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**Housing Support Programme (HSP)**

**3 Year Delivery Plan for 2022-25**

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# **1. Introduction**

2021 has continued to be a difficult and unusual time with the ongoing impact of Covid-19, which has of course made a significant impact on services and will continue to impact the way in which the Housing Support Grant (HSG) is delivered over the next three years.

Despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, delivery of the Housing Support Programme (HSP) has been well maintained. Through supporting the continuation of positive partnerships and continual monitoring and adaptations of services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community, we have been able to effectively respond to the increased levels of demand that we have been presented with.

As we continue to move forward, we are now in a position where, as set out in the HSG Guidance, local authorities are required to have a three-year HSP Delivery plan in place. This Delivery plan will set out how Torfaen intends to deliver on its strategic priorities and ongoing HSP delivery requirements over the next three years. It also sets out the spending and commissioning intentions of the HSG over the next three years and summarises the needs assessment and stakeholder engagement findings which have informed the HSP strategic priorities and ongoing HSP delivery priorities. The HSP Strategic priorities are set out below:

*Figure 1 Strategic Priorities*

|  |
| --- |
| **Strategic Priorities** |
| **Reviewing and developing our supported accommodation offering to meet the accommodation and support needs of vulnerable individuals within our community** |
| **Strengthen access to mental health support provisions to meet the increase in demand** |
| **Enhance early intervention and assertive outreach services to minimise the negative impact of homelessness** |
| **Strengthen access to VAWDASV support provision the meet the increase in demand** |
| **Embed a Rapid Rehousing approach to ensure that where homelessness is experienced it’s brief and unrepeated** |
| **Continue to monitor and assess levels of demand for housing related support, reviewing and adapting services to meet current trends and requirements for people who are or may become homeless** |
| **Strengthening and building collaborative approaches and constructive partnerships to improve outcomes for homeless households** |
| **Strengthen accessibility of services and increase awareness to ensure that housing provision is visible within our communities** |
| **Invest in workforce development to ensure a highly skilled, responsive and sustainable workforce** |

# **2. Needs Assessment**

As set out in the HSG Guidance, local authorities are required to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment every four years, with a light touch review every two years to inform development of their HSP Strategy. The needs assessment analysed a wide range of data from different sources, to determine the levels of homelessness, housing need and support provision within Torfaen, whilst extensive consultation was carried out with service users and stakeholders to better understand their concerns and priorities. The findings were used to identify current trends, areas of growth and gaps in provision, which have helped to shape the Statement of Need



## **2a. Needs assessment process**

The Needs Assessment was carried out using a variety of data sources including national statistics, regional data and local intelligence, to provide quantitative data about the levels of need within Torfaen. This was then complimented with qualitative information from service users, stakeholders, and other key partners, who had direct experience of either providing or accessing these services locally.

The intelligence collected through the assessment process provided a comprehensive understanding of existing provision; including levels of need and demand, current challenges, gaps in provision and areas of priority; both now and in the future.

## **2b. Key findings**

Some of the main themes which emerged from the Needs Assessment and which have helped to shape the strategic priorities of the strategy include:

**Accommodation and a lack of supported / semi supported accommodation**

One of the most significant gaps in Torfaen is the lack of affordable housing. There are unprecedented levels of demand for housing across the UK and Torfaen is no exception. Single person accommodation is particularly limited and waiting lists for housing are growing. There is a particular need for more supported and semi supported accommodation options, to assist households who have multiple support needs and to ensure that tenancies are sustainable and can succeed.

**Increased levels of demand**

Housing support and homelessness services have both experienced a significant increase in demand in recent years, coupled with more service users being supported for longer periods of time. This has led to additional pressures, so the service continues to review and where necessary, increase access to these services to better meet these needs and ensure that the local authority is prepared for any future demands which are likely to emerge.

**Complex and multiple needs**

More households with complex or multiple needs are contacting the housing service for assistance, which makes finding suitable solutions more difficult. Stakeholder feedback strongly emphasised the importance of developing and commissioning more dedicated support services to address identified levels of need, as well as the importance of collaboration and more coordinated multiagency approaches.

**Disengagement and barriers to support**

Homelessness statistics and HSG referral data has identified a significant number of service users who do not engage with the services offered to them. This is a particularly serious problem for temporary accommodation, with households losing their emergency accommodation and, as a result, failing to secure suitable long-term housing provision.

**Early intervention and prevention**

Evidence has shown that where preventative approaches have been used, they were very successful in reducing levels of acute need. Working together with households who were at risk of homelessness has proved to be extremely beneficial, with the local authority having a higher rate of success for preventing homelessness than for relieving it. Focussing more resources on early intervention approaches, therefore, will ensure that situations are addressed quickly and do not deteriorate into crisis.

**Existing provision and future demand**

Torfaen continues to provide a wide range of services, both locally and on a regional basis, ranging from high level intensive residential support through to low level activity groups, enabling a broad range of needs to be met. Feedback regarding existing provision has been extremely positive from both service users and stakeholders, which helps to reaffirm that current provision is meeting a need. However, continual monitoring of services to meet new and emerging needs will remain a priority throughout the strategy.

Some gaps and areas of concern were identified during the assessment, including an increased demand for accommodation, a rise in mental health amongst service users and households experiencing complex or multiple needs.

Engagement with stakeholders has also highlighted some emerging areas of support. The use of the internet has led to more online abuse, the needs of the LGBTQ+ community are still underrepresented and the rise in hording are just some examples of where more support provision and intervention may be required over the next few years.

**Areas of deprivation**

Some of the wider pressures being experienced by residents within the local authority are impacting on the housing service, highlighting the importance of collaborative and multi-agency approaches for addressing need.

Economic inactivity, widening inequality and pockets of deprivation across Torfaen present a number of challenges for housing, with an increased demand for financial inclusion services, a lack of affordable housing options leading to greater reliance on social housing and in some cases, increased homelessness and rough sleeping.

Housing cannot mitigate these pressures alone but is a key partner in the delivery of the Torfaen Wellbeing plan and through collaboration with other service areas, can support the delivery of long term, viable solutions, which will enable people to achieve more positive outcomes.

## **2.3 Conclusion**

The Statement of Need clearly showed that there were some key areas of demand and some common themes, which the local authority will need to address. There are also some new areas of need emerging, which will require further monitoring and possible support provision in the future.

The need for more housing provision locally; to better meet both current and emerging demands, was clearly highlighted within the need’s assessment. Therefore, the development of more supported housing provision locally has been identified as one of the key priorities within this strategy.

The increased levels of demand for services, the importance of early intervention and the complex needs of some households, has also been highlighted as areas of pressure. When developing the priorities within this strategy, it was important that these issues were reflected within the strategic priorities and suitable actions put in place to mitigate against them, including strengthening access to mental health provision and VAWDASV provision, enhancing early intervention and assertive outreach services; which are key tools for addressing homelessness and helping to ensure that any occurrences are both rare and brief, as well as working collaboratively and constructively with partners to embed a rapid rehousing approach locally.

Further priorities which emerged from the Statement of Need, were in relation to the importance of continually monitoring and reviewing demand for services and ensuring that services are both visible and accessible. Existing data has shown that levels of disengagement for some services are higher than would be hoped and that there may be barriers which are making access difficult. It is also important that the Housing Support Programme continues to review and adapt its services as new trends emerge, to ensure that services remain fit for purpose.

Finally, the pressures around workforce development have come through very strongly from stakeholder engagement, with many providers experiencing difficulty in retaining or recruiting a sustainable workforce. So, a priority of this strategy will be to continue supporting and assisting providers to address this particular area of concern. The ability to successfully meet these needs and deliver appropriate solutions remains challenging and cannot always be achieved by one service area. However, with better collaboration and more joined up service delivery, this strategy will work to meet both the current and future demands identified.

# **3. Delivery priorities**

The Delivery Priorities actions for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 have been carefully considered, to take into account the overarching priorities of the HSP, whilst also seeking to align the HSP priorities with those of the Regional Homeless Strategy. The priorities in the delivery of HSG are presented below:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Strategic Priority** | **What we will do ….** | **Who will action?** | **2022/2023** | **2023/24** | **2024/25** |
| **Reviewing and developing our supported accommodation offering to meet the accommodation and support needs of vulnerable individuals within our community** | * Continue to scope and explore single person accommodation opportunities to increase supported accommodation capacity across Torfaen. * Progress the development of a supported hostel & assessment hub to ensure that where homelessness is experienced people are accommodated and supported. * Improve the support offer to those residing in temporary accommodation through the provision of proactive and targeted service provision. * Work with partners to progress the implementation of young person specific supported accommodation and pathway * Support the expansion of the generic supported accommodation scheme to support an increased range of flexible accommodation options. * Continue to monitor the demand and need for temporary accommodation and emergency bed provision to inform the level of provision required to meet the need. * Work with wider partners and stakeholders to embed and develop the Housing First Service in Torfaen      * We will work with partners to understand the accommodation and support needs of individuals presenting with a range of complexities to inform future service provision. * Collect and analyse information on the needs of our communities, benchmark approaches to homeless prevention and identify opportunities for improvement. | All Housing Teams  All Housing Teams     HSG & TA Team  HSG Team  HSG Team  All Housing Teams  HSG Team  All Housing Teams  All Housing Teams | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill |
| **Strengthen access to mental health support provisions to meet the increase in demand** | * Review and where appropriate reconfigure mental health supported accommodation and community support services to meet the needs of the community. * Review the effectiveness of the pilot of the 24/7 supported accommodation provision to inform future service options. * Evaluate the effectiveness of substance misuse and mental health service provision to inform service development.      * Monitor demand and need for mental health services to ensure provision meets the needs of the community. * Work with partners to develop mechanisms that improve and support positive hospital discharge and improve discharge pathways and access to support * Review and consider the functions of the transitioning homelessness prevention projects and ensure they align to and complement existing service provision * Ensure that all support workers engaged in the delivery of Housing Related Support are able to access basic mental health training. | HSG Team  HSG Team  HSG Team  HSG Team  Regional HSG Partnership Group  HSG Team  HSG Team | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| **Enhance early intervention and assertive outreach services to minimise the negative impact of homelessness** | * Maintain commitment to accessible information, advice and support through triage and targeted community based drop in provision across a range of service provision. * Review and consider the functions of the transitioning homelessness prevention projects (linking to mediation and young person’s services) and ensure they align to and complement existing service provision * Improve access to the private rented sector through developing relationships and the support offer with private sector landlords. * Embed a proactive resettlement and move approach through the development of our Housing Intervention Team. * Ensure assertive outreach provision remains responsive to the needs of those who are experiencing homelessness and periods of rough sleeping. * Maintain commitment to crisis support that is accessible for those who need rapid access to support services. * Work with partners across Children’s Services and Youth Services to influence education and support packages that inform young people of the issues surrounding youth homelessness and develop preventative strategies. * We will ensure that families and households that are able to access timely financial advice and support to sustain their accommodation and prevent homelessness. * Work with our RSL partners and stakeholders to progress the zero evictions agenda. | HSG Team  HSG Team  Housing  Housing  HSG Team  All Housing Teams  All Housing Teams  Housing  Housing | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill |
| **Strengthen access to VAWDASV support provision the meet the increase in demand** | * Work with VAWDASV partnership at a regional level to inform, shape and influence key strategies and commissioning priorities. * Work with local providers of VAWDASV services to implement new contractual arrangements and services. * Link closely with local and regional structures to identify gaps in service provision and ensure that VAWDASV services are accessible for all. * We will proactively identify the barriers of engagement within community-based support services to ensure equality of access and equity of treatment. | HSG Team  Regional HSG Partnership Group  Regional HSG Partnership Group  HSG Team | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill |
| **Embed a Rapid Rehousing approach to ensure that where homelessness is experienced it’s brief and unrepeated** | * Progress the development of Rapid Rehousing approaches to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief and not repeated. * We will review policies, procedures and pathways to enable the adoption of a rapid rehousing approach   .   * We will work with partners and stakeholders to develop and communicate the rapid rehousing approach and plan.   ***\*\*This section will be updated upon completion of rapid rehousing plans\*\**** | All Housing teams  All Housing teams  All Housing teams | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| **Continue to monitor and assess levels of demand for housing related support, reviewing and adapting services to meet current trends and requirements for people who are or may become homeless** | * Review provision and develop a robust and proactive monitoring framework to ensure that services remain relevant and responsive to the needs of our communities. * Streamline Gateway monitoring and reporting processes to ensure they are accessible and responsive to demands. * Developing productive working relationships with relevant partners and stakeholders to ensure services are coherent. * We will develop and implement quality assurance mechanisms to support service development and improvement. * We will engage with service providers and partner agencies to identify and respond to emerging challenges and trends. * Review the HPG services that have been transferred to HSG to align and compliment existing service provision. | HSG Team  HSG Team  HSG Team  HSG Team    HSG Team  HSG / Housing | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill |
| **Strengthening and building collaborative approaches and constructive partnerships to improve outcomes for homeless households** | * Work with regional colleagues to sustain and develop the following collaborative projects and approaches to meet our local needs:   + Specialist support service for those with an offending history including those being released from prison.   + Specialist provision for the Gypsy and Traveller community   + Research the housing support needs of the LGBQT+ community to support identification of gaps in service provision. * Seek to develop stronger strategic and operational relationships with the criminal justice sector to ensure a coherent criminal offenders pathway into settled accommodation. * Continue working with colleagues in Health to support the delivery of the Health and Housing Research recommendations. * Review the membership and reinvigorate the Torfaen Homelessness and Housing Support Grant Network. * Work with a range of partners to improve the referral arrangements and support to those accessing Housing First services. | HSG Team  &  Regional HSG Partnership Group  All Housing  Regional HSG Partnership Group  HSG & Housing Solutions  HSG Team | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill |
| **Strengthen accessibility of services and increase awareness to ensure that housing provision is visible within our communities** | * Develop a communications strategy and plan to routinely promote Housing and Housing Support Grant Service through a range of mediums. * We will proactively engage with people with lived experience and wider stakeholders to understand the barriers to accessing and engaging with support.      * Increase visibility of services through engagement with a wide range of multi agency fora and groups. * Work with our service providers and stakeholder to develop a range of marketing materials and engagement events. * We will use social media to expand and increase audiences. * Work with regional partners to develop a stakeholder open day to promote the range of service provision. | HSG Team  HSG Team  HSG Team  HSG Team  HSG Team  Regional Partnership | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill |  |  |
| **Invest in workforce development to ensure a highly skilled, responsive and sustainable workforce** | * Undertake a skills audit of the HSG sector to identify gaps and effectively target training and support. * Using our regional links and partnerships deliver the following training opportunities for all staff engaged in delivering the Housing Support Programme:   + Substance Misuse Training   + Basic Mental Health   + Money Guiders Programme * Continue to support the provider community to develop different methods of promoting recruitment to the support sector. * Ensure our commissioning and procurement practices contribute to the development of a sustainable workforce. | HSG Team  Regional HSG Partnership Group  Regional HSG Partnership Group  HSG Team | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill | Checkmark with solid fill  Checkmark with solid fill |

# **4. Stakeholder engagement**

Engagement and consultation form an integral part of service delivery within Torfaen, and service users and stakeholders are regularly given an opportunity to provide their views and opinions. Engagement is vital to the development of the HSP delivery plan, whilst also assisting with the continual improvement of the HSP service, both on a local and regional level.

Torfaen carries out regular ongoing engagement with service users and stakeholders, as well undertaking an annual consultation in partnership with the other Gwent Local Authorities. This has meant that a long-term, collaborative approach to engagement is undertaken and that key partners and service users from a wide range of organisations are regularly consulted and involved.

Through continuous engagement and ongoing collaboration, the HSP service can better anticipate areas of pressure and take a preventative approach to meeting emerging needs. It has also enabled greater involvement from the people most affected by the HSP service and has allowed them to take an active role in the shaping of services.

## **4a. Stakeholders engaged with**

In previous years, both face to face and online engagement methods were used, but due to restrictions in 2020 and 2021, face to face events were not feasible, so online approaches were adopted. Online surveys were disseminated to all stakeholders and an online event was carried out for local providers and key partners.

The following are a list of the stakeholders who were invited to take part:

* People who use HSP services
* Carers and families of people who use HSP services
* Health
* Social Services
* Probation
* Police
* VAWDASV Partnership Boards
* Substance Misuse Area Planning Boards
* Children and Communities Grant
* HSG Providers
* Landlords

### **Service User Survey**

In 2021, an online survey was developed and published on the Gwent HSG website specifically for service users. Details were also circulated to service providers, encouraging them to support and encourage their service users to complete it.

### **Stakeholder Survey**

A separate survey was developed for key partners, asking them to identify any gaps or priorities for the HSP and Homeless services and to make any recommendations for further improving partnership working and the delivery of services.

### **Local Stakeholder Engagement**

In addition to the online surveys, Torfaen engaged with its local providers via a Microsoft Teams event. The event was an opportunity for discussions to take place between the different service providers and the local authority, providing an opportunity to share experiences and identify common themes.

### **Ongoing engagement**

In addition to these specific engagement events, service users are regularly consulted about their experiences. Surveys are sent out each month to clients accessing the housing solutions service, regular survey work is undertaken as part of the HSP tendering process and service users are interviewed when services are monitored and reviewed.

Torfaen also meets regularly with its service providers through a multiagency forum, to provide updates and information on any changes or developments that may be taking place within the sector. This helps to maintain good levels of ongoing communication and helps to foster better involvement and collaboration, improving the ability of the HSP and Housing service to meet long term needs, implement preventative approaches and achieve better integration. It also ensures that service providers are fully involved in the delivery of the Housing Support Programme.

## **4b. Stakeholder feedback**

The feedback received from these different engagement opportunities was extremely positive and some robust and detailed information was collected, which has reaffirmed and shaped our understanding of the needs and pressures that are being experienced by both those receiving and providing support, to shape the strategic priorities. Some key themes to emerge from the engagement included:

**Lack of accommodation**

The need for more accommodation and different accommodation options has been frequently identified through the engagement process and remains a long-term challenge within Torfaen.

**Improved collaboration and partnership working**

There are some positive examples of existing partnership working and collaboration, but further work is needed to ensure that all services are working together effectively and gaps in provision are being met.

**Complex Needs**

Feedback has shown that there are now more service users with complex or multiple needs which cannot be met by one service area alone, further supporting the need for more collaborative approaches. The impact of the coronavirus pandemic also emerged during the engagement process, with mental health provision an area of significant concern, as well as access to VAWDASV services

**Awareness Raising**

Service user feedback in particular highlighted that knowledge about the availability of support is not always consistent and it remains an important priority for the service to continually promote and raise awareness of Housing and the Housing Support Programme.

**Recruitment, Training and Retention**

The recruitment of staff has been identified throughout the consultation process as an area of pressure for service providers, which has had a knock-on effect for service delivery.

The evidence and information received from service users and other stakeholders has directly shaped the strategic priorities of the strategy and Torfaen will work closely with its colleagues to optimise the impact of the strategy through continued integration and communication, whilst exploring opportunities for further collaboration, aligning strategic priorities with those of partners and jointly commissioned services where appropriate.

## **4c. Partnership working**

We will regularly review the governance of our local planning groups and we will proactively seek to ensure that key partners are represented at all relevant forums, ensuring that they are fully engaged in these positive discussions.

We will work with partners at an operational and strategic level thereby creating opportunities to collaborate across boundaries and sectors to optimise resources and capacity.

We will continue to promote the Housing and HSP locally, through ongoing engagement and consultation with stakeholders, making full use of the various communication channels available.

Through the use of the regional collaborative mechanisms that are currently in place, we will continue to foster productive relationships at all levels with key partners such as health, care and criminal justice in order to deliver and optimise the impact of the strategy.

## **4d. Regional working**

We are committed to working with regional partners and wider stakeholders to achieve better outcomes for the people we work with.  As part of our strategy we are committed to delivering the following objectives that have been agreed through the Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group:

* Deliver high quality, effective and responsive services
* Expand our reach by collaborating and working in partnership
* Strengthen engagement and accessibility

**Deliver high quality, effective and responsive services**

* We will work with the APB to develop and roll out substance misuse training to the HSG and Homelessness Workforce to ensure that staff are skilled and responsive to emerging need.
* We will roll out the money guiders programme to ensure that staff are equipped to support households address their financial challenges.

**Expand our reach by collaborating and working in partnership**

* We will continue to work with the Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group to progress regional funding and commissioning opportunities.

**Strengthen engagement and accessibility**

* We will evaluate the effectiveness of the online promotional event to inform future engagement activity
* We will Work with Housing Support Teams across Gwent to develop and implement engagement activities and mechanisms.

# Annex A – Impact Assessments



# Annex B – Spend Plan



# Annex C – Commissioning Plan



# Annex D – Homelessness Statutory Duties

