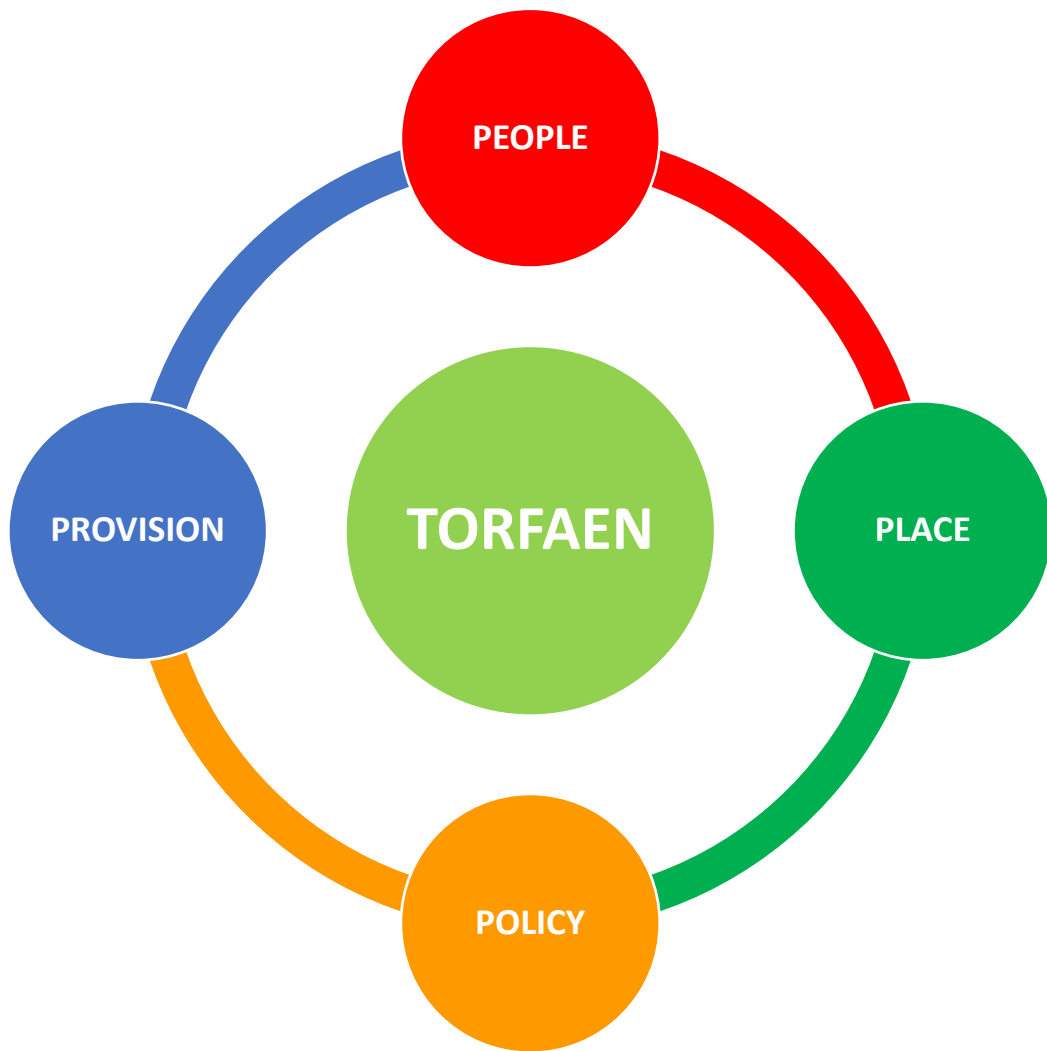


'Homes Matter'

The Local Housing Strategy for Torfaen



2018 – 2021

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Foreword

I am pleased to present **Homes Matter - The Local Housing Strategy for Torfaen**, which sets out the strategic direction for housing delivery in Torfaen over the next 3 years.

Housing is one of the most fundamental requirements of every household and demand for help and assistance in Torfaen has continued to increase in recent years, with more people now struggling to access and maintain safe and affordable housing.

Despite the challenges that are being faced by the Housing sector, especially following the introduction of Welfare Benefit Reform, Torfaen remains positive and is determined to adopt a proactive and innovative approach to meeting housing need.

The introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act, which has provided greater devolved legislation to Local Authorities in Wales, has provided more opportunities for addressing homelessness and delivering better housing solutions and through effective partnership working, we can take forward our vision of Torfaen as a place where everyone is able to access and benefit from affordable, good quality housing in a safe and secure environment.



David Daniels

Executive Member for Communities, Housing and Anti-Poverty

Executive Summary

This strategy, which has been developed by Torfaen's Strategic Housing Forum (SHF), provides a vision for housing in Torfaen over the next three years.

The positive impact of housing cannot be underestimated, not just through the provision of homes and services, but in supporting and contributing to wider policy agendas such as education, health and social care and helping to deliver many social, economic and environmental benefits.

Recent political and economic changes have transformed the housing landscape and the UK's decision to leave the European Union has created significant uncertainty, with the full implications of this decision unlikely to become apparent for some time. The unsettled economic climate has been further exacerbated by austerity measures and welfare benefit reforms, which have impacted negatively on the delivery of housing and associated services.

With access to good quality affordable housing becoming much harder, a greater burden has been placed on local authorities and their partners to supply suitable alternatives. Despite these challenges, the SHF has continued to explore new approaches for delivering services and embracing increased levels of partnership and regional working, to ensure that high quality homes and services are provided to the residents of Torfaen.

Put simply, **Homes Matter, the Local Housing Strategy for Torfaen** is about people, place, policy and provision. It combines and highlights the challenges and collaboration opportunities across partner organisations to deliver a local housing strategy from 2017 to 2020.

Introduction

Since the launch of the previous Strategy - **Developing a housing future together: In adversity and beyond** (2012-2017) - there have been significant changes to both Housing Policy and Legislation; the most momentous being the enactment of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, which provided Wales with its first piece of devolved Housing Legislation.

The Act has enabled Wales to set out its own unique approach for delivering housing solutions. This has resulted in more positive outcomes for homeless households, but has also created additional pressures for Local Authorities and their partners. Welsh Government (WG) have provided assistance to offset some of the resource implications associated with the Act, but a number of challenges still remain.

Coupled with policy changes, the effects of Welfare Benefit Reform in recent years have been significant for the housing sector, especially social housing, with the introduction of the spare room subsidy and more recent changes to the Local Housing Allowance rates, posing a serious challenge to many landlords. In addition, the scarcity of suitable land locally, makes housing development more challenging and over time could limit the amount of new homes that are being provided in the area.

However, there are many opportunities available to Torfaen over the next few years, the most significant being the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, which aims to boost economic prosperity and includes the development of a South Wales Metro, which will improve transport links across South Wales and help to regenerate the more remote communities within the South Wales valleys.

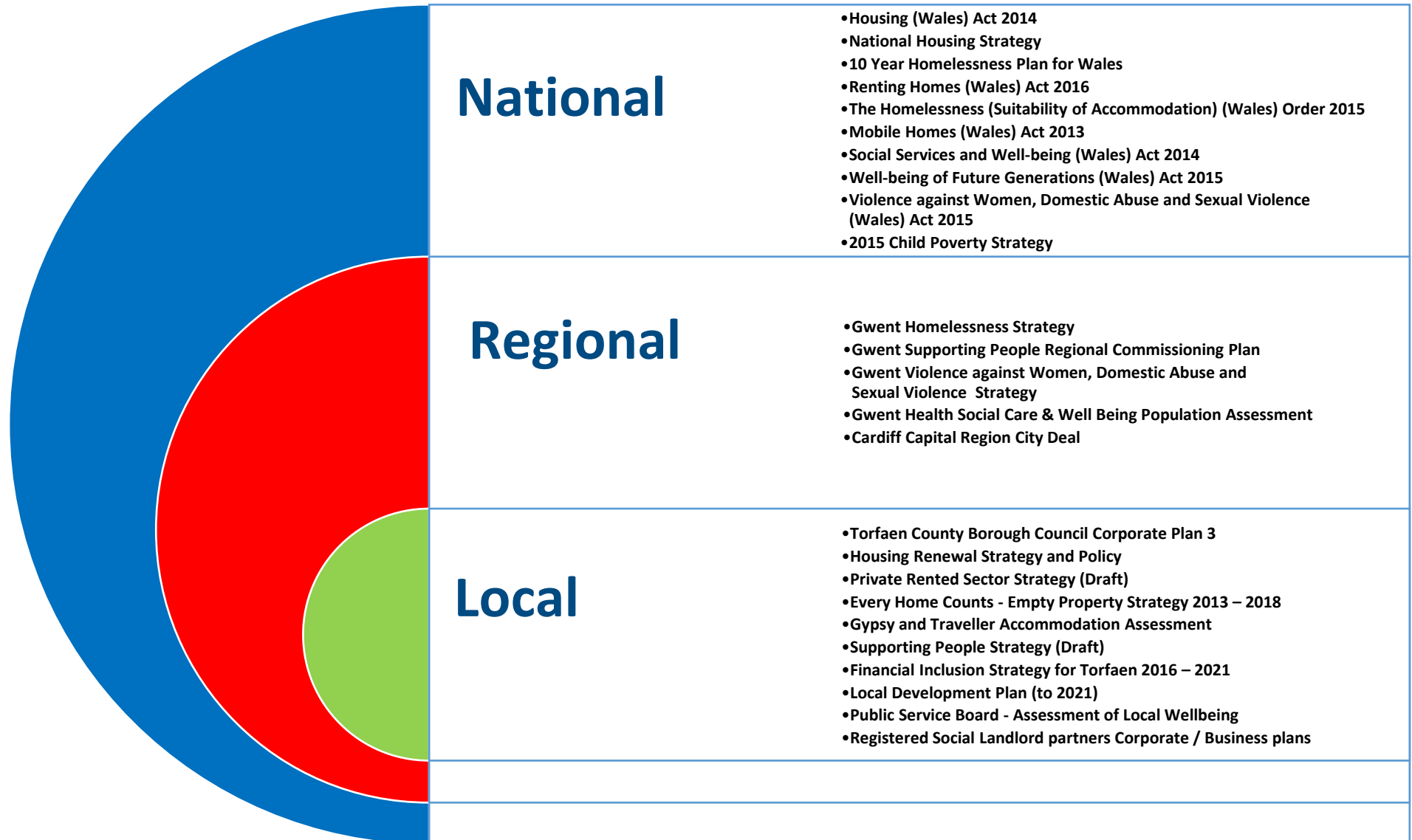
To guarantee that Torfaen can effectively address the challenges and maximise the opportunities, it is important to have a robust Local Housing Strategy, which provides a clear vision for service delivery to meet existing and future demands.

Homes Matter has been developed by the SHF, in consultation with key partners and stakeholders, who have a critical role to play in meeting housing needs and providing sustainable housing solutions for Torfaen.

For any further information relating to this document please contact:

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Strategic Context



See Appendix 1 for full details

Housing Services in Torfaen

New Homes

The SHF works in partnership to deliver new homes that are available on the open market, via the Low Cost Home Ownership scheme; Help2Own Plus, or as social housing allocated through the Homeseeker Partnership. Effective planning, the identification of suitable land and the utilisation of Social Housing Grant has resulted in the creation of over 400 new affordable homes in Torfaen since 2011.



Access to Housing

Increasing access to suitable and affordable housing remains a key priority within Torfaen and a number of schemes exist to support households (see appendix 3).

The local authority's Housing Solutions Service provides dedicated advice and information about the housing options that are available in Torfaen and works with partners in both the social and private rented sector to increase opportunities and access to housing.

The Homeseeker partnership continues to improve access to social housing, whilst ensuring that suitable support and assistance is made available to enable tenants to successfully maintain a tenancy.



Homelessness and Housing Advice

The local authority continues to discharge its statutory duty and, through the provision of extensive advice and assistance, works to ensure that fewer households experience homelessness.

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014, legislated for considerable changes in the delivery of homelessness services. The increased emphasis on prevention has resulted in more positive outcomes and a reduction in households who have required a full homelessness duty, but the overall number of people seeking housing advice and assistance has remained high.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014	2015/16	2016/17
Eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need ⁱ	69	66
Households successfully prevented from Homelessness (Section 66) ⁱⁱ	213	215

Support and Assistance

The provision of high quality support that enables residents to build resilience and improve their long term life chances enabling them to remain in their own homes for longer, is an integral part of the provision of sustainable housing options in Torfaen and helps to reduce demand on other public services and the public purse.

The Supporting People Programme have commissioned a wide range of housing related support services, whilst landlord partners within the SHF have also developed a number of schemes and initiatives to ensure that at various stages of their life, their tenants can access the help and support they require.

By working collaboratively and making effective use of funding opportunities, the SHF have ensured that Torfaen residents benefit from the provision of a wide range of support services including floating support, supported living accommodation and financial inclusion support **(see appendix 3)**.

Home Improvement and Energy Efficiency

Maintaining existing homes and ensuring that they are safe and secure remains a priority and a number of schemes currently exist to promote these outcomes.

Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners have invested over £155m to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) and worked hard to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

The local authority has complimented the work of RSLs by providing similar schemes to home owners in the most deprived areas of Torfaen through Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and energy efficiency schemes, whilst Care and Repair Grants, Disabled Facility Grants and Physical Adaptation Grant have all helped to improve access and overcome mobility issues for residents struggling to maintain their independence **(see appendix 4)**.

Training and Employment

The Housing Sector is currently a major employer within Torfaen and the development of housing and housing related services has supported the creation of numerous training and employment opportunities.

Apprenticeships and jobs have been directly created through the procurement process of housing developments, whilst housing improvement works and the growth of housing related support services have increased job opportunities locally. In addition, a number of skills and employment programme have been developed, to assist residents to access employment and mitigate the impacts of welfare benefit reform.

(A full list of the partners and the schemes and initiatives that are currently available in Torfaen are contained in Appendix 3)

Housing Services – Pressures and Opportunities

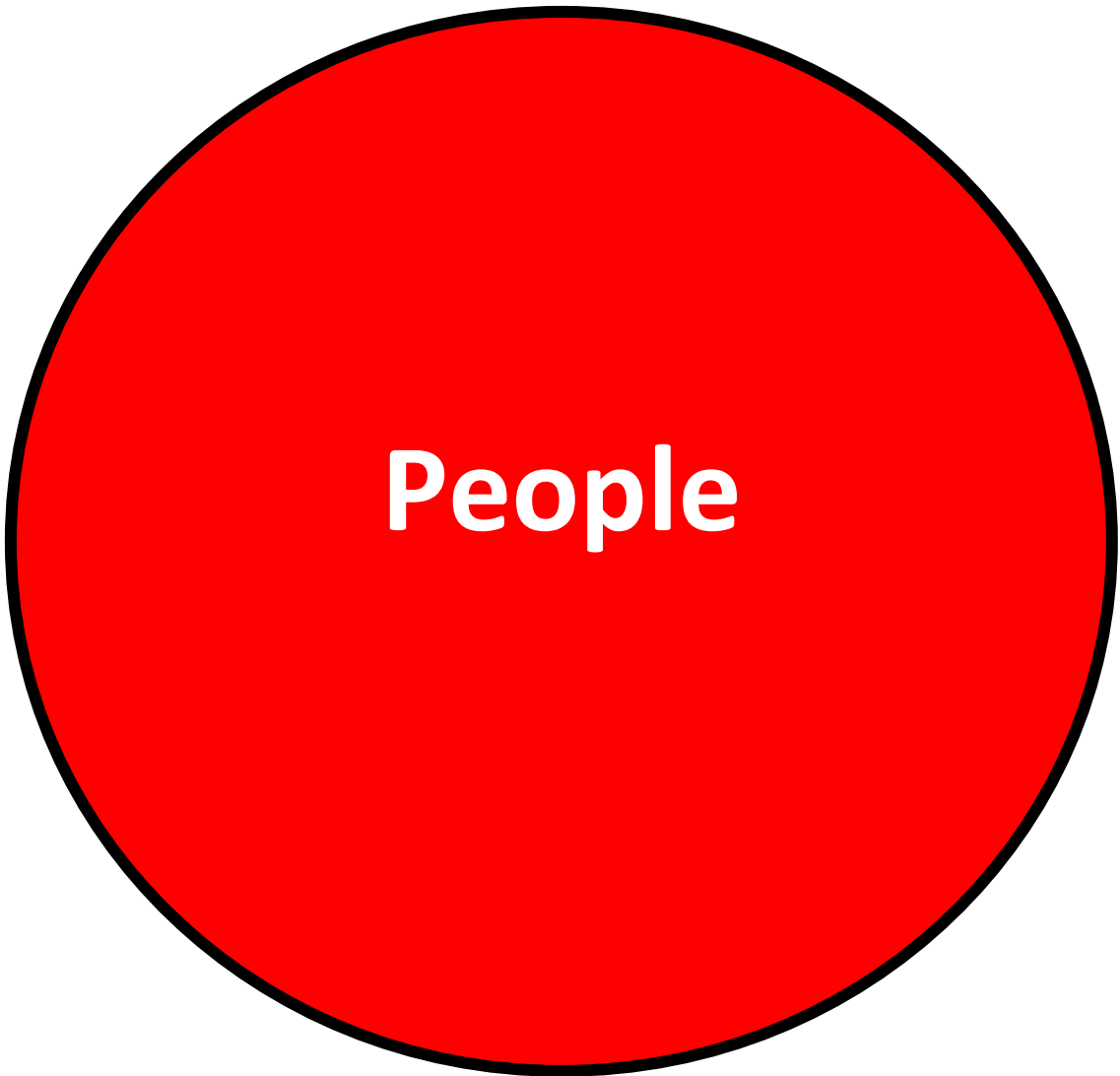
Delivering Housing services in Torfaen remains a challenge and a number of pressures currently exist. However, there are opportunities which need to be explored and developed, to ensure that housing services in Torfaen continue to be effective and meet the needs of the population.

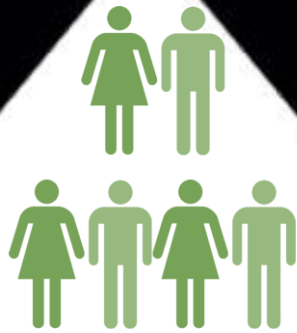
Pressures

- Limited availability of land for the delivery of residential dwellings and competing priorities for capital receipts and the use of planning gain, has reduced the amount of affordable housing delivered.
- The difficulties of accessing homeownership often relating to accessing suitable mortgage products have put pressure on other housing tenures to meet demand
- Full homelessness duty cases have decreased due to the focus on prevention, but overall requests for help remain high, with families experiencing multiple difficulties
- Demand for temporary accommodation remains high and costly Bed and Breakfast (B&B) usage has risen
- Service users have more complex needs requiring greater levels of support
- Increased pressure on services due to Welfare Benefit Reforms and the impact of Benefit Caps and Universal Credit
- A lack of affordable homes, especially for young single households and the under 35s
- Demand for assistance remains high as people struggle to upgrade, repair and maintain their homes.
- Removal of Specific Capital Grant funding has created uncertainty about the future of Housing Renewal Areas
- Torfaen has many older properties, especially in the north of the borough, which require greater levels of investment
- Despite reductions to grant funding, demand for services remains high, with more people requiring dedicated and complex levels of support
- The allocation of resources from WG on an annual basis means that it is difficult to strategically plan programmes
- Continual upgrading and improvement of database systems to meet data requirements can be time consuming and expensive
- The comprehensive data required when applying for funding, has made accessing grants more complicated

Opportunities

- The WG target to develop 20,000 new affordable homes in Wales with Torfaen being allocated circa £17m of SHG/HFG over the next 4 years
- The City Deal will bring increased opportunities for the area and encourage greater levels of investment
- In response to the lack of available land for residential dwellings, a review of the designation of land sites will be undertaken as part of the development of the newly emerging LDP
- Torfaen will continue to apply for WG energy efficient funding to improve the energy efficiency of homes through the most effective and efficient routes
- A Regional Homeless Strategy is in the process of being developed and greater opportunities for regional collaboration between LA's and RSLs are being explored
- Bron Afon's under 35s Pilot to support young people affected by Welfare Benefit changes into training and employment to increase tenancy sustainability is successful and has now been adopted as policy for the life of this strategy and there may be potential for similar approaches to be considered by other RSLs in Torfaen
- The recent review of the Housing Solutions service has resulted in a proposed new structure which will better meet the needs of our customers in terms of preventative services
- The annual review of the Homeseeker business plan will ensure that we continue to have an effective partnership between the local authority and local RSLs and systems remain fit for purpose.
- The new Critical Care Centre in Cwmbran will modernise health services locally and bring increased job opportunities to the area and greater levels of investment
- Continued collaboration with the In One Place initiative and innovative use of housing funding to address health, social care and wellbeing pressures





**91,075 people live in Torfaen
25% are over the age of 60**



**32% of homes have
someone
with a long term
health problem or
disability**



29% of residents have no qualifications

Torfaen is home to a wide cross section of people, whose social and economic circumstances are diverse and their housing needs and aspirations varied. When planning for future housing demands, it is important to recognise these differences and take into consideration how they will affect people’s ability to access housing.

There are pockets of significant deprivation within Torfaen, with 22.4% of children living in low income households and 16.5% of working age residents in receipt of a benefit.ⁱⁱⁱ This has inevitably meant that demand for affordable housing solutions and appropriate support remain high.

House prices are now five times higher than incomes in Torfaen, placing owner occupation beyond the financial capabilities of many residents; especially first time buyers. This has put greater reliance on the rental market to meet housing demand.

Comparison of purchase affordability by local authority, 2016^{iv}

	Average House Price	Average Annual Earnings	House price to earnings ratio
Torfaen	£143,956	£28,357	5.1

Torfaen has a relatively small private rented sector (8.5%) and despite efforts to make it more accessible, it has not grown as anticipated and remains an expensive option, making it unaffordable for many households.

Comparison of private rent affordability by local authority, 2016^v

	Average weekly private rent	Average weekly earnings	Private rental price as % of earnings
Torfaen	£123.28	£548	22.5%

Social housing, therefore, remains the only viable option for some households. Yet recent Welfare Benefit Reforms have meant that even in the social housing sector there are no longer the same levels of security that once existed, with benefit caps, spare room subsidies and housing benefit reductions (for the under 35s) having significant consequences.

Work has been carried out by members of the Strategic Housing Forum to mitigate against the impacts of these changes, including opportunities for young single people to share through joint tenancies in existing social housing, starter home schemes, an under 35s pilot and the utilisation of discretionary housing benefit payments, but further work is still required.

Improving the economic circumstances of residents will increase their housing options. Through the delivery of a number of anti-poverty programmes the SHF have a successful track record of creating jobs and training opportunities through housing investment locally. This will be further encouraged and supported by the delivery of Torfaen’s Wellbeing Assessment Plan. Therefore residents directly benefit from the investment that housing delivers to the local economy.

Torfaen has an ageing population whose care and support requirements will change as they continue to age. It is important that a holistic approach is taken to meeting resident's needs, with services working together to deliver positive outcomes across health, housing and social care, that enable people to live independently for longer.

Torfaen already has a number of successful partnerships with health, housing and social care; the most successful being the **In One Place (IOP)** programme. IOP brings together representative from the Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the 5 Gwent Local Authorities and 9 RSLs, to improve the provision of accommodation and care services to those with complex health and social care needs, through strategically planned and co-ordinated care solutions, ensuring that future accommodation requirements are planned and delivered collaboratively. The success of this partnership should be encouraged and similar collaborations promoted.

As people's circumstances change and they struggle to access suitable accommodation to meet their individual requirements, delivering alternative options remains a priority. Through effective collaboration with its partners, a focus on long term resolutions and work to deliver preventative measures, the Housing Service will support the delivery of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and develop sustainable, long term housing solutions that meet the needs of people in Torfaen.

What we want to achieve

- Develop more affordable housing and increase the range of housing products and solutions available to suit people at different stages of their lives
- People live independently through the provision of support services
- Residents have a choice of suitable housing in an area where they want to live
- People have access to good quality support, advice and information about housing
- Services are fully accessible and take account of individual circumstances and needs
- Housing related support is provided to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged
- Create more opportunities for training, apprenticeships and employment in the local economy

How we will achieve it

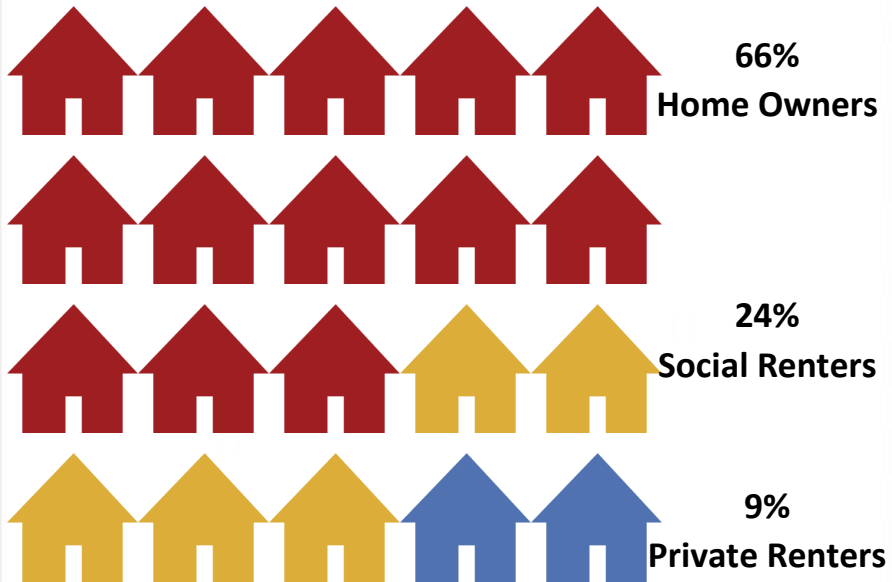
- Ongoing monitoring and review of the Homeseeker Policy and related services to ensure that it is agile, appropriate, remains fit for future purpose and is accessible to everyone and supports those in greatest need
- Work with partners to explore alternative housing solutions for local residents
- Better understanding of the needs of vulnerable people in Torfaen and implement the Supporting People Strategy
- Adopt an inclusive framework for the planning and commissioning of services
- Provide housing services that are efficient, effective and offer good value for money
- Place the service user at the heart of the service, enabling service user feedback to drive continuous improvement
- Improve access to financial inclusion advice and information to help reduce poverty, and support delivery of the Torfaen Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Continue to work collaboratively across housing, health and social care programmes
- Implement the findings of the WG annual review of RSLs



Place



10% of homes in Torfaen
are estimated to be in fuel poverty



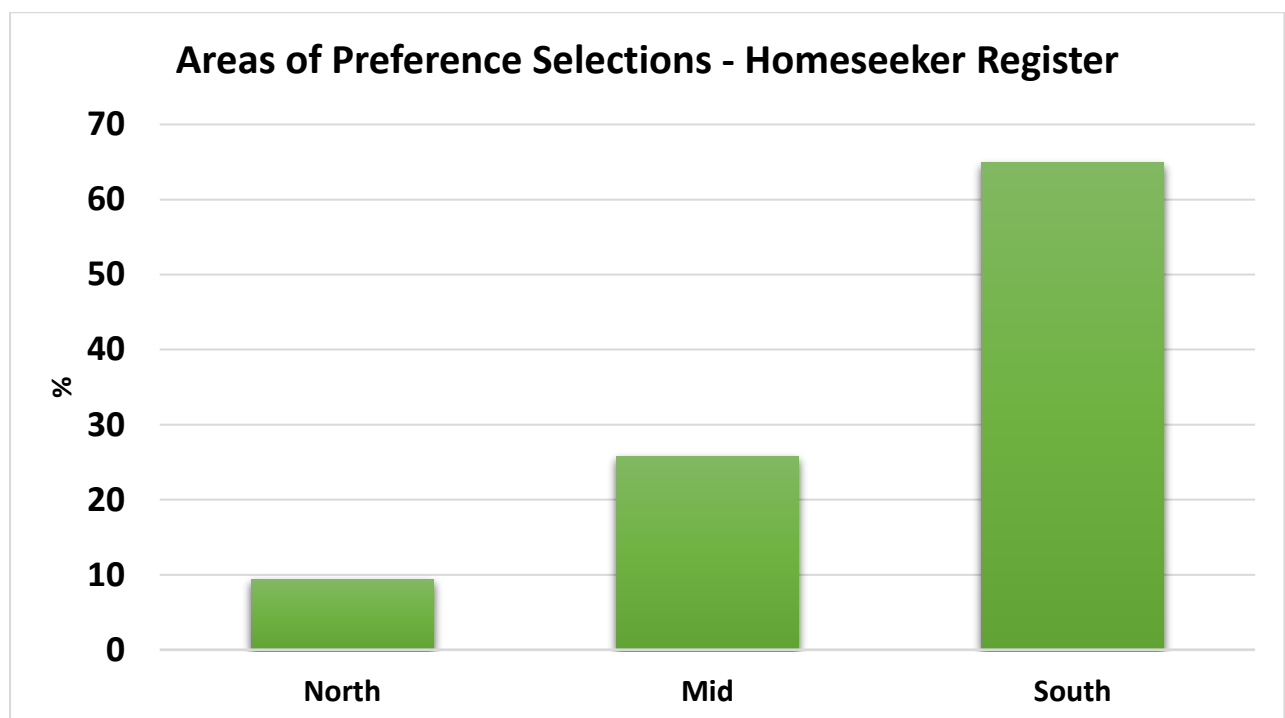
The Home is a key factor in a person’s welfare, with property conditions, location and levels of accessibility having a significant impact on health and wellbeing. So ensuring that properties are safe, secure and well maintained remains a priority for the Council.

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard has ensured that social housing in Torfaen has been maintained to a high standard, but conditions in the private sector are mixed. The provision of services to assist owners to maintain their homes, reduce their risk of fuel poverty and carry out alterations and adaptations is therefore paramount to mitigate the risks and create long term savings and cost efficiencies. Links between poor housing and health are well established and the impacts are being felt by other public services who must deal with the consequences.

As people age, their housing needs inevitably alter and adaptations or a move to more suitable accommodation is often required. This affects residents across all tenures, but especially owner occupiers (61% of all over 65s) who currently account for 15% of applicants on the Common Housing Register.

Owner occupation remains the dominant tenure in Torfaen so to effectively meet the aspirations of potential buyers, it will be important to continue promoting the Help2Own Plus scheme and bring forward new housing sites, but this remains a challenge and innovative approaches are constantly required.

Location is also a consideration when planning housing delivery, with housing intelligence showing a clear preference for the South of the borough.



The popularity of the South has led to rising house prices and rental costs, therefore, more people are applying to Homeseeker for social housing.

Continuing to expand the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and working closely with potential landlords is crucial, to provide alternative housing solutions and work is ongoing to increase the profile and access to the PRS in Torfaen.

It is also important to make best use of existing housing; especially empty properties. These properties are valuable assets which can provide much needed homes in Torfaen.

Figures suggest that households living in rented accommodation are often at a disadvantage to owner occupiers, with renters accounting for **80%** of all unemployed households^{vi} in Torfaen (**59%** social and **21%** PRS), whilst **51%** of social tenants have no access to a car, compared to only 13% of owner occupiers.^{vii} So work is ongoing to increase equality of opportunity across all housing tenures. However, this cannot be achieved in isolation and the Housing Service, which already works closely with colleagues from across different public sector departments and organisations, must continue to collaborate and influence the policies.

What we want to achieve

- Accessing more private sector investment and maximising development opportunities to deliver regeneration across communities
- Working collaboratively with key partners to increase supply
- Increase the availability of high quality, affordable rented properties
- Improve housing conditions across the borough
- Improve the energy efficiency of properties to reduce fuel poverty and improve general health and wellbeing

How we will achieve it

- Maximise and make best use of Private Sector Renewal funding opportunities to undertake area based property improvements in areas of deprivation
- Work with key partners to maximise opportunities for improving existing homes and communities
- Work in partnership to maximise the delivery of affordable housing through Social Housing Grant and Housing Finance Grant
- Continue to promote the Help2Own scheme
- Engage with private sector landlords to increase the availability of properties by delivering the PRS strategy
- Work collaboratively to bring forward land for the provision of affordable housing
- Maximise opportunities for employment and training, advocating the use of local supply chains and procurement frameworks
- Continue to bid for funding to carry out energy efficiency work in Torfaen
- Monitor the impacts of housing services and undertake benefits realisation



Policy



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

To effectively meet the many housing needs within Torfaen, it is essential to have robust evidence based policies in place. With the ever changing political and legislative landscape in both Wales and the UK, the requirement to be flexible is imperative. The impact of Welfare Benefit Reform has been particularly significant.

Torfaen, in conjunction with its partners, have worked hard to bring forward a range of measures and schemes that will help to lessen the effects of these changes. Some examples have included the expansion of the Financial Inclusion Service, the creation of a dedicated Mental Health Housing Solutions Officer, alterations to the Homeseeker Policy to ensure applicants are maximising occupancy and tenancies are sustainable and, working with partners to develop dedicated housing services for young people.

As a direct result of having in place these key strategic policies and procedures, Torfaen has benefitted from significant investment.

The following tables details some of the investment received in Torfaen over the last two years.

	2015/16	2016/17
Social Housing Grant	£4m	£4.4
Private Finance	£2.9m	£3.2m
Energy Efficiency	----	£744,776
Supporting People Grant	£3.4m	£3.4m
Specific Capital Grant	£643,192	£643,192
Gypsy and Traveller Grant	£1.3m	£9,100
Vibrant and Viable Places	£1.4m	£3.4m
Homeless Prevention Grant	£168,995	£91,800
Houses into Homes Loan	£69,692	£231,800

Torfaen’s success is due to a willingness to adapt and embrace alternative and collaborative ways of working.

Through the collaboration approach taken across Torfaen, such as the SHF, Homeseeker Steering Group, Supporting People Inclusive Forum, Supporting People Planning Group and other fora, constant review and amendment to policy decision making is easily achieved allowed a continuation of service delivery fit for purpose. Whilst continued development of robust data around housing has meant that all policies are based firmly on evidence and a thorough understanding of housing demand.

All policies will continue to be reviewed and updated reflecting political and statutory changes.

What we want to achieve

- Improving the quality and standard of private sector housing through Neighbourhood Renewal Area investment
- Making best use of unoccupied homes and delivering the aims and objectives of the Empty Property Strategy
- Delivering the aims and objectives of the Affordable Warmth Strategy to reduce fuel poverty and energy inefficiency across households, maximising and making use of investment and funding opportunities
- To be key partners in the delivery of the wider Torfaen Strategies
- Delivery of the new LDP

How we will achieve it

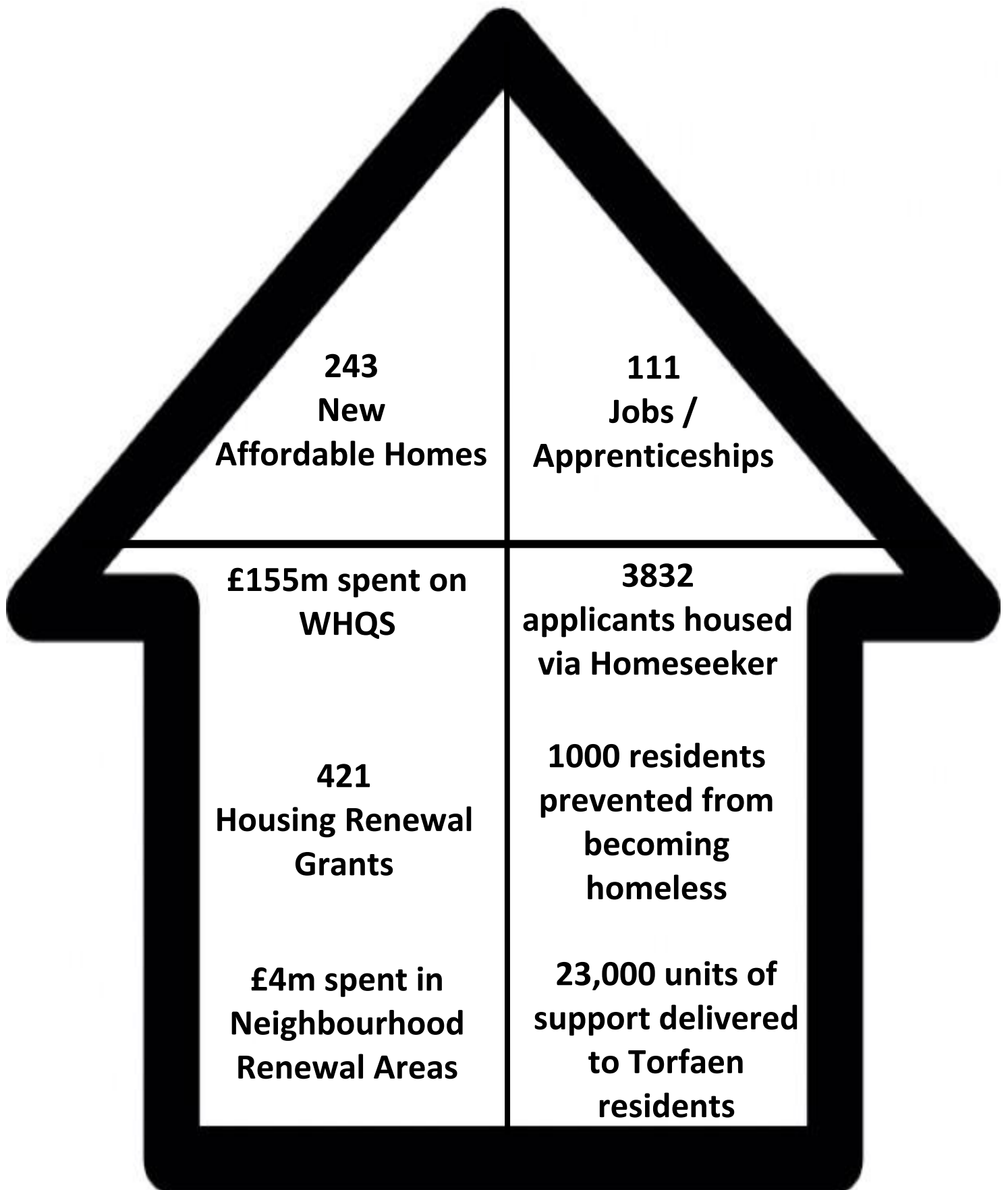
- Continue to implement and monitor the Empty Homes Initiative and Houses into Homes loans scheme
- Monitor the Affordable Warmth Strategy and Empty Property Strategy
- Develop a new Private Rented Sector Strategy
- Develop a new (Regional) Homelessness Strategy
- Contribute towards the delivery of the Financial Inclusion Strategy
- Work with private sector landlords to improve property standards
- Feed into the delivery of local Regeneration initiatives
- Work in partnership with Forward Planning and Development Control to maximise opportunities for affordable housing through Supplementary Planning Guidance
- Further develop the Strategic Housing Forum to maximise opportunities to improve services
- To identify and maximise all avenues of investment opportunities and funding options
- To review and make more creative use of existing stock to meet emerging needs
- Actively contribute to the relevant forums for the various Torfaen Strategies, including the review of the Blaenavon World Heritage status policy, Pontypool Regeneration strategy
- Review the Homeseeker scheme and other relevant strategies
- To engage proactively with planning colleagues to ensure affordable housing is identified correctly.



Provision

2011

2016



The provision of suitable Housing solutions that effectively meet the needs of Torfaen residents remains the primary focus of the SHF. Torfaen has a successful record of delivering housing options and will explore potential opportunities for new and innovative approaches.

A significant change for public services is the reduction and removal of grant funding, in favour of repayable loans; the Welsh Government's dissolution of Specific Capital Grant being a prime example. With the huge impacts that poor housing conditions can have on wider policy agendas, ensuring the provision of home improvement support is imperative.

The Homeseeker Partnership have recently reviewed the Homeseeker Policy to take account of changes in the needs and demands of applicants. Homeseeker provides an invaluable service to a cross section of residents seeking to access affordable housing.

Help2Own Plus, the Council's Low Cost Homes Ownership (LCHO) scheme which continues to support first time buyers who are struggling to access home ownership and affordable rents, has been reviewed allowing more flexibility and intermediate housing options to be made available.

This approach to affordable housing delivery will be further supported over the next 4 years through additional WG funding (£17m), which has been allocated to Torfaen to increase the supply of affordable housing and to assist in meeting the WG's 20,000 affordable homes target.

The Housing Service regularly bids for funding to deliver new and existing services in Torfaen and it will continue to make use of all available sources at its disposal. Recent successes with energy efficiency funding has meant that the number of homes in fuel poverty in Torfaen is reducing and the wider impacts that fuel inefficient homes have on residents health, wealth and general wellbeing are being successfully reduced or eradicated.

The Supporting People Team continue to allocate grant funding to provide housing support across Torfaen, helping to ensure that people's housing support needs are being adequately met and pressure is relieved on other statutory services which would otherwise have to manage the consequences.

A significant amount of work has been carried out to support young people to access and sustain housing. To alleviate some of the impacts brought about by Welfare Reform, Bron Afon Community Housing, in conjunction with the local authority, have launched an under 35s pilot scheme, which works with young people to provide a range of options that will help them sustain a tenancy.

Despite some of the pressures that currently exist, the Housing Service will carry on exploring new ways for meeting current housing need across Torfaen, so that more housing options are brought forward in the future.

What we want to achieve

- Maximise funding for housing investment
- More housing for people at different stages of their lives
- Continue to develop the Private Rented Sector
- Develop appropriate forms of housing to meet the needs of diverse groups of customers

How we will achieve it

- Develop and submit bids for maximising income for the local authority and its partners
- Continue to work collaboratively with partners and other public services to better plan for future housing requirements
- Explore how improvements can be made to support private sector tenants
- Use the IOP programme to develop more appropriate homes for people with specific needs and requirements
- Develop effective relationships with Health and Social Care colleagues to better understand the housing needs of specific cohorts of people

Conclusion

The Housing Service and its partners will continue to work towards meeting the housing needs of Torfaen residents and remains committed to delivering suitable housing solutions for the borough, with delivery of the aims **Homes Matters** being regularly monitored and evaluated over the next three years to guarantee effective delivery.

However, the impacts of inadequate or poor housing are wide ranging and this must be acknowledged, with greater levels of partnership working encouraged to deliver sustainable solutions to Torfaen residents that takes a holistic approach to meeting their needs and promoting their overall wellbeing.

Monitoring

This strategy will be regularly monitored through the Strategic Housing Forum and an action plan will be developed which will be annually reviewed. The action plan will link to the strategic priorities and operational business plans of our partners and those of the Public Service Board, Health and Social Care, to ensure a coordinated and holistic approach is taken to meeting housing need in Torfaen.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Strategic Context

National

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

The first of its kind in Wales, the Act aims to improve the supply, quality and standard of housing in Wales, through a range of duties that will result in the delivery of more, better quality homes and improved housing-related services. Enshrining these aims in law will help to guarantee that housing services in Wales are delivered in a co-ordinated and comprehensive manner that positively contributes to the wellbeing of residents. The Act is supported by a Code of Guidance, which provides comprehensive information for local authority staff, to guide them in implementing their functions in connection with allocations and homelessness.

National Housing Strategy

Published in 2010, the National Housing Strategy 'Improving Lives and Communities,' identified the various changes and challenges that were being faced in Wales and the approach it would adopt to meet them. Despite significant policy and programme changes since its launch, the approach adopted still remains relevant and resonates with the aims of the Housing (Wales) Act:

- Provide more housing of the right type and offer more choice
- Improve houses and communities, including the energy efficiency of homes
- Improve housing related services and support

10 Year Homelessness Plan for Wales

In 2009, Welsh Government launched the 10 Year Homeless Plan, which set out some key principles for the delivery of homeless services in Wales. The Plan remains as relevant today as when it was originally published, with greater emphasis on the prevention of homelessness and a strong focus on the needs of the service user, placing them at the centre of the process.

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

The Renting Homes Act was introduced to simplify the renting process and improve access to the sector. It replaced the various and often complex pieces of legislation that previously existed, with one straightforward and clear legal framework. A major change introduced by the Act was the replacement of all current tenancies and licences with just two types of occupation contract:

- secure contract - modelled on the current secure tenancy issued by Local Authorities
- standard contract - modelled on the current assured shorthold tenancy used mainly in the private rented sector.

The Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2015

The Order sets out the criteria a local authority must take into consideration when providing accommodation to someone who is homeless, or threatened with homelessness, under Part

2 (Homelessness) of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. In order to meet the terms of the order, the local authority must be satisfied that any accommodation that it has provided is deemed suitable for the purposes of performing and discharging its homeless duties.

Mobile Homes (Wales) Act 2013

The Mobile Homes Act was introduced to clarify and better protect the rights of residents who live in Mobile Homes, whilst also seeking to improve the regulation and management of Mobile Home sites in Wales.

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

The Act was introduced to improve life for people and their carers, by changing the way their needs are assessed and services delivered, so that people have greater involvement in determining the care and support they receive. The Act also promotes the utilisation of additional help that is available within the community, to reduce formal, planned support. Delivering more sustainable solutions will require greater partnership working across different sectors; including housing and health, to ensure that people get the support they need to lead positive and fulfilled lives.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Introduction of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act has placed a duty on public bodies to carry out their functions in a way that is sustainable and will guarantee that any decisions that are made, take into account the potential impact on people and communities both now and in the future. It will expect them to:

- work together better
- involve people reflecting the diversity of our communities
- look to the long term as well as focusing on now
- take action to stop problems deteriorating - or stop them happening in the first place.

Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015

The Act seeks to improve the response of the Public Sector in Wales to abuse and violence. Some of the key changes that the Act will bring are:

- Improve arrangements to promote awareness of, and prevent, protect and support victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence
- Introduce a needs-based approach to developing strategies which will ensure strong strategic direction and strengthened accountability
- Ensure strategic level ownership, through the appointment of a Ministerial Adviser who will have a role in advising Welsh Ministers and improving joint working amongst agencies across this sector
- Improve consistency, quality and join-up of service provision in Wales.

2015 Child Poverty Strategy

In 2010, Wales introduced the Children and Families (Wales) Measure, which legislated its commitment to tackle child poverty and placed a duty on the Welsh Government to develop a Child Poverty Strategy for Wales. The objectives of the strategy are:

- Reduce the number of families living in workless households
- Increase the skills of parents and young people living in low-income households

- Reduce the health, education and economic inequalities amongst children
- Create a strong economy which helps tackle poverty and reduces in-work poverty.
- Support families living in poverty to maximise their household income

The Measure also placed a duty on Local Authorities to support the poverty agenda by setting their own objectives for tackling child poverty.

Regional

Gwent Regional homelessness Strategy (Draft)

One of the duties of the Housing (Wales) Act, is the formation of a Homelessness Strategy and Torfaen is currently leading on the development of a regional strategy for Gwent. As a region, Gwent experiences many similar pressures and problems in relation to tackling homelessness, so a regional approach will encourage joint working and the promotion of best practice, so that each local authority successfully discharges its duties.

Gwent Supporting People Regional Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020

Under the new framework for administering the Supporting People Programme, Regional Collaborative Committees (RCC) are required to establish a Regional Strategic Plan that provides an overview of commissioning intentions across the region. The Gwent Strategic Plan provides a summary of the region's commissioning intentions and a regional gap analysis of support services on a cross authority basis. The Gwent Regional Collaborative Committee is made up from the areas of Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Local Authorities.

Gwent VAWDASV Regional Team

The Regional VAWDASV Team works across Gwent to tackle the issues surrounding domestic abuse, to raise awareness of domestic abuse, make strategic links both regionally and nationally and to support Local Authorities to develop their own local and regional strategies.

Population Needs Assessment Gwent Region Report

This assessment has a central role in promoting Well-being, supporting people at the earliest opportunity to maintain their independence and to help people across the Gwent area to better help themselves.

The assessment presents the level of need across the region and also provides a regional response to the identified need, as well as proposing the next steps required to meet those needs.

Local

TCBC Corporate Plan 3

Corporate Plan 3 is Torfaen Council's key strategic document and sets out how services are delivered and resources targeted to improve communities and create a sustainable future.

The three priorities of the Plan are:

- A clean and green Torfaen
- Raising educational attainment
- Support for Torfaen's most vulnerable residents

Housing Renewal Strategy and Policy

The strategy sets out the Council's policy for private sector renewal in Torfaen and seeks to:

- Improve the quality and condition of private sector housing in Torfaen.
- Promote sustainable communities through environmental, economic and social regeneration and development.

Private Rented Sector Strategy (Draft)

A robust and resilient Private Rented Sector (PRS) is crucial for promoting a vibrant local housing market and offering a range of housing options to residents. To ensure that Torfaen maintains and promotes the sector, the strategy will:

- Increase the quality and supply accommodation in the PRS.
- Support residents to access affordable, good quality and well managed private rented homes.
- Develop strong partnerships to support the growth of the PRS.

Every Home Counts - Empty Property Strategy 2013 – 2018

This strategy formalises and continues to promote the Council's commitment to tackling empty homes across the borough, setting out actions for reducing empty properties and the problems associated with them. The Strategy aims to reduce empty homes by:

- Establishing positive relationships and partnership working with owners
- Undertaking a firm enforcement approach in cases where owners' co-operation is not forthcoming, or if owners cannot be found
- Working closely with organisations and partners
- Promote the issues surrounding empty homes to all Torfaen residents to enhance awareness

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment

Part 3 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 placed a duty on Local Authorities to undertake a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment and to make suitable provision where the assessment identified an unmet need. The Torfaen assessment was carried out in 2016 and identified a growing community of Gypsies and Travellers, which will require continual monitoring to ensure that current and future provision remains sufficient. In response to this growth, a new site has been developed adjacent to the existing Gypsy and Traveller site to meet the identified need.

Local Housing Market Assessment

Carrying out periodic reviews of housing need and maintaining a good understanding of the local housing market is essential for the strategic planning of housing provision and ensures that the local authority continues to deliver the right type of housing in the most suitable locations. Utilising data from a range of sources, the assessment identifies current trends and anticipated projections within Torfaen until 2021.

Supporting People Strategy (Draft)

The Supporting People Programme provides housing related support services for vulnerable people. The Torfaen Supporting People Strategy sets the direction for the programme ultimately ensuring that programme in Torfaen prioritises services based on the needs of

our communities, offers value for money and responds effectively to the challenges of a turbulent political environment.

Torfaen Financial Inclusion Strategy for Torfaen 2016 - 2021

The strategy aims to improve financial assistance and support for the residents of Torfaen across 4 strategic priority areas; People, Place, Provision and Policy. The strategy will help to ensure that residents are sufficiently equipped to deal with the economic and financial challenges that they face.

Local Development Plan (to 2021)

The Local Development Plan (LDP) is the key document for delivering new homes and infrastructure in Torfaen. The adopted LDP's vision is to deliver planned, sustainable growth reflecting the specific role and function of Torfaen's settlements, through a "network of integrated communities". It will provide for a distinctive, vibrant and prosperous area where people have the skills, knowledge and opportunities to achieve a better quality of life in safe, healthy and thriving communities with accessible local facilities.

Local Assessment of Wellbeing (draft)

The Well-being Assessment will be used to inform planning across the public sector to achieve the Torfaen we want to see and meet the national well-being goals for Wales. The Assessment, which will be used to set local Well-being Objectives has been developed by consulting extensively with our communities and partners to gather their ideas on the well-being of the area, now and in the future. The three emerging themes from the assessment are:

- Economy
- Health
- Natural Environment

RSL partners Corporate/ Business plans

Whilst the Council takes responsibility to develop the emerging Local Housing Strategy, its aims and objectives cannot be delivered without the support and cooperation of our key partners. We have endeavoured to review and feed in the various strategic and annual operational business plans that have been developed by strategic housing forum members.

Appendix 2 - Glossary

Affordable Housing

Housing to meet the needs of households unable to access housing on the open market

Anti-Social Behaviour

Behaviour that negatively effects a person(s) or communities enjoyment of their local area

Category 1 Hazard

A serious hazard that a local authority must take action to rectify as per the Housing Health and Safety Rating System

Choice Based Lettings

A scheme for the allocation of social housing, that provides the applicant with a choice of which property they are interested in renting

Disabled Facilities Grant

Government funding provided to Local Authorities to provide adaptations and services to disabled residents, enabling them to stay in their own homes for longer

Demographics

The characteristics of a population e.g. age, gender, ethnicity

Energy Efficiency

Advice and products that can help make a property more energy efficient

Financial Inclusion

Helping people gain the skills and confidence to manage their money and reduce their debts

Fuel Poverty

When a household cannot afford to keep their home warm at a reasonable cost (when they spend over 10% of their income on energy costs)

Help2Own

A Torfaen Council Scheme designed to help households access the owner occupied sector

Homeseeker

The common housing register for the allocation of social housing within Torfaen

Housing Associations

Organisations that provide social housing at affordable rents on a not for profit basis (also known as Registered Social Landlords)

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

A risk assessment tool used to assess potential risks to the health and safety of occupants in residential properties in England and Wales

Intermediate Rent

Intermediate rent gives people the opportunity to rent a home at less than the market rate.

Landlord Hub

A partnership between Monmouthshire Council and Torfaen Council that meets quarterly to provide advice and information to private sector landlords

Local Development Plan

A long-term strategic planning document guiding the development and use of land within a specific Welsh local authority Area

Local Housing Market Assessment

A detailed study of a district and/or region that gives detailed information on the present and future housing need

Local Strategic Partnership

An umbrella organisation made up of Council's, Registered Social Landlord's, voluntary groups and private sector groups to improve equality of life in communities

Public Service Board

Leaders of local public and third sector organisations come together to take collective action to ensure public services are effective and citizen focussed

Lower Super Output Areas

An area of approximately 1500 people which is used to measure deprivation through the Welsh Index of Multi Deprivation

Neighbourhood Renewal Area

Renewal areas improve housing and living conditions in specific areas and tackle a wide range of related environmental and socio-economic conditions

Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment

An assessment of an area prior to undertaking regeneration or renewal work

Private Sector Stock Condition Survey

A review of the condition of private sector properties in an area

Registered Social Landlord

Organisations that provide social housing at affordable rents on a not for profit basis (also known as Housing Associations)

Shared Equity

Shared equity schemes provide buyers with an equity loan to put towards the cost of buying a property, which can help boost the size of their deposit and increase their opportunity of getting a mortgage.

Shared Ownership

Purchasing part of a property through a Registered Social Landlord or the Council

Social Housing Grant

A grant given to Registered Social Landlords by the Welsh Government to provide housing for rent or low cost home ownership that meets local needs and priorities

Specific Capital Grant

A Welsh Government grant given to Local Authorities to finance work undertaken in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas

Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)

The recommended method for measuring the energy efficiency of properties

Supporting People Programme Grant

A Welsh Government subsidised programme, introduced to fund and co-ordinate the provision of housing related support to vulnerable groups

Sustainable Communities

Communities that meet the needs of existing and future residents and provide opportunity and choice in areas such as housing, health, education and jobs

Tenure

The financial and legislative arrangements under which someone has the right to live in a property e.g., owner-occupied, private rented and social rented

TYPSS (Torfaen Young Peoples Support Service)

A Multi-Agency/Multi-Disciplinary service which takes a holistic approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable young people aged 16 to 21

Welfare Benefit Reform

A reform of the current benefit system to help people progress into work. Also often termed 'Welfare Reforms'

Welsh Housing Quality Standard

A standard to which the Welsh Government requires all social landlords to improve their properties by 2012

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation

The official measure of deprivation in Wales, measuring Income, Employment, Health, Education, Access to Services, Community Safety, Physical Environment and Housing

Williams Commission

A Welsh Government Commission set up to look at how public services are delivered in Wales

Appendix 3 – Housing Services

New Homes

- Help2Own Plus
- Bron Afon Community Housing
- Melin Homes
- Pobl Group
- Linc

Access to Housing

- Homeseeker Partnership – Bron Afon Community Housing, Melin, Charter, Linc, Hafod, United Welsh, Torfaen County Borough Council
- Ty Rosser Gwyn
- Lion's Court
- Seren Living
- Solas Bond Scheme
- Holmes and Castle

Homelessness and Housing Advice

- Torfaen Housing Solutions Service
- Be Independent
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Mortgage Rescue (United Welsh)
- Shelter Cymru

Support and Assistance

- Supporting People Programme
- Bron Afon Supported Living
- Own Two Feet (Bron Afon)
- Bron Afon Community Safety Officers
- Bron Afon and Melin Money Advisers
- Smart Money Team – Hafod
- Money Advice Team - Linc
- Landlord Hub
- Linc Care

Home Improvement and Energy Efficiency

- Neighbourhood Renewal Areas
- Arbed Funding

- Care and Repair
- Bron Afon Occupational Therapy and Adaptations Service
- Disabled Persons Service
- Physical Adaptation Grant (PAG)
- Empty Hopes
- Empty Homes Wales (United Welsh)
- Pontypool Home Improvement Loan
- Home Improvement Loan

Training and Employment

- Bron Afon Job Club
- Bron Afon - That Works Training Academy
- Melin Works
- Y Prentis
- Together Project – United Welsh

Appendix 4 - Housing Improvement Services

	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014	2014 / 2015	2015 / 2016	2016 / 2017	2017/18
Housing Renewal Grants	79	96	82	54	110	81	46
Housing Renewal Spend	£1,120,190	£847,010.49	£656,491.72	£644,273	£643,192	£643,192	£500,000
Disabled Facilities Grants	117	124	144	141	50	46	39

ⁱ Households eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (section 75) by priority need and household type, Homelessness data collection, Welsh Government, 2016

ⁱⁱ Prevention of Homelessness by Area and Measure (Section 66), Statutory Homelessness: Key Indicators, 2017

ⁱⁱⁱ DWP benefit claimants - Working-age client group - main benefit claimants - not seasonally adjusted (August 2016), % is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64, Nomis

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157402/report.aspx#tabwab> [Accessed 21/03/2017]

^{iv} Source: Land Registry, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ONS) , Rent Officers Wales

^v Source: Land Registry, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ONS) , Rent Officers Wales

^{vi} Census 2011 - Tenure by economic activity by age - Household Reference Persons, Nomis Census

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/DC4601EW/view/1946157402?rows=c_tenhuk11&cols=c_ecopuk11 [Accessed 24/03/2017]

^{vii} Census 2011 - Tenure by car or van availability by religion of Household Reference Person, Nomis Census

https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/LC4204EW/view/1946157402?rows=c_tenhuk11&cols=c_carsno [Accessed 24/03/2017]