

Monmouthshire County Council

Housing Support Programme Strategy

2022- 2026

1 Introduction:

- 1.1.1 Monmouthshire County Council is required to develop a Housing Support Programme (HSP) Strategy ('the Strategy') every four years, with a mid-point review every two years, outlining the strategic direction of the Council's housing related support services.
- 1.1.2 The Council also has a duty under the Homelessness (Wales) Act 2014 to produce a four-year homelessness strategy. This document, therefore, provides a single strategic view of the Council's approach to homelessness prevention and housing support services within Monmouthshire. The document particularly sets out how the Council will continue to implement the required transformational shift to improve the quality and availability of homeless accommodation, that homeless should be brief and non-recurring and a move to a Rapid Re-housing approach, as determined by Welsh Governments Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness & Housing Related Support.
- 1.1.3 The development of the Strategy followed a review of homeless data and services and a comprehensive needs assessment that included a series of stakeholder engagement exercises and focus group meetings with both service users and partner organisations.
- 1.1.4 This Strategy sets out the key actions the Council will be working on in the medium term. It provides direction and a sense of what is important for the next four years to tackle the current homeless challenges and transform homeless services in Monmouthshire.

1.2 Purpose of the Strategy

- 1.2.1 This Strategy sets out a single strategic direction for both homelessness and housing support services in Monmouthshire for the next four years (2022 - 2026), and meets the Council's statutory requirements to produce a Homeless Strategy under Part 2, Housing (Wales) Act 2014. The Strategy sets out the homeless priorities for Monmouthshire (See Section 3) for the Council and partner agencies.
- 1.2.2 This Strategy effectively reviews and updates the Monmouthshire dimension of the Gwent Regional Homeless Strategy, established in 2018, which the Council was party to. The Strategy also reviews and reflects the Council's Homeless Transition Plan established in early 2021, as required by Welsh Government's Phase 2 Guidance.
- 1.2.3 The Strategy identifies and sets out key themes and priorities for the Council and its partners to prevent homelessness wherever possible through early intervention: and where we cannot prevent homelessness, it is rare, brief and unrepeated.
- 1.2.4 The Strategy seeks to contribute to the Council's commitment to the vision for Monmouthshire to be:
- an ambitious place full of hope and enterprise
 - a fair place where your family is safe
 - a sustainable place where people care about each other
 - a place you are proud to call home
- 1.2.5 Central to the Council's vision are the principles of social justice. A socially just society is one in which everyone's rights and dignity are equally respected, where all citizens are able to participate fully, and where nobody's life chances are held back for reasons that are beyond their personal control. The Council considers homeless services individually and collectively have an extremely important role to play in this regard.
- 1.2.6 The development of the Strategy ensures that there is full alignment between homelessness and the Council's Housing Support Grant Programme and that the on-going review, development and commissioning of the programme is informed by homeless need in the County. In this regard the Strategy sets out the priorities for the Housing Support Grant programme over the next 4 years.

1.3 Legislative and Policy Context

1.3.1 National context

1.3.2 A number of legislative acts, national plans and policies informed the drafting of the Strategy. The two principle pieces were the following legislative acts,

1.3.3 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

1.3.4 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 seeks to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales in order to create a Wales that all want to live in, now and in the future.

1.3.5 The Act requires public bodies to think about the long-term impact of the decisions they make and to better work together to prevent inequality issues such as poverty and ill health. Decision makers should benchmark the decisions they make against the well-being goals introduced by the Act,

- I. A prosperous Wales;
- II. A resilient Wales;
- III. A healthier Wales;
- IV. A more equal Wales;
- V. A Wales of cohesive communities;
- VI. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language; and
- VII. A globally responsible Wales.

1.3.6 Preventing and relieving homelessness has a role in meeting those well-being goals, particularly goals ii to iv, above.

1.3.7 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014

1.3.8 The Act introduced new statutory duties on local authorities to ensure that those at risk of homelessness are able to receive help at the earliest opportunity. Homelessness prevention became a statutory duty under Section 66 and 73 of the Act. The duty to prevent also removed the qualifying criterion of “priority” that had previously excluded many households from accessing any form of assistance. Strengthening homeless prevention and seeking to identify potential issues further ‘up-stream’ is an outcome sought from the strategy.

1.3.9 To enable local authorities to meet their statutory duties the Act allows local authorities to access the private rented sector for suitable accommodation. In this regard, the Council established its Monmouthshire Lettings arms-length branding several years ago. A key outcome is to further develop MLS to encourage more private landlords to make available their properties to the Council.

1.3.10 Other Relevant Legislative Acts and Policies considered in the Strategy's development were the following

- Welsh Government Rough Sleeping Action Plan 2018-20.
- Housing Support Grant Practice Guidance.
- Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016.
- The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014.
- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

1.3.11 Phase 2 - Planning Guidance for Homelessness and Housing Related Support Services

1.3.12 In June 2020 and in relation to the Covid pandemic, Welsh Government published the Phase 2 homeless guidance. Having previously asked all local authorities in Wales to help protect individuals and communities by supporting people facing homelessness into safe and stable accommodation, the Phase 2 guidance requested local authorities to ensure that everyone brought into temporary accommodation is supported into long-term accommodation.

1.3.13 In addition, the Phase 2 guidance articulated Welsh Government's vision for homelessness and homeless policy to transform the whole approach to homelessness provision so that those who present as homeless experience a system focused on prevention and where that fails homelessness is rare, brief and non-repeated. The core of the vision is a move to 'Rapid Rehousing.'

1.3.14 Rapid Re-Housing Guidance

1.3.15 Welsh Government vision is that the prevention of homelessness must remain the primary focus in order to achieve a higher rate of success in relation to keeping people in their own homes.

1.3.16 Where prevention has not worked, Rapid Rehousing is essential to reduce the impact of homelessness and ensure it is unrepeated. The benefits of secure, settled and self-contained housing for people who have experienced or been at risk of homelessness should not be underestimated. The majority of people experiencing homelessness should be provided with such homes as quickly as possible. This will help avoid the effects of prolonged homelessness or prolonged stays in emergency or temporary settings while remaining homeless. (This is a particular challenge for the Council at present). Rapid rehousing is based upon a systematic approach of understanding what housing is required to meet local need, how that housing is going to be funded, developed and allocated to people who find themselves homeless. This approach, when properly applied, means the need for many forms of temporary accommodation will diminish and where it is needed, is for a shorter period than currently.

1.3.17 A priority of the Strategy is to develop a Rapid Rehousing Plan by June 2022.

1.4 Local/Regional context

1.4.1 Gwent Regional Public Service Board Well-being Assessment

1.4.2 The eight statutory members of the Gwent Regional Public Service Board, or GRPSB, are the five local authorities, the Local Health Board, Fire and Rescue Authority and Natural Resources Wales. Other organisations are also invited, these include Gwent Police, Local Housing Associations, Melin Homes and voluntary organisations represented through the Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations.

1.4.3 The RPSB must prepare and publish an assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in the area and then agree priorities to address these.

1.4.4 Monmouthshire County Council Corporate Business Plan 2017 / 2022

1.4.5 Sets out a clear direction for the Council and resources required to deliver it. It informs and shapes a whole set of enabling and delivery plans around People; Digital; Economy; Customers, Land and Assets.

1.4.6 The plan sets out sets out our five Organisational Goals. These goals incorporate the four Well-being Objectives. The role of homelessness services has an important contribution to make to the majority of below:

- I. The best possible start in life
- II. Thriving and well-connected county
- III. Maximise the potential of the natural and built environment
- IV. Lifelong well-being
- V. Future-focused Council

1.4.7 People, Place Prosperity: A Strategy for Social Justice 2017 – 2022

1.4.8 The Aim of the Social Justice Strategy is ‘To put Social Justice at the heart of what we do’.

1.4.9 The Commitments made in the Strategy focuses on the following:

- Enabling connected and caring communities supporting people to live independently;
- Delivering on social justice, better prosperity and reducing inequality;
- Enabling better local services through supporting volunteers and social action

1.4.10 And has aligned with the Public Service Board priorities and aspirations:

- To reduce inequalities between communities and within communities;
- To support and protect vulnerable people; and
- To consider our impact on the environment.

1.4.11 Gwent Regional Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018-2023

1.4.12 The Gwent Regional Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Strategy 2018-2023 sets out six Strategic Priorities that will contribute to the pursuit of the prevention of violence and abuse, the protection of victims and the support of all those affected.

1.4.13 Housing Support Grant Programme

1.4.14 The Housing Support Grant (HSG) Programme is an early intervention programme that funds a wide range of housing related support and homelessness services for vulnerable people across Gwent, and supports activity which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation, or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation.

1.4.15 The Monmouthshire HSG Programme supports the National vision for the Housing Support Programme, which is:

A Wales where nobody is homeless, and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish and live a fulfilled, active and independent life”.

1.4.16 Furthermore, the Council will participate in the Gwent Regional Housing Support Grant Collaborative Group in order to identify shared needs and deliver on shared goals. The Strategic goals of the Gwent RHSCG are:

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

1.5 The Council's Strategy to Summer 2022 – Looking Ahead, Delivering Now

1.5.1 The Purpose

In December 2021, the Council revised its own Strategy to Summer 2022 and reviewed its purpose. This Strategy contributes to the Council's 'Looking Ahead, Delivering Now Strategy to Summer 2022' whereby the Council wants Monmouthshire to be:

- An ambitious place full of hope and enterprise
- A fair place where your family is safe
- A sustainable place where people care about each other and
- A place you are proud to call home

1.5.2 The Council's Strategy is underpinned by a clear sense of who we are as a local authority. The Council expects people and partner agencies who work with us to share a strong value set and expect that these are evident in the ways we work and engage with our communities. Our values reflect who we are, how we do things and how we are transforming homelessness:

- Openness
- Flexibility
- Fairness
- Teamwork
- Kindness

1.5.3 The Council remains committed to preventing and reducing homelessness, tackling the main causes of homelessness, and supporting those in need. Where we cannot prevent homelessness occurring, we strive to make it rare, brief and unrepeatable.

1.5.4 The Principles

- To deliver an accessible quality service that ensures every person receives good quality advice and assistance at the earliest opportunity to prevent homelessness and protect people from harm.
- To reduce inequality by promoting social and community cohesion.
- To maximise resources by improving partnership working both regionally and locally to deal with homelessness.

2 Needs assessment:

2.1.1 Needs Assessment process.

The needs assessment process consisted of analysing key policy documents, statistical research and information collected during feedback from consultation exercises and a questionnaire.

2.1.2 The Statement of Need focused on the following areas:

- The wider environment that homelessness services operate within;
- The accommodation in place to prevent and alleviate homelessness;
- Demand for homelessness services and trends – past, current, and estimated future levels of homelessness;
- The main causes of homelessness;
- The resources currently in place to prevent homelessness and support those who are homeless and possible gaps;
- Potential areas of improvement; and
- The expected resources the Council has to devote to statutory homelessness services moving forward.

2.1.3 The methods used to inform the Statement of Need were:

- A desktop review of key literature and statistical data;
- Focus groups and group discussions with key staff relevant to the preparation and implementation of homelessness planning);
- Both SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) and PESTL (Political, Economic, Social, Technology and Legislation) analyses were used;
- A stakeholder questionnaire feedback from service providers, partners and other stakeholders;
- Surveys with people who have experienced homelessness and related services first-hand;
- Direct engagement with different service user groups;
- Empirical data used to inform the strategy and evidence need included: WHO12 data, LHMA prospectus data, Mental Health data from Aneurin Bevan Health Board and Outcomes data (HSG)

2.1.4 [Click here for access to the Statement of Need](#) (link to be inserted later)

2.2 Key findings

2.2.1 An analysis of the homelessness data for the 4-year period 2017 - 2021 identified the following:

- Applications
 - Total applications have seen a fall of just over 32% over the past 4 years¹;
 - The number of single households remains relatively stable at around 65.5% of total applications²;
 - Around 61% of all single households are males³;
 - Around 39% of all single households are females;
 - Around 29% of applicants have dependent children⁴;
 - 96% of those in Temporary Accommodation (TA) have at least one recorded support need⁵.
- Main Age Range of Applicants
 - Around 25% of applicants were aged between 16 to 24 years old⁶;
 - Around 4% of applicants were 16 - 17 years old⁷.
- Main Causes of Homelessness (S66)
 - 30.6% of all causes was rent arrears⁸;
 - 30.5% of all causes was a loss of private rented sector accommodation⁹;
 - Around 29% of all causes was family and friends no longer able to accommodate¹⁰.

2.2.2 The Needs Assessment Review particularly highlighted Mental Health, Young People, Substance Misuse, a lack of homeless and permanent accommodation as key issues/themes which have been relevant to the development of the Strategy and the future delivery of homeless services in Monmouthshire. These key areas have been adopted as priorities for the Strategy for addressing homelessness in Monmouthshire.

¹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.3.1.1

² (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.3.2.1

³ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.3.2.3

⁴ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); Figure 26

⁵ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 9.3.3.1

⁶ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.3.4.2

⁷ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); Figure 29

⁸ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); Figure 31

⁹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.5.3

¹⁰ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); Figure 34

2.2.3 Mental Health

2.2.4 The Statement of Need demonstrated an overwhelming demand around Mental Health issues for those facing or becoming homeless¹¹. A survey of the support currently provided through HSG funding alongside the quantity and level of need highlights both accommodation and support gaps particularly for those with mental health needs. This supports the anecdotal evidence raised by stakeholders around the barriers to supporting this cohort¹². The data suggests that Mental Health is very likely to be a significant factor in those finding themselves with housing and homelessness issues¹³.

2.2.5 To effectively meet this need Monmouthshire Housing Support Team will need to look at expanding mental health support services accommodation services. Alongside procuring and commissioning services, this will also include forging relationships with local Mental Health teams so people can access the treatment required- something that has anecdotally been raised as a hurdle to providing appropriate support and homelessness prevention.

2.2.6 Young people

2.2.7 For an overall aging population Monmouthshire has an overrepresentation of young people (16-24) within its housing support population, particularly in TA¹⁴. Being a young person of itself is not necessarily a support need, but when mixed with other needs can add a level of complexity and vulnerability, which corresponds to the approach in support, that is required. Monmouthshire currently commissions two services for young people, one being a provision of supported accommodation and the other being Emphasis.¹⁵

2.2.8 Looking at the level of need amongst young people in TA there is a higher proportion of those with High and Intensive needs¹⁶. The current services provided do not have sufficient capacity and are therefore not currently equipped to support those with anything above medium level of needs. The data from the needs assessment shows that Monmouthshire needs to expand the number of units for young people and the capacity of services to support service users with high and complex needs.

¹¹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.2.3, 10.3.3.1, 10.4.1.2

¹² (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.4.1.2

¹³ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.3.1, 10.4.1.2.

¹⁴ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.5.7

¹⁵ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.2.4

¹⁶ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.5.8

2.2.9 Substance Misuse

2.2.10 In the needs assessment for those in TA, Substance Misuse issues as a lead need are overrepresented when compared to the wider support data¹⁷. Monmouthshire Council's HSG is currently recruiting for a GDAS Outreach Worker for TA. The data suggests that those with these issues as a lead need are more likely to find themselves homeless and in need of emergency and temporary accommodation¹⁸.

2.2.11 Similar to young people captured in the TA needs assessment, there is a higher proportion of those with High and Intensive needs amongst those with a lead need of Substance Misuse¹⁹. At present there is no clear housing route for these clients and no supported accommodation equipped to provide appropriate support.

2.2.12 Suitable Accommodation

2.2.13 Monmouthshire has a deficit of housing in relation to those approaching as homeless, which is only widening²⁰. There is a shortage of housing of all types but as explored in the data, over half of all applications are made by single people²¹. This has created unprecedented pressure on one bed properties throughout the county. Monmouthshire Council has and will continue to seek creative solutions to expand stock.

2.2.14 The TA Needs Assessment has also demonstrated a significant minority of homeless applicants with high to intensive support needs where traditional housing routes would not be conducive to a successful tenancy²². Monmouthshire has a Housing First Scheme, but this provision is currently small, and will not be suitable for those with the highest of needs. As was mentioned frequently during stakeholder events, Monmouthshire does not have a high needs/ 24 hour staffed accommodation and it was felt that this is a noticeable gap in services for those who are homeless with high needs in Monmouthshire²³.

2.2.15 Prevention

2.2.16 Available data has shown Monmouthshire Housing Options Team (HOTS) to have a 60% success rate in preventing homelessness suggesting there is room for further improvement²⁴. Monmouthshire has recently invested in additional resources to work directly with those who are at risk of homelessness and in doing so gain further knowledge and experience in prevalent triggers. Monmouthshire County Council will also pursue ways to identify at risk households further upstream before issues become entrenched and unsurmountable.

¹⁷ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.4.2.6

¹⁸ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.4.2.6

2.2.17 It has been stated by stakeholders that information around support and services offered to those at risk of homelessness is not always easy to find or accessible. Monmouthshire County Council is looking to review the way it disseminates this information to reach a larger audience in an easy to follow format.

2.2.18 The need and demand for a range and type of temporary, supported and permanent homeless accommodation has risen significantly, particularly in relation to young people, single people and those experiencing mental health and substance misuse issues, a high proportion of which require medium to high housing support provision beyond what is currently available through HSG. The increase in demand for homeless temporary, supported and permanent accommodation has first highlighted the importance of homeless prevention and identifying scope to further strengthen existing arrangements. In addition, there is a need to identify additional permanent housing solutions both in the social and private rented sector. Lastly there is a need for additional self-contained temporary accommodation, as per Welsh Governments Annex D standard) to facilitate a reduced and eliminated use of B & B and a phasing out of shared temporary housing. These key findings are addressed in the priorities identified for MCC below.

3 Strategic priorities:

3.1.1 Monmouthshire County Council is committed to empowering its residents to lead prosperous, sustainable lives. This starts with stable, appropriate accommodation and effective, timely support for those who need it.

3.1.2 The strategy sets out the four key priorities Monmouthshire County Council has identified, to tackle homelessness and its underlying causes over the next four years and beyond. The objective is to prevent homelessness occurring in the first instance but if it does occur to ensure it is brief and non-repeating.

¹⁹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.5.12

²⁰ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 7.5.3.1, 7.5.7.2, Figure 11

²¹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.3.2

²² (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.4.2

²³ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.4.1.2

²⁴ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.12.1

3.2 Priority One: To identify those at risk of homelessness earlier and provide timely interventions to prevent homelessness occurring.

3.2.1 Reason for this priority:

- The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduced new statutory duties to prevent or relieve homelessness;
- Amongst others it is a key action of the Council's 'Looking Ahead, Delivering Now' strategy to 2022.
- There is a desire to move to a proactive approach that is able to identify and be responsive to changing housing need rather than to deal with housing need on a reactive basis;
- Monmouthshire's Housing Options Team currently has a prevention success rate of 60% for those who present as threatened with homelessness²⁵;
- There is a disproportionate prevalence of young people experiencing poor mental health and those with substance misuse issues within temporary accommodation²⁶.

3.2.2 What we will do:

- Review of homelessness services information to ensure there is clear and easily accessible information to help prevent homelessness at the earliest possible stage;
- Target households at risk of becoming homeless through partnership working with other support agencies;
- Incorporate Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) approach to our service;
- Work alongside colleagues to promote services available to those who are at risk of homelessness through the Council's emerging Tackling Poverty and Inequality Campaign;
- Make better use of information technology to capture and analyse data to identify opportunities and improve planning;
- Investigate how to increase the number of households accessing the service at an earlier stage thereby reducing the number of households presenting in a crisis;
- Continue to invest to deliver upstream homelessness prevention in places of education including wider family networks;
- Seek to identify funds and invest in resources to directly engage with households considered high risk groups such as:
 - Mental Health.
 - Young Persons.
 - Substance misuse.

3.3 Priority Two: To provide timely and effective support for vulnerable residents particularly for those with high and complex needs.

3.3.1 Reason for this priority:

- ‘.....providing support for those who find themselves without a roof over their head’ is a key action of the Council’s ‘Looking Ahead, Delivering Now’ Strategy to 2022;.
- The adoption of a psychologically-informed and trauma-informed approach to commissioning and service delivery as required by Phase 2 Guidance requires support to be flexible and tailored to meet individual needs;
- The survey of support needs conducted by HSG providers highlighted two main priorities for Monmouthshire County Council: mental health and substance misuse²⁷;
- 96% of those in TA were recorded as having at least one support need. 23% of these were described as having High and Intensive needs²⁸;
- Monmouthshire does not have a high and complex needs accommodation provision. Currently there is no clear housing pathway to cater to this cohort. A shortfall of HSG funding means that MCC are unable to rectify this²⁹;
- Stakeholders have described the difficulties in getting clients with high level mental health support needs the appropriate support, and the deterioration of a client’s situation during this time³⁰;
- 31% of those receiving support are identified as having support needs around mental health, and current services for mental health support are oversubscribed³¹;
- Those with identified support needs around Substance Misuse are disproportionately represented in TA, suggesting that this need is a prominent contributing factor to homelessness³². At present HSG commissions an outreach worker from the Gwent Drug and Alcohol Service (GDAS) to provide support, but there is not currently any other specialist service or accommodation provision for this group³³;

²⁵ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.12.1

²⁶ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.5

²⁷ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.5.1.3, 10.5.1.4

²⁸ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.3.1

²⁹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.5.1.3; 10.5.1.4

³⁰ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.1.4.2

³¹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022), Table 46, 10.2.3

³² (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.4.2.6

³³ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.5.13

- There is current demand to expand the existing Housing First scheme. At present there is only one Housing First worker and there are individuals waiting for Housing First support and accommodation³⁴;
- MCC has seen an increase in the proportion of Young People making homelessness applications, a high proportion of which have needs higher than currently funded services can meet;
- The demand for VAWDASV services has seen a steep increase which appears to be a continuing trend³⁵. Services need to be monitored to ensure they continue to embed best practice, implement the National Training Framework and collaborate with key partners and stakeholders to tackle all forms of VAWDASV for citizens across Gwent and Monmouthshire.

3.3.2 What we will do:

- Seek to engage with Welsh Government and other partners to identify additional resources to increase the capacity of the housing support programme and support availability;
- Seek to expand the existing Housing First service to meet unmet demand;
- Seek to expand the Young Persons floating support service and remodel existing shared housing to increase the availability of dedicated young person's accommodation;
- Review and evaluate the newly re-modelled Young Persons accommodation in relation to outcomes achieved for those with higher needs and consider whether there is a need for Young Persons Housing First.
- Increase the supply of accommodation and support for people with complex needs around substance misuse and mental health;
- Review, evaluate and recommission Housing Support Grant services by April 2023.

3.4 Priority Three: To increase access to a range of affordable and suitable housing solutions for homeless households, both temporary and permanent.

3.4.1 Reason for this priority:

- Many households are finding renting and home ownership unaffordable³⁶;
- There is insufficient housing in both the social and private rented sectors to meet demand and therefore limited options to move households out of temporary and emergency accommodation³⁷;

³⁴ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.4.2

³⁵ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.2.2

³⁶ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 7.5.3.1

³⁷ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 7.5.20, 7.5.12.2

- The Council relies on the use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation to supplement temporary accommodation provision. Monmouthshire has seen an increase in its use of emergency accommodation in the last 18 months and currently has the highest number of homeless households in B&B³⁸. The use of B & B accommodation is not conducive to the wellbeing of households and is unsustainable from a cost analysis;
- There is a need to ensure the Council fully utilises its Social Housing Grant allocation and it is fully aligned with homeless accommodation requirements;
- There is a need to provide a range of temporary and supported accommodation particularly medium to high need emergency accommodation³⁹;
- S66 Prevention duty ended by placing 37% of applicants in social and 63% in privately rented housing⁴⁰;
- S73 Relief duty ended by placing 30% of applications into social and 28% in privately rented housing⁴¹.

³⁸ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022) 9.1.2

³⁹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 10.3.4.2

⁴⁰ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.6.5.3

⁴¹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 8.6.6.1

3.4.2 What we will do:

- Work with Homesearch partners to operate flexible Housing Register quotas to maximise the number of lettings of social housing vacancies to homeless households;
- Work with Homesearch partners to implement actions to make the 'best use' and maximise occupancy of the stock to facilitate more people to move-on from temporary accommodation;
- Review the use of all forms of temporary accommodation and reduce our reliance on it over the length of the strategy;
- Continue to co-ordinate Monmouthshire's newly established Strategic Housing Partnership with housing association partners to help identify opportunities to develop new affordable housing;
- Continue to factor homeless need into the Council's development and Social Housing Grant Programme;
- Appraise the opportunities for the Council to utilise Council owned assets for homeless purposes;
- Appraise the option of the Council directly developing new homes that can be used as homeless accommodation;
- Appraise the option of directly purchasing properties from the open market for use as homeless accommodation;
- Implement the Empty Property Action Plan to target empty homes and town centre opportunities;
- To seek to establish links with local voluntary organisations and local churches/faith groups to develop new services;
- Review and evaluate Monmouthshire Lettings to identify opportunities to improve the service and encourage further private landlords to make available their properties to the Council;
- Develop a 'rapid rehousing' approach to help people into and sustain permanent housing;
- Further develop the 'Housing First' approach to provide long term housing solutions for people who have been unable to sustain accommodation in the past because of their complex and/or multiple needs.

3.5 Priority Four: To move to a Rapid Re-Housing Approach

3.5.1 Key objectives to meet this priority will include:

- As main priority seeking to continue to identify opportunities to strengthen homeless prevention as the most efficient way of tackling homelessness. Where homelessness can't be prevented:
 - Systematic planning to make settled accommodation available;
 - Move into settled accommodation at the same time as, rather than after, addressing support needs;
 - An improvement in the quality and a reduction in the need for temporary accommodation;
 - Offering a package of assistance and multi-agency support, specially tailored to individual needs where this is required;
 - Rapid Rehousing should be flexible and recognise that people who present as homeless may have different levels of need.

3.5.2 Reason for this priority:

- There is a need to implement Welsh Government policy direction and establish and implement a Rapid Re-Housing Transition Plan

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4.1 Priority Five: To maximise and increase the availability and effectiveness of financial, staffing/workforce and collaborative resources available for tackling homelessness.

4.1.1 Reasons for this priority:

- At present, funding hasn't been identified for a number of actions within the Strategy. Due to these budget shortfalls, there is a need to identify additional short and long-term funding and resources to meet the homeless need identified in the statement of need and to fully fund the priorities and actions within the Strategy. Without this some proposals are not deliverable;
- There is a need to ensure all homeless services are financially sustainable and effectively deliver cost benefits;
- Working with others is a collaborative way to find shared sustainable solutions is a key principle of the Council's 'Looking Ahead, Delivering Now' Strategy to summer 2022;

- Feedback from the stakeholder events highlighted the potential risk of funding processes for services producing short-term ‘fixes’ rather than long-term sustainable solutions⁴²;
- Tackling homelessness and achieving successful outcomes successfully requires the input of other specialist organisations, skills and knowledge that doesn’t necessarily sit within the Council;
- Many homeless and housing services are already delivered through a partnership approach, such as Monmouthshire Homesearch, the Housing Support Grant Programme and the Housing Intervention Panel. These are platforms that can be further build upon;
- There is a need to ensure there is adequate staff capacity and capability to deliver homeless services and this strategy. Equally, in recognition that delivering homeless services can be highly reactive and demanding for homeless staff, staff need to be supported accordingly.
-

4.1.2 What we will do:

- Identify funding for those aims and objectives where funding currently hasn’t been allocated;
- Transition from short-term arrangements established quickly due to the Covid Pandemic and in response to Welsh Government guidance to more sustainable long-term solutions;
- We will work collaboratively both internally and externally with organisations that offer a broad range of skill sets and knowledge, expertise and experience to address homelessness successfully;
- We will develop further the Housing Support & Homelessness forum;
- We will evaluate the effectiveness and cost efficiency of using data analytics for the prevention of homelessness;
- To continue to monitor existing staff structures of teams delivering homeless services to ensure there is sufficient capacity
- Undertake a training needs audit and establish a programme of training to support staff to deliver and transform services.
- Adopt and maintain a Psychologically Informed Environment/ Trauma informed approach;
- Identify opportunities for increasing collaborative arrangements with Aneurin Bevan Health Board;

⁴² (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.1.6.2

- Engage with Welsh Government and the Welsh Local Government Association in respect of future funding arrangements to align with homeless need in Monmouthshire;
- Identify opportunities for homeless services and solutions to support wider strategic priorities. For example, Social Care needs, tackling empty properties, Town Centre regeneration and decarbonisation.

5 Stakeholder Engagement

5.1.1 Detailed consultation took place with service users and partner organisations to ensure that the Statement of Need and the development of this strategy is both relevant and current to enable the Council address homelessness within the county⁴³.

5.1.2 One method of consulting with stakeholders would have been in pre COVID times through a consultation event at a venue large enough for representatives to meet in person. However, because of COVID the Council decided that the safest method for stakeholders to participate in the consultation would be through an on-line questionnaire.

5.1.3 The following organisations received the questionnaire for completion:

- Health services
- Social services
- Probation & Community Safety services
- Domestic abuse services
- Substance misuse services
- Registered Social Housing Providers
- Housing advice services
- Service users

5.1.4 In total 45 individuals received the questionnaire.

5.1.5 In addition to the stakeholder questionnaire a number of focus groups sessions took place using video conferencing and covering the following five service areas:

⁴³ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); Chapter 11

- Community Safety & Domestic Violence Services
- Health Services
- Homelessness Prevention Advices Services
- Housing Support Provider Services
- Young Persons Services

5.2 Stakeholder feedback

5.2.1 Feedback received via the above methods were broadly categorised into 6 themes: Communication, Staffing, Accommodation and Support, Transport, Legislation, Policy and Processes and Community.

5.2.2 **Partnership Working:** General consensus that partnership working had improved, largely due to the change in working brought about by the pandemic. There has been more of an appetite for all agencies to work together flexibly and creatively to meet the challenges of the last 18 months. The Housing Intervention Panel (HIP) was mentioned several times as an example of good practice in this area which allows professionals to come together to seek creative solutions, and also serves as a preventative resource. The HOTS team has recently been expanded and they have become more creative in how they approach homelessness and reach solutions⁴⁴.

5.2.3 However, unlike strategic partners, service users felt that there could be an improvement in communication between MCC and partner agencies⁴⁵.

5.2.4 **Communication:** The use of various digital platforms for communicating with service users is a positive advancement, especially for Monmouthshire being a semi-rural area⁴⁶. The increased use of MS Teams has in some ways made collaboration easier between partner agencies. However, this was also raised as a concern by many who also emphasised that it's limitations should also be recognised. As a rural county Monmouthshire does not have consistency in infrastructure with regards to internet and mobile signal and so some people risk becoming isolated from services. Similarly, some residents would have a preference in face to face working to build trust and a relationship with services. All services would like to see a blended approach to communicating with residents to meet individual preferences and needs moving forward⁴⁷.

⁴⁴ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.1.2.1, 11.1.4.1

⁴⁵ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.2.2.3

⁴⁶ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.1.2.1

⁴⁷ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.1.2.2

- 5.2.5 **Accommodation and Support:** The theme that overwhelmingly dominated discussions around weaknesses is resources. It was widely acknowledged that Monmouthshire has a lack of accommodation of all types but in particular participants noted a lack of housing options for those with medium to high needs, as there aren't any provisions suitable to ex-offenders, those with entrenched drug and alcohol misuse issues, and those with medium to high mental health needs. The idea of specialist 24 hour supported hostel provision was raised in a number of the focus groups as support services have identified a larger number of complex cases coming through the system⁴⁸.
- 5.2.6 The Housing Support Grant team conduct exit interviews on a sample size of service users whose support is ending. 83.3% of responders asserted that their experience was positive and had brought changes to their life and 72.9% of responders felt that the support received had increased their ability to live independently⁴⁹.
- 5.2.7 **Policy and Processes:** Services noted that clients are being required to repeat their circumstances and antecedent history which in turn is contributing to a culture of clients becoming retraumatised by having to repeat their issues and challenges every time they move between services. The lack of robustness of the referrals can also do service users a disservice as they may not be allocated to the correct service for their needs and having to go through the system again. Additionally, this contributes to the efficiency of services provided.
- 5.2.8 Service Users did not rate the homelessness process particularly highly, describing what they felt was a convoluted process with a lack of clarity on how their application was being processed. Service users described the process as having a negative impact on mental health⁵⁰. Respondents to a questionnaire however were largely positive when considering the service they received from Housing Options, with 95% of clients being satisfied or very satisfied with the service from Housing Options; and 91% very satisfied or satisfied with allocated temporary accommodation⁵¹.

⁴⁸ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.1.4.2

⁴⁹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.3.2

⁵⁰ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.2.2.4

⁵¹ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.4.1

5.2.9 **Staffing:** Staffing remains an issue across the sector in line with national trends. Services are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit staff and retention rates are currently poor. The stresses of working during the pandemic was identified as taking its toll on the wellbeing of staff, but also the emerging competition from other sectors luring staff with increases in pay and additional bonuses⁵².

5.2.10 **Funding Policy:** Participants discussed the funding processes for services and identified that this tends to be on a short-term basis which makes it difficult for them to develop long term solutions to issues. Services do not feel that they can work with longevity when funding can be removed or changed regularly⁵³.

6 Impact assessments: [to be completed]

7 Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Strategy

Working with Partners

- 7.1.1 The Council recognises that although it has the statutory duty to prevent and alleviate homelessness within the County, it will require many organisations working together in partnership that will deliver the priorities of the Strategy.
- 7.1.2 We will continue to work with our partners working across the statutory and non-statutory sectors to efficiently utilise resources and deliver effective outcomes.

⁵² (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.1.3.2

⁵³ (Monmouthshire County Council, 2022); 11.1.6.2

7.2 Funding Sources

To deliver this Strategy, the Council will seek to access and maximise the availability of the following funding streams

7.2.1 Revenue

- Welsh Government Covid Hardship up until 31st March 2022 to support the current reliance on B & B provision and the need to provide a concierge service
- Housing Support Grant - funding prevention and housing support services and supported accommodation
- Housing Options Team Revenue funding including:
 - Homeless Prevention Fund
 - Private Leasing budget
- WG Tenancy Hardship Grant
- WG National Leasing Scheme funding
- WG Empty Property Enforcement Loan funding
- Discretionary Housing Payments to support homeless prevention
- Children's Services revenue to contribute to the provision of low to high needs young persons accommodation
- Rental income from temporary accommodation
- S106 Contributions to support private sector owners

7.2.2 Capital

- Social Housing Grant
- ENABLE disabled adaptation funding
- Potential local authority prudential borrowing
- Potential use of additional local authority capital assets

7.2.3 At the time of adoption, the Council had not identified all of the resources necessary to deliver the provision necessary to meet the identified and projected homeless demand. For example, the revenue to fund Multiple Needs Housing Supported Accommodation. It will, therefore, be a key priority of the Council to continue to identify resources to fund this strategy fully.

7.2.4 The Housing Support Grant provides a wide range of support services. The Statement of Need document provides a detailed analysis of current provision of services in Monmouthshire.

7.2.5 The Council will continue to work with its partners to bid for external funding wherever opportunities arise.

7.3 Monitoring, reviewing and evaluation arrangements

7.3.1 The Strategy and the accompanying Action Plan is the result of a number of consultation exercises with our stakeholder partners, which influenced the Strategy's vision and priorities for tackling homelessness within Monmouthshire.

7.3.2 The Council will utilise a number of channels to monitor Strategy. The main channel will be the Monmouthshire's CCG & HSG Executive Group that will monitor the Strategy and the Action Plan on a quarterly basis to determine progress in achieving actions, and meeting our targets and outcomes⁵⁸. In addition a comprehensive review will take place at the mid-point of its life.

7.3.3 The Action Plan is live document, which means the Executive Group will be able to address any new developments that arise by adding additional actions as and when required.

7.3.4 An additional level of monitoring will be through Monmouthshire's scrutiny structure and the newly established Strategic Housing Forum.

8 Bibliography

Monmouthshire County Council. (2022). *Statement of Need*.

⁵⁸ See Appendix 1: TERMS OF REFERENCE; Children and Communities-Housing Support Executive Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE
Children and Communities-Housing Support
Executive Group

PURPOSE

The Children and Communities-Housing Support Executive Board (CCHSEG) formally undertakes the Public Service Board's (PSB) statutory responsibility in-line with the Social Services and Well Being Wales Act 2014 and Future Generations Act 2015, which includes strategies for Providing Children & Young People with the best Possible Start in Life.

In response to the findings of the previous reviews, wellbeing assessment and countywide objectives, Monmouthshire PSB established a Children & Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) consisting of senior level officers from across multi-agencies organisations. One of the CCHSEG key functions is to support the CYPSP to align all funding sources (statutory, core and grant) to meet the needs of families and children across the county, ensuring that gaps in provision and service are addressed. The Children & Communities Grant and Housing Support Grant will become integral to the work of this partnership, and the broader strategic objectives, in addressing the needs and challenges across the county. The grant will not be used to substitute core or statutory service delivery but rather complement, maximise and enhance public and third sector support for families and children.

Monmouthshire PSB has delegated this responsibility to the 'Children and Communities-Housing Support Executive Group' (CCHSEG).

The CCHSEG fulfils its broad function in supporting the Families, Children and Young People of Monmouthshire by:

- Overseeing specific delivery of Children and Communities grant to address the support needs of the most vulnerable children and adults in our communities through a range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. . It will seek to mitigate or remove disadvantage to vulnerable people to enable them to have the same life chances as others, and therefore contribute to a more equal Wales.
- Overseeing specific delivery of Housing Support grant to address the housing and housing related support needs of the most vulnerable individuals in society through the range of early intervention, prevention and support mechanisms. It will seek to mitigate or remove disadvantage to vulnerable people to enable them to have the same life chances as others, and therefore contribute to a equal Wales. As such, Housing Support Grant will be about accessing and maintaining a home.
- Overseeing financial management of grants to ensure compliance with Welsh Governments Terms and Conditions

- Being a hub of best practice and innovative ideas around Community Engagement to inform long-term vision and delivery of plans in line with overall Wellbeing of Families, Children and Young People and Welsh Governments aspirational 'More equal Wales'.
- Ensuring consistency and the application of statutory responsibilities and agreed standards in partnership working with statutory, private and third sector methodologies
- Ensuring that local community initiatives and interventions are able to demonstrate impact and outcomes
- Working in partnership to reduce families' exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as homes experiencing domestic violence or substance or alcohol misuse.
- Overseeing the action plans for the Children and Communities and Housing Support Grants
- Providing leadership and support to all sub-groups that sit under the CCHSEG
- Connection with Welsh Government
- Connection with Monmouthshire C.C. Children & Young Persons (CYP) Strategic Partnership

BACKGROUND

Welsh Government believes the Public Service Board is the heart of local multi-agency working. Given the collaborative leadership role of PSBs, Welsh Government considers them to be the appropriate forum for formulating and reviewing Wellbeing and Future Generations Act priorities.

Monmouthshire PSB has adopted, as one of key objectives to; ***Provide Children & Young People with the best Possible Start in Life.*** This objective provides a broad focus throughout the start of people's lives from conception through to early adulthood.

All grants are delivered across a wide range of partnership agendas under the PSB. The multi-agency partnerships are the main delivery mechanism for the priorities across the county and are overseen by the PSB and PSB Programme Board, ensuring all available resources are targeted effectively and in-line with needs across the county.

The Children & Young Peoples Strategic Partnership (included in landscape) is senior level multi-agency group, with Chief Officer Representation from across Monmouthshire County Council who are currently the responsible officers for both the Children & Communities-Housing Support Grant streams within their respective directorates. This is a key partnership under the PSB that oversees how the wide range of services, (statutory & non-statutory) are shaped. They remain responsive to the challenges across the county; whilst also remaining responsive to new emerging issues as they arise and link to other partnership groups who may be better placed to support, for example, Safer Monmouthshire Group who have the Community Safety function for the county.

Under the direction of the Monmouthshire PSB, the CCHSEG brings together managers and key representatives of the organisations responsible for shaping and delivering CCHSEG actions and initiatives, which contribute, to Wellbeing of Families, Children and Young people in line with the Monmouthshire PSB Priorities.

MEMBERSHIP

DESIGNATION	ORGANISATION
Families First Programme Manager	MCC – Communities & Partnership
Financial Accountant	MCC – Communities & Partnership
Housing and Communities Manager	MCC – Housing and Communities
Supporting People Manager	MCC – Housing and Communities
Flying Start Manager	MCC – Children’s Social Services
Families First/Flying Start Strategic Lead	ABUHB
Childcare and Play Manager	MCC – Children’s Social Services
Communities For Work Plus Manager	MCC – Housing and Communities
Communities and Partnerships Manager	MCC – Communities & Partnership
Children’s Services - Service Manager	MCC – Children’s Social Services

CHAIR: The Chair will be appointed by ‘Children and Communities-Housing Support Executive Group’ membership. A Vice Chair will be appointed annually.

MEETING FREQUENCY

The ‘Children and Communities-Housing Support Executive Group’ meets quarterly. Task & Finish groups will be established to undertake an identified piece of work on behalf of the group.

REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

The ‘Children and Communities-Housing Support Executive Group’ reports directly to the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership quarterly and on an exception basis.

STRATEGIC LINKS

Monmouthshire Public Service Board: <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/psb>

Future and Generations Act 2015:

Social Services and Well Being Wales Act 2014:

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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