58
Monmouthshire	1.31	1.54	1.11	1.67
Newport	1.29	1.64	1.92	2.48

The population growth across Gwent is likely to increase the levels of demand for VAWDASV services, however, the ability to obtain a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of the extent of VAWDASV in Gwent remains challenging. Some of the reasons for this are that a large proportion of VAWDASV is not being reported, or where data is recorded, significant differences occur making direct analysis impossible. For example, some agencies report on different timescales, or there are inconsistencies and gaps in the information.

Recommendations

The needs assessment identified 32 recommendations, which can be broadly categorised into the following areas:

- More robust data collection to improve the commissioning of services
- Conduct further research to better understand demands
- Increased partnership working, greater alignment and joint service provision
- Data sharing across partners and organisations
- Improved communication and publicity of services
- Greater focus on some key areas of concern e.g. sexual health services, housing for those with complex needs

Key Points:

- Torfaen as one of the highest rates of sexual offences in Gwent per 1000 people
- Early intervention and prevention, increased awareness and access to services are important.
- There is a lack of robust data about the extent of VAWDASV in Gwent
- Some forms of service provision are less adequate in some areas than others
- Funding complexities can create barriers to service delivery

³⁵ <http://www.gwentrbp.wales/violence-against-women-domestic-abuse-and-sexual-violence> [Accessed 03.12.2020]

Feedback from Service Users and Stakeholders

Positive engagement with service users and stakeholders is important for identifying current needs and levels of demand, whilst also highlighting any gaps in service provision. Torfaen, in partnership with its Gwent partners, undertakes regular consultation and engagement with stakeholders to continually review services and identify priorities.

Gwent Service User Survey Feedback 2020 & 2021

The Gwent Local Authorities recognised that recipients of support are the experts in evaluating the quality of the services they receive. Their first-hand experience puts them in the best position to determine what works well, what is less effective and what improvements need to be made. To help capture this information, every year service users are consulted and asked to provide their feedback on the services that they have received.

In 2020, an online survey was developed and circulated to capture responses from users of HSG services during the Covid 19 Pandemic. Over 350 people from across the Gwent area responded to the questionnaire; a breakdown of these responses by locality is shown below:

Respondents were asked to specifically feedback on their experiences of receiving support during the coronavirus lockdown and in most cases, respondents felt that their support workers had gone above and beyond to help them under very difficult conditions and that support was extremely positive.

Figure 69 Word Cloud of Responses



Some areas where respondents experienced difficulties were in relation to the pandemic, where their limited digital skills, lack of access to technology, and a reduction of face to face support created barriers.

Other areas where respondents identified gaps or suggested improvements included:

- Better marketing / awareness raising of available support services
- Increasing capacity and reducing waiting times for accessing support
- Providing support for longer (low level)
- Providing more intensive support (greater levels contact)
- Psychological Support
- Shopping (possibly linked to Digital Inclusion)

In 2021, building on the feedback received in the previous consultation, service users were again asked about their experiences of accessing and receiving support, but with a particular emphasis on Digital Inclusion.

The results highlighted that all respondents in Torfaen were either Happy or Very Happy with the services that they had received through the HSG programme and there were no specific improvements or priorities identified. However, when asked about their experiences of using online services, the results showed that there were mixed reactions.

Nearly 50% of respondents stated that there were no barriers to them accessing services online and many used online services to access basic services such as shopping, banking, benefits and housing services. However, others identified a lack of knowledge or understanding and limited or no access to technology, which presented a problem. There was also a small but significant cohort who did not want to get online or improve their digital skills.

The final question asked service users to identify whether, with suitable training and access to IT equipment, they would use online services to access support; some indicated that they would but over 80% replied that they still preferred face to face support.

The findings suggest that for some service users, improving their digital skills is something from which they would benefit, and this may be something that support providers can assist them to achieve. However, when it comes to the provision and delivery of support services, face to face remains the preferred method and exploring more digital approaches was not something that many respondents were keen to embrace.

Gwent Stakeholder Feedback 2020 & 2021

In addition to engaging with service users, the Gwent HSG services regularly consult with providers and other key stakeholders about the services which are being provided locally, to determine areas of pressure and demand, gaps in provision and emerging priorities.

Responses are invited from a wide range of partners including support providers, local authority departments (including those working in Children's services, Adult services and Housing), as well as wider partners including Probation, Health, Police and the third sector.

In 2020, the key themes that were identified from the engagement included:

- Expanding and developing accommodation options
- More collaborative partnerships and multiagency approaches, promoting better use of resources and reducing duplication
- Improved partnership working with health and the development of specific health posts that work in each local authority area
- Focussing resources towards more specialist services, especially:
 - Complex needs particularly rough sleepers and those with dual diagnosis
 - Increasing accommodation and support options for prison leavers.
 - Developing and expanding the range of mental health services available.
 - Increasing accommodation and services for those affected by VAWDASV including male victims, the sexually exploited and victims of modern slavery.
 - Providing a wider range of services for those with disabilities.
- Increasing access to specialist welfare benefits and money advice services
- Increasing digital skills
- Increase and develop communication to keep stakeholders up to date and to provide opportunities to share information and good practice
- Mandatory training in key areas for all providers

Early intervention and preventative approach were also important, and respondents emphasised the importance of services that are client led, person centred, and which prioritise the needs of the individual.

In 2021, further consultation was carried with stakeholders to identify any further gaps or themes that had emerged over the last 12 months. The responses received were very similar, with accommodation, complex needs, especially mental health, being identified again as priority areas.

The importance of partnership working and better collaboration was also highlighted again in the consultation, but over half of the respondents stated that in the last 12 months this had improved. Some of the reasons for this improvement included better communication and more multiagency meetings, improved links between some public health services and housing, as well as better joint commissioning. However, other respondents felt that these were still areas for further improvement and better collaboration is still needed and remain a priority.

Local Stakeholder Engagement

In addition to the online survey, Torfaen also held a local workshop with its HSG providers to further explore some of their concerns and priorities, especially reflecting on the new challenges that had emerged as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and how to create better resilience going forward.

Some of the key themes to emerge from this workshop were that where clients were able to access support digitally during the pandemic, this enabled providers to support more people and saved on travel time. However, this only worked for some clients and it meant that more vulnerable clients did not engage and were not receiving visual checks. There were also differencing levels of digital proficiency amongst support staff and service users, or a lack of suitable IT equipment, which also created some issues for the providers.

Providers identified some further challenges and areas of demand, which had been exacerbated during the pandemic. These included an increase in mental health, financial hardship, loneliness and isolation, coupled with higher waiting times as more people sought to access support.

Providers were also facing additional pressures around recruitment, training and retention of staff, which was hindering their abilities to deliver services and was further exacerbated by some of the uncertainty around funding. In addition, the lack of availability within other services, whose workloads had increased during the pandemic, made it hard to meet the needs of complex clients, who needed access to more specialist services.

Some of the key priorities that they identified as providers included more cooperation and collaboration with a wide range of partners, sharing information & data, promoting and marketing services and their positive impact, better accessibility and digitally inclusive approaches to support and securing a range of options to meet the needs of individuals

Service Review Feedback

The Commissioning Unit regularly undertaken reviews of the services they commission, to ensure that they are being delivered effectively. As part of the review, questionnaires are issued to service users and several focused interviews take place, exploring in more detail the experiences of service users.

Some key themes to emerge from the reviews were:

- Consistency and reliability of support workers was important to people in engaging with services to build a relationship and trust.
- People want flexible and responsive support that is available and accessible outside of traditional hours.
- Support workers that are knowledgeable in homelessness and benefits processes.
- Isolation and challenges with managing mental health throughout the pandemic emerging through the feedback alongside increased need emotional support.
- Frustrations over the lack of alternative options and move on, particularly during the pandemic.
- Increased emotional support offered and welcomed throughout the pandemic

Service Monitoring Feedback

In addition to the service reviews, ongoing feedback is collected and collated to better understand the experience of service users and the outcomes achieved.

Housing Related Support Survey

The Housing Related Support Survey is completed by service users who have accessed support services via the HSG programme. In 2020, 74 of respondents stated that it was easy to access support and that support was available to them when they needed it. The survey then asked respondents whether there were any issues which had made engaging with support difficult for them. The following were identified:

Figure 70 Barriers to support

Barrier	%
Mental Health	78.90
Physical Health	28.90
Relationship Breakdown	23.70
Financial Issues	23.70
Substance Misuse	7.90

However, following support, 65 of respondents felt that they were now more able to live independently as a result of receiving support.

Housing Solutions Service

Each month, households who have contacted the Housing Solutions Service for advice and assistance are asked to provide feedback on their experiences.

- 92% of respondents in 2020 found it easy to access the service,
- 82% were satisfied with the service that they received.

Respondents also identified the following outcomes, which had been achieved as a result of accessing the service:

Figure 71 Outcomes of Support

Outcomes	%
Happier	59.30
Reduced risk of homelessness	55.60
More in control of my situation	37.00

Safer in property	37.00
Improved personal safety	37.00
Able to set up home as I like	33.30
More independent	29.60
Confident to maintain tenancy	29.60

Areas where respondents felt that improvements were required or where more support was needed included:

- More emergency accommodation and accommodation of a higher standard
- More Housing Solutions Officers and more regular updates for service users
- More support and options for full time employees who are experiencing homelessness and are often financially disadvantaged in emergency accommodation
- More face to face services

Key Points:

- Services appear to be accessible and service users are generally very happy with the assistance they received
- Support workers go above and beyond, especially in times of crisis
- More specialist services needed to address complex / multiple needs
- Better collaboration and multiagency working will further improve service delivery
- Digital Inclusion affected some service users, especially during the pandemic
- More accommodation options remain a key priority for addressing existing needs
- More resources to increase capacity, reduce waiting times and offer different levels of support provision e.g. low-level longer-term support and more intensive support
- Increased training opportunities for all providers in key areas e.g. homelessness, substance misuse
- Increased promotion / marketing of service available
- Increased flexibility around support provision e.g. consideration for service users who cannot access support during 'Office Hours'
- Increased links to health and more joined up approaches to service delivery
- Some barriers to accessing support still exist, especially due to mental health

Research and National Publications

Preventing rough sleeping in Wales and reducing it in the short-term October 2019

This report is the first published by the Homelessness Action Group and addresses the question; what immediate actions can we take to reduce rough sleeping between now and the winter of 2019/20, and to end rough sleeping altogether?

Some key recommendations to emerge from the report included:

- Organisations that communicate about homelessness should agree a common approach that provides clear information about what can be done in the short term to help people who are rough sleeping or homeless, and in the longer term what they can do to help end homelessness.
- People who are at risk of homelessness need a 'no wrong door' approach
- Services need to remove the barriers and misunderstandings that prevent people from accessing the help they require, including the commissioning of outreach services and support to promote sustained solutions that support people out of homelessness for good.

Report from the Homelessness Action Group for the Welsh Government March 2020

This report sets out the overall framework of policies, plans and approaches that should be implemented to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and not repeated, followed by a series of recommendations to achieve this.

Recommendations in the report included:

- A shared sense of ownership for ending homelessness and making sure everyone has a home.
- An agreed outcomes framework and reporting via Welsh Budget processes to the Senedd
- Mutual accountability and support between public services.
- More support and recognition for workforces, including funding and supporting psychologically informed approaches across public services; and enabling volunteers and communities to play a role.
- A focus on dignity and respect for people experiencing homelessness and national structures for stakeholders, including people with lived experience, to feed into the planning, delivery and evaluation of all work

One of the recommendations identified by the group was that public services, housing providers and support providers should ensure that people with lived experience of homelessness have opportunities to influence decisions and the delivery and evaluation of services to end homelessness.

By regularly engaging with service users and seeking their views of the services they have received and how these can be improved, Torfaen has developed a wealth of knowledge to assist it in delivering person centred and effective housing and housing related support services.

Report to Welsh Ministers from the Homelessness Action Group July 2020

This report provides more detail on scaling-up rapid rehousing approaches and joined-up partnerships and plans, as identified in the March report and also considers the impact of the coronavirus outbreak and the response.

As part of the recommendation of the report, the Welsh Government, local authorities and their partners are encouraged to continue working with social and private landlords to reduce and end evictions into homelessness, provide tenancy support, and ensure there are tenancy relations services in place.

Rough Sleeping Action Plan February 2018

The Two Year Action Plan reflected the concern of the Welsh Government and its partners following the recent rise in rough sleeping across Wales.

The Plan contains 24 points which the Welsh Government wanted to see implemented to effectively address rough sleeping and covered the following areas:

- Prevention
- Support
- Outreach
- Emergency Accommodation
- Housing First
- Legislation and statutory guidance
- Measuring and Monitoring
- Funding
- Joint Working
- Promoting Good Practice

Key Points:

- Early intervention and prevention are still considered the most effective ways of addressing homelessness, reducing rough sleeping and ensuring people get the help and support they require to live independently.
- Consistent and clear communication, coupled with a no wrong door approach is important for helping the most vulnerable to access the help they require
- Partnership working, pooling skill and joined up approaches can be beneficial in meeting needs
- Service users with first-hand experience of homelessness or housing need should be actively involved in shaping service delivery.

Key Local and Regional Strategies

Torfaen Wellbeing Plan

One of the key messages to emerge from the Torfaen Wellbeing Assessment is that there is widening inequality across Torfaen. Some of the information gathered in the assessment confirmed what was already known; where the most deprived communities are located and how people in these areas often experience multiple, complex needs which affect their well-being.³⁶

However, even in less deprived areas, households were struggling with poor health, limited or no educational qualifications and unemployment or low-income levels.

During the assessment, the local authority talked to people across the borough and heard how most of them value green spaces, safe and clean streets, affordable housing and good health. They also highlighted the importance of affordable and timely transport to access education, employment and social activities. Based on the information used gathered during the assessment, 7 wellbeing objectives were developed:

Figure 72 Torfaen Public Services Board well-being objectives

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Develop a functional, connected network of natural areas that support the current and future well-being needs of local populations.	Develop mitigation and adaptation responses to the impacts of climate change.	Provide children and young people with the best possible start in life.	Support healthy lifestyles and enable people to age well.	Tackle the inter-generational patterns of poverty and develop economic resilience.	Improve local skills through work-force planning, training, apprenticeships, and volunteering opportunities.	Create safe, confident communities and promote community cohesion.

Gwent Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018 - 2023

The effects of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence are serious and can have a significant impact not only for the victims, but for their immediate family.

The purpose of this strategy is to set out an integrated approach for stopping violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence, which will improve the health and well-being of individuals and families affected by abuse whilst holding to account those who perpetrate the abuse.

The strategy aims to build on existing partnerships, further increase public awareness and deliver a robust response that ultimately creates a society where everybody can be free from violence, abuse and fear.

The Strategy organises the work that needs to be done along the three key strands of the national strategy:

- Prevention
- Protection
- Support

³⁶ Well-being Plan for Torfaen 2018 – 2023, Torfaen Public Service Board

During its development, the strategy took into consideration current service provision, the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being Act and Welsh Government Policy, the result of the needs assessment, a strategic analysis of needs and sought the views and opinions of victims and survivors. The evidence and data that was gathered led to the creation of 6 strategic priorities:

1. Increase awareness and challenge attitudes of violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence across Gwent.
2. Increase awareness in children and young people of the importance of safe, equal and healthy relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong
3. Increase focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety
4. Make early intervention and prevention a priority
5. Relevant professionals are trained to provide effective, timely and appropriate responses to victims and survivors
6. Provide victims with equal access to appropriately resourced, high quality, needs led, strength based, gender responsive services throughout the region.

These priorities and the accompanying Strategic Delivery plan will be used to work towards the prevention of violence and abuse, the protection of victims and the support of all those affected.

Strategy for Older People Phase 3: Torfaen Delivery Plan (2015 to 2023)

This local strategy is aimed at public services and how their actions can help people in Torfaen consider the issues of older age, to make plans and act wherever possible to foster well-being.

The strategy identified several key issues that will affect Torfaen and the provision of services.

- The number of older people in Torfaen is rising
- The number of single households amongst older people are increasing
- Population projections indicate there will be an 80% increase in the number of over 75s by 2031
- Depression and social isolation can affect as much as 1 in 7 people over the age of 65

The strategy set out the following areas of action which it seeks to address:

- Social Resources
- Environmental Resources
- Financial Resources
- Ageing well in Wales

The Gwent Homelessness Strategy 2018 - 2022

The vision presented through the Gwent Homelessness strategy is that everyone in Gwent has a home to live in and the right support if they need it, to lead a fulfilling life. Through working together to overcome homelessness, the strategy establishes the following priorities:

- Priority 1: Help improve access to suitable and affordable housing
- Priority 2: Offer fast and effective advice and support, working with partners to help vulnerable people

- Priority 3: Minimise homelessness and prevent it through early intervention
- Priority 4: Ensure fair, equal and person-centred homeless services

The Homeless Review identified a number of areas of need across Gwent which informed the development of the strategy:

Phase II homelessness plan

The agreed Phase II homelessness plan supports the objectives presented through the Gwent Homelessness Strategy, by delivering a transformational plan to build capacity in support and accommodation options to meet the needs of our communities.

The Council's approach is to follow the core requirements of the guidance issued by Welsh Government which is outlined below:

- Support
- Plan
- Build
- Transform

The plan highlights that demand for accommodation across Torfaen remains high, especially for single person accommodation, which has been highlighted in recent years with the increase in the level of rough sleeping and further emphasised through the demand on services throughout the COVID 19 pandemic. Available data shows a decline in the use of temporary accommodation for families with an increase in placements for single people.

There is a need to provide more options for single people over the age of 21 and to ensure there are effective move on and support services in place to avoid protracted periods of time in temporary accommodation. This can only be done through a refocusing of resources and approach as demand for social housing is showing no signs of decreasing and approximately 60% of the common housing register comprising single people.

Additionally, waiting time for supported housing schemes is increasing with this currently being approximately 250 days, leaving options limited. Floating support services are much more readily accessible, but individuals have been forced at times into more independent units of accommodation that do not necessarily meet their needs and requirements.

Service transformation is critical in addressing the needs of individuals seeking assistance. The Council has numerous services and systems in place that can be built upon and are critical to how services will transform to meet the needs of residents.

The pivotal part of the plan is focused upon the re-alignment of provision, creating a central HUB that will focus upon how single people will access accommodation and support services when they become homeless. This provides an opportunity to re-align services, bring in new services and review existing provision to meet the needs of residents. Collaboration is key to making this change and all agencies need to be fully committed to this change in order to ensure that the core principles of the plan are delivered as the Council cannot deliver this change alone. However, it is accepted that the Council is the lead agency in transforming services and in providing the strategic direction.

Summary

This needs assessment has identified several areas of concern that should be considered and addressed when developing the HSG Programme Delivery plan. The HSG programme must ensure that it continues to provide appropriate support, promotes the availability of services and works to maximise outcomes for residents to address some of the overarching challenges that currently exist.

Population projections, employment, income, qualifications, deprivation and health will all influence the long-term housing and support needs of residents and will need to be taken into consideration when developing the HSG strategy. Some groups in society are more likely to live in areas of deprivation than others and are likely to require greater levels of support. The HSG programme will need to continue supporting these groups and focus on the delivery of those services that will best support and empower them to improve their situation.

Demand for services is currently high and is likely to increase further in the short term, due to the pressures created as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, such as the level of homelessness, poor mental health and financial pressures. Regular reviews of existing provision will be required to ensure that services are fit for purpose, forward planning and meet both existing and emerging need. Preventative approaches and multi-agency working will be vital for effectively addressing some of the needs identified, as well as building on existing good practice and further enhancing and developing mechanisms and support services.

Supply of housing remains one of the biggest challenges for addressing housing need and whilst Torfaen has had significant success at preventing homelessness, the ability to relieve it remains a much harder challenge, due to the limited amount of accommodation available.

Statement of Need

Current and Future Demands

A number of needs have been identified through this assessment which are set to continue to be an issue in the next few years:

Lack of suitable accommodation

One of the biggest pressures facing housing and HSG service delivery in Torfaen is the lack of suitable accommodation options, especially supported and semi supported accommodation. This is particularly significant for single person households, as evidenced by the increased levels of single people who are sleeping rough, presenting as homeless to the local authority, living in temporary accommodation or seeking housing via the common housing register. Unless more is done to address the lack of accommodation, this is an area of demand that is set to continue in the future.

Accommodation has been an area of concern for some time, and it was frequently identified as a significant gap during stakeholder engagement. House prices are now beyond the means of many first-time buyers and rental values in the private sector, which is already a small sector in Torfaen, remain buoyant, making access unaffordable in some parts of the borough. In addition, the effects of welfare benefit reform have further impacted on access to the social rented sector, especially for younger renters, making a previously affordable tenure more difficult to access and sustain.

Existing schemes to deliver more affordable housing options are helping to address some of this need, but they cannot keep pace with the ever-increasing levels of demand. Delivery of suitable accommodation can only be achieved through a concerted and collective approach with all key partners working together to explore and deliver new models of accommodation. Increasing accommodation options, especially for young people, will be given considerable focus over the next few years, aligning to the aims of the Phase II Homeless Plan and linking to the Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA), to ensure that the needs identified within this assessment are reflected in the planning and delivery of future housing.

Increased levels of demand, including complex and multiple needs

The needs assessment has shown that demand for services remains high. Despite the success of some preventative approaches, levels of homelessness are still a concern, placing significant pressure on the housing service, whilst service users accessing support often have more complex needs, resulting in an increase of support extensions by 55%.

The number of people who require more specialist levels of support has become an area of additional pressure on services and was clearly highlighted through the stakeholder engagement, with many providers struggling to assist service users to access the specialist support that they require.

For service users, increasing capacity and reducing waiting times for support was a priority to emerge from the service user engagement,

It is anticipated that the effects of the coronavirus pandemic are likely to lead to continued high levels of demand for services in the next few years, with more households requiring assistance as the economic and emotional effects of the pandemic begin to be felt. Mental health has already been identified as an area where demand increased significantly, whilst intelligence from housing association partners has identified a number of tenants who are currently in debt and will require more support once the existing protection around evictions are relaxed.

To meet this anticipated need, the Housing service will continue to explore new and better ways to deliver services, maximise existing capacity and seek to implement specialist provision where specific needs arise.

Multi agency approaches & limited resources

The Gateway identified that more service users are requiring support for longer and that some key support needs are in greater demand than others, placing increased pressure on available resources. Some of these needs can be addressed by the Housing and HSG service, but other more complex needs require a multiagency approach.

The population needs assessment highlighted that the number of looked after children in Torfaen is high. It also noted that many children and young people in contact with the youth justice system are likely to be known to children's social care and are among those children and young people who are not in education, employment or training. Many of these young people will also be contacting the housing service for their accommodation needs.

Funding and commissioning of specialist VAWDASV services in Gwent was identified as complex and is provided by various agencies, which makes it difficult for practitioners in partnership organisations to understand who provides services in each local authority area. This creates a potential for services to be missed or duplicated, causing confusion and gaps in support, which increases the risk of services not effectively meeting the needs and safety of those accessing support.

The importance of partnership approaches and multiagency working have been made clear throughout this assessment and via engagement with stakeholders and partners. The importance of developing joined up service provision, where different agencies and services work together seamlessly, will not only improve people's outcomes, but will lead to more efficient and effective provision, through the pooling of resources and expertise, which will help to ensure the best use of resources, generate economies of scale and enable the local authority to deliver more services for the community.

Torfaen has already developed a number of effective partnerships on both a local and regional basis that deliver bespoke services where a specific need has been identified. It will be important to continue with these collaborative approaches and to continue linking with wider agencies to further develop partnership working and make the best use of available resources when developing the Delivery Plan and working to meet current and future demands.

Barriers to support, non-engagement & marginalised groups

There are still some individuals who struggling to access or engage with services. Service user's engagement highlighted that whilst access had been straightforward, knowledge of the services available had been limited, so better awareness raising, and increased publicity is still needed. This will help to ensure that marginalised groups or those who may struggle to access services are aware of the assistance available to them.

Service user engagement also identified that mental health was a barrier, whilst the needs assessment highlighted a relatively high number of homeless applicants who disengage before reaching a satisfactory outcome. The Gateway also had a number of referrals for support that were rejected, often for disengagement or an inability to contact the service user.

Continuing to promote services and offer more flexibility will be vital for helping people to access the assistance they require at the earliest possible opportunity and prevent situations from escalating in the future.

High Demand Areas

This assessment has shown that some service users are more represented than others and there are some clear areas of demand which need to be monitored.

Single person households seeking assistance with their housing remains a challenge and will continue to be so until more suitable and affordable accommodation options are delivered.

Mental health has been an area demand for some time, which was further exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Existing provision is robust, but continued monitoring and regular reviews of services remains a priority, to ensure that they have the skills and capacity they need to address client needs.

Young people accessing services remains a concern and although the overall number of young people is expected to reduce in Torfaen over the next 20 years, current demand on services remains high. Young people leaving care or another form of institution is one the main reasons for youth homelessness and whilst a joined up approach to addressing the needs of young people exists via Torfaen Young Persons Support Service, the high numbers of looked after children in the borough indicate meeting the needs of young people will continue to be an area of pressure for some time. In addition, WIMD research suggests that young people are more likely to experience deprivation than other age groups, which can result in a number of additional needs, which will further impact on service delivery, if not addressed at an early stage.

VAWDASV related abuse remains high, and it will be important to ensure that local service delivery aligns with the aims Gwent VAWDASV Commissioning Group. The assessment identified a lack of clarity and consistency across different local authorities, creating potential barriers, whilst existing data about VAWDASV incidents not sufficiently robust. Better collaboration and more coordinated approaches will be important for meeting current and future demand and enabling the delivery of more preventative measures.

The needs assessment also highlighted that Torfaen has an ageing population, which may have an effect on future levels of demand and service provision, as residents require more specific support and assistance.

Deprivation

Economic inactivity is an area of concern in Torfaen and commissioning HSG services that help to address the underlying causes will be essential. Inequality is widening and Torfaen has clear pockets of deprivation, so working to address financial inclusion, food bank usage, delivering more affordable housing options and offering tangible solutions, especially to young single households and who are particularly vulnerable remains vital, in supporting the wider poverty agenda. Torfaen has already expanded its financial inclusion service provision and will continue to review and adapt its services to meet emerging needs.

Regional Needs

The stakeholder consultation identified some issues that were not unique to Torfaen and which were a concern to local authorities across the region.

Retention and Recruitment

Many service providers across the Gwent area identified difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff within the housing sector. This was placing increased pressure on providers to

deliver services and as a result was impacting on the Gwent local authorities' ability to commission and implement service locally.

Digital Inclusion

The Gwent service user consultation looked specifically at the importance of digital inclusion, as an area of emerging need. Service users have indicated that access to online resources is often difficult and more support and assistance is needed to increase skills and improve access amongst service users. With more and more services being delivered online, the need for increased levels of digital inclusion is likely to be an area of demand both now and in the future.

Regional Services

Some support is already delivered via regionally commissioned services and the importance of continuing to expand provision by collaborating and working in partnership remains important for meeting regional needs. Four areas in particular where this is considered most relevant are; Substance Misuse, Mental Health, VAWDASV and Offending.

Statutory Needs

Torfaen will meet the statutory needs of the community through the provision of its existing Homeless services and through the development and implementation of new approaches for addressing housing provision.

This assessment has shown that despite the positive work that already takes place in Torfaen to prevent and minimise homelessness; including early intervention and prevention services, demand for assistance from households with statutory needs remains high and continuing to deliver services in the same way will not adequately meet the challenges that are being faced. So additional approaches need to be adopted, to complement the existing good practice that takes place.

Some of the main needs identified include increased levels of complex needs, households losing temporary accommodation and failing to secure long term accommodation and an increase in homeless applicants resulting in an increased use of bed and breakfast accommodation, which is often located out of county.

The full impact of the Covid pandemic, the ending of the furlough scheme, the reduction of universal credit payments and other benefits, are still to be realised and it is anticipated that the effects will continue to impact on households for a considerable time, which will inevitably lead to high levels of demand for services.

The ability of the local authority to address statutory needs and assist households requiring settled accommodation is challenging, due to the limited amount of available or affordable housing across all housing sectors. In particular, local housing allowance payments are not compatible with increasing rental charges within the private rented sector, to allow the local authority to discharge duties through this sector, leading to longer periods in temporary accommodation.

To address these pressures, the local authority will be working to develop more accommodation options across a range of tenures and to embrace new approaches that can help to alleviate or mitigate some of the pressures being faced.

Through the implementation of its Phase II Homeless Plan and the HSG strategy, Torfaen will initially seek to increase and develop the range of targeted homeless prevention services

available, to prevent homelessness and enable more households to remain in their current accommodation. Where this is not successful, the local authority will work to deliver more move on arrangements, to reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation, supporting the principles of rapid rehousing.

Under the Covid guidance, which requires everyone to be placed into accommodation, the local authority is now dealing with a significant increase in homeless presentations, from households of varying size, which is placing pressure on the limited temporary accommodation provision that currently exists. Efforts to increase the portfolio of temporary accommodation have been affected by rising prices within the private rental market and the growth of house prices has resulted in some landlords withdrawing their properties from the temporary accommodation leasing scheme with better rental incomes available on the open market.

Despite these challenges, Torfaen has continued to work closely with local landlords to explore options for developing and expanding temporary accommodation and the range of options that can be offered to households. This has included adapting properties to create more single person accommodation units (helping to reduce the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation) and reconfiguring existing hostel provision to better meet the demographic profile of households experiencing homelessness. This approach will continue to be adopted and implemented in the next few years, so that the services can better adapt and respond to the emerging needs of households requiring statutory assistance.

More households are now demonstrating complex needs, which has impacted their ability to maintain their temporary accommodation placement. Existing approaches to supporting these service users have proved unsuccessful and so to help meet their needs, Torfaen has adopted new approaches, including the development of a Housing First scheme.

Through the implementation of the Housing First scheme and other similar approaches, which will form part of the Rapid Rehousing Plan, Torfaen will ensure that it has in place the right services and provision to meet the statutory needs of its residents and to complement these with a range of HSG services to provide a more holistic approach to meeting housing needs.