

Appendix 1

Monmouthshire County Council Homeless Transition Plan – October 2020

1. Have a move-on protocol in place with rapid re-housing at its heart

Current Situation

It is a requirement of Welsh Government, as per the Phase 2 Planning Guidance for Homelessness and Housing Related Support, for the Council to have a 'move-on protocol with rapid re-housing at its heart' for re-housing those in emergency/temporary homeless accommodation into suitable permanent accommodation.

At present the Council does not have a move-on protocol per se, although the Homesearch Housing Register policy facilitates the re-housing of homeless households through the use of quotas.

It is proposed to request the Homesearch partners to sign up to the draft protocol below, which is currently being consulted upon:

The Council is required to minimise the number of placement moves for any individual or family that experiences homeless. Settled permanent accommodation following a short period of time in emergency accommodation is the desire for all partners when working together to eradicate homelessness and promote sustainable tenancies.

MCC will work closely with the Monmouthshire Housing Partnership to facilitate adequate availability of social housing stock through local housing associations to help meet local homeless need through the flexible quota arrangement within the existing Monmouthshire Homesearch Housing Allocation Policy. The Council is committed to RSL's having the guarantee of immediate Intensive Resettlement Housing Support for those needing to be accommodated via the homeless route. In the short-term this will be provided through an interim reconfigured Housing Support Grant funded service provided by Pobl.

Should this support not be available this may prevent the Council from moving some applicants on to permanent accommodation.

On a homeless determination and a 2B Banding status assessment under the Homesearch Allocation Policy, Housing Options Officers will work closely with Homesearch Officers to ensure registration of housing applications and minimise delays in processing applications. The allocated Support Worker will be involved by providing individual support plans to illustrate the intensity of support to be delivered, as well as the individual's commitment to working towards a successful tenancy.

Any barriers to an offer of accommodation, such as previous rent arrears, will be negotiated by this triage, and if necessary, the Council will utilise the Homeless Prevention Fund to reduce/refund arrears. Any support issues such as previous behaviour or substance misuse issues which could inhibit an offer being successful, will be addressed via the support plan and evidenced by the involvement of the Substance Misuse Assertive Outreach Worker (also part of MCC bid), and Mental Health services.

To further support individual clients, the Council or support providers will refer clients into the multi-agency Housing Intervention Panel to consider and identify solutions. The Council, housing associations and support providers are committed to both referring clients and attending meetings.

As the Temporary Accommodation and Resettlement Support Service are delivered through the same Providers, there will be a seamless move with support during the resettlement process. High-intensity flexible, client-led support will be provided for between 12 to 16 weeks, with ongoing support being provided via the RSL or generic floating support service after this period.

Of relevance to the above, the Council does not have any formal Housing Support Grant Contracts in place to provide Re-settlement Support to facilitate move on to permanent accommodation.

There is, however, currently an informal interim arrangement in place (which also provides Temporary Accommodation Support) through an existing Provider that has effectively temporarily re-modelled an existing generic floating support contract. This interim arrangement is relying on the goodwill of the Provider. There is a need to formalise the arrangement to provide certainty going forwards. There, however, is an additional annual cost of £66,000 to facilitate this. There is currently no funding capacity within the existing Housing Support Grant Programme, which is not scheduled to be re-commissioned until April 2023. An application to the Welsh Government Phase 2 grant programme was unsuccessful.

Consideration is currently being given to de-commissioning existing projects in order to potentially formalise this goodwill arrangement from April 2021 through four existing projects being amalgamated to provide to provide a Temporary Accommodation and Re-Settlement Service and a Tenancy Support Team.

Recommendation

- To establish and agree a Move-On Protocol between the Council and Homeseach partners.
- To underpin the proposed Move-On Protocol, continue to give consideration to de-commissioning and amalgamating four existing HSG projects to provide Temporary Accommodation and Re-Settlement Service and a Tenancy Support Team.
- To provisionally aim to fund Intensive Re-Settlement and Temporary Accommodation Support from the Housing Support Grant Programme from April 2022, subject to a review assessment.

2. Improve the quality and reduce the dependency on emergency/ temporary accommodation solutions

Current Situation

As at 30th October 2020 there were 56 people (mostly singles) accommodated in B & B, plus two in the MCC Nightshelter. In addition the Council's other homeless accommodation (eg shared, private leasing and managed accommodation) is occupied at capacity. The historical reliance on Generic Floating Housing Support has highlighted the deficiencies both, in the diversity and range of the Councils temporary accommodation together with the type of housing support provision available.

There is a need, therefore, for the Council to increase the diversity and range of temporary accommodation. Some accommodation should have dedicated and specialist support.

The dispersed nature of Monmouthshire also impacts on the accessibility to this accommodation. Often there is a need to displace applicants from their home communities in order to access temporary accommodation.

Furthermore, Welsh Government policy (Annex D) has now determined minimum accommodations standards for Phase 2 onwards. In summary these are:

- Minimum standards – eg self-contained and suitable for independent living; appropriate location
- Homes should be of high quality, innovative and sustainable
- Homes should be flexible and responsive to the changing needs of the occupants
- Homes should be safe and secure.

Welsh Government are also advising that they no longer expect local authorities to use night-shelter type accommodation. This has implications on the Council currently using on office space for temporary accommodation, although every effort is being made to cease this arrangement.

There is a need to assess the Council's accommodation against these standards.

The following are types of accommodation are needed in Monmouthshire:

- **Emergency Family Accommodation**

- **Current Situation**

- At present the Council's only emergency family accommodation is a 5 bedroomed shared emergency accommodation situated in Monmouth. (This is temporarily being used as multiple needs accommodation).

In addition, a 6 person property was purchased in Caldicot in 2019 by Monmouthshire Housing on behalf of the Council for use as shared emergency family accommodation. The property hasn't come into use as yet due to opposition from the immediate local community. For Planning purposes there is a need for the Planning Committee to agree to a management plan after consultation with the immediate local community. This should be completed by December 2020.

Further to the above, further opportunities to provide emergency family accommodation through the Social Housing Grant Programme have arisen in Caldicot and potentially Monmouth, providing 10 units of self-contained accommodation. In addition a potential scheme was identified in Abergavenny which would have been cross funded by Welsh Government homeless capital grant. Unfortunately, the land owner decided not to sell.

- **Recommendations**

- To cease using the emergency shared accommodation in Monmouth for families and utilise for an alternative homeless purpose eg Multiple Needs accommodation.
 - In respect of the proposed emergency shared family accommodation in Caldicot, consult on the draft management agreement and submit to Planning Committee for final planning approval and on acquiring final planning approval, sign up to the lease agreement with Monmouthshire Housing. This proposal is cost neutral.
 - Through the Social Housing Grant programme, continue to explore the possibility of providing emergency self-contained family accommodation in Caldicot (4 units) and Monmouth (6 units) under lease arrangements with the developing housing associations.
- **Self-Contained Temporary Family Accommodation**

- **Current Situation**

- The Council currently has a portfolio of family accommodation which is made up of:

- Private leased units x 49 (which includes a number of RSL properties)
- However, 1 is rolling on during COVID and is likely to end, 2 terminate on 31st December 2020, 2 terminating on 30th September 2020 and 1 is on a monthly rolling lease with an RSL.
- Managed units (on behalf of private landlords) x 33
- MCC low cost home ownership unit x 1

Subject to landlord approval and financial sustainability, the aim is to continue with the existing portfolio and proactively seek to identify additional properties using the Monmouthshire Lettings Service branding.

Running alongside recruiting private landlords there is also a proposal to target private sector tenants who may be starting to experience problems with sustaining their

accommodation but as yet may not have reached out to the Council for assistance. Perhaps due to rent arrears, unemployment, debt etc

Recommendation

- Under the Monmouthshire Lettings branding, to continue to engage with private landlords and promote landlord incentives, to seek to identify private sector accommodation. This will be funded through existing resources
- Seek to engage with private sector tenants and/or landlords who may be experiencing as an approach to providing an early intervention and minimise the possibility of tenants presenting as homeless.

- **Housing First**

Current Situation

At present a Housing First scheme available in Monmouthshire. There is a current need of 6 people in Monmouthshire who have extremely high support needs and there is no suitable support or accommodation available to them.

A Housing First scheme currently operates in Newport and there is the opportunity to extend into Monmouthshire through the existing provider. The provider will provide the support and identify accommodation which could be from any source, but will include housing association stock. There is a cost of £32,000 to provide this until April 2021 and Welsh Government homeless grant has been secured to fund this service. At present, however, there is no funding currently available for 2021/22. Again there is no current funding capacity through the Housing Support Grant Programme.

Recommendation

- For the Council to support the Housing First proposal by potentially assisting with acquiring/providing accommodation alongside Pobl, Monmouthshire Housing and Melin Homes.
- To identify options for securing £36,000 to facilitate the continuation of the Housing First project after 31st March 2021, subject to need.
- Subject to on-going need, provide evidence on the need for the Housing First project to continue to inform re-commissioning of the Housing Support Grant Programme from April 2023.

- **Emergency & 24 Hour Multiple Needs Accommodation**

Current Situation

There is no emergency specialist multiple needs accommodation in Monmouthshire beyond the current interim provision of 4 units of shared accommodation in Monmouth under the supervision of security. Temporary Assertive Outreach support x 0.5 has been established to support 4 residents in this accommodation. 11 applicants with high needs are currently being supported through the Assertive Outreach.

Historically the Council's shared housing supplemented by generic floating support. Placement breakdown was common-place. The Council currently has approximately 26 people who have multiple needs in B & B and 33 people in shared accommodation.

The Council submitted a provisional scheme for Welsh Government homeless grant to convert the existing shared accommodation in Monmouth to self-contained accommodation and acquire an additional property that is currently on the market. The bid totalling £215,000 was refused.

Recommendation

- To work towards establishing a scheme to cover the North and a scheme to cover the south.

- For the north, continue to explore the feasibility and costs of potentially converting/reconfiguring the existing family hostel to achieve 3-5 units of self-contained accommodation and purchasing an additional property that has recently come on to the market.
- To explore and identify opportunities to establish a scheme to cover the south of the County.

- **Young Persons Accommodation**

Current Situation

There are currently 21 units of supported accommodation across two separate schemes in Abergavenny and Chepstow. Being dedicated accommodation for young people this is extremely important accommodation. The schemes, however, are for young people with low needs and aren't suitable for all young people, particularly those who are more vulnerable and with higher needs. It is not un-common for either the Housing Options Team or the Through Care Team to be unable to place in this accommodation. As a result, young people on occasions may need to be placed in B & B or the Council's shared housing with floating support, although there is a interim Temporary Accommodation Support in place.. Such accommodation and support (generic floating support) doesn't adequately meet the needs of such young people

There is no step-down accommodation in Monmouthshire for those young people who make good progress towards independent living, but aren't quite fully ready.

An initial opportunity arose to establish five units of emergency self-contained accommodation for Young People with provision for specialist on-site support. The capital costs were to be funded through the Social Housing Programme and Welsh Government homeless capital grant. Unfortunately, this project didn't progress as planned due to the housing association being unable to purchase the site in question.

As an alternative option the Council is now working with a local housing association on developing a medium to high needs young persons scheme with 24 hour on site support and with move on accommodation. The scheme is owned by the housing association and will involve re-modelling existing provision. The project will be a partnership between Housing & Communities; Children's Services, Housing Support Grant Commissioning and the said housing association.

The number of units at the scheme is yet to be confirmed, but architects have been appointed to develop initial designs, which are expected to be available mid November 2020. The number of medium to high needs units is expected to be approximately six, with four or five move on units. All will be self-contained units.

Recommendation

- To continue to develop the proposed 5 self-contained units of Young Persons accommodation in the North of the County with facility for on-site support.
- As an interim arrangement, identify an appropriate shared housing property that can be re-designated to provide a temporary scheme for young people utilising an existing shared property.
- Seek to identify interim funding for a dedicated Young Persons Accommodation Support Officer of £36,000 until April 2022.
- To potentially aim to fund dedicated young persons accommodation support through the Housing Support Grant Programme from April 2022, subject to a review assessment and need.

- **Low Need Single Persons Accommodation**

Current Situation

The Council currently has 70 units of shared accommodation (which is expected to reduce by 5/6 units to facilitate for the proposed interim Young Persons Accommodation). There will be a need for the Council to continue with the portfolio of shared housing for the short to medium term. However, there will be a need to

review the future of this accommodation in the context of Welsh Governments quality standard.

Recommendation

- Undertake an options appraisal against Welsh Government 'Annex D' Quality Standard of the existing shared to inform the future use of the accommodation eg improvements, possible disposal etc. The options appraisal will also be used as an opportunity to identify potential improvements to the service provided and the general standard of accommodation provided

• Self-Contained Temporary Family Accommodation

Current Situation

The Council currently has a portfolio of family accommodation which is made up of:

- Private leased units x 49 (which includes a number of RSL properties)
 - However, 1 is rolling on during COVID and is likely to end, 2 terminate on 31st December 2020, 2 terminating on 30th September 2020 and 1 is on a monthly rolling lease with an RSL.
- Managed units (on behalf of private landlords) x 33
- MCC low cost home ownership unit x 1

Subject to landlord approval and financial sustainability, the aim is to continue with the existing portfolio and proactively seek to identify additional properties using the Monmouthshire Lettings Service branding.

Recommendation

- To continue to engage with private landlords to seek to identify private sector accommodation, using Monmouthshire Lettings Service branding. This will be funded through existing resources

• Domestic Abuse

Current Situation

The Council will provide homeless accommodation directly for victims of domestic abuse and specialist housing support is available through Cyfannol and the Llamau Modas service.

Cyfannol Womens Aid provides a five unit refuge in the County and the service of one crisis worker. In addition, a Gwent wide sexual violence service is available in Monmouthshire. Cyfannol are currently experiencing a 50% increase in the need for their crisis service.

Cyfannol have acquired direct funding to establish 2 dispersed properties in the south of Monmouthshire which will be available shortly.

In addition, the Council has acquired Welsh Government homeless grant for Cyfannol to enable them to extend their crisis service. They will be appointing an additional part time Crisis Worker until April 2021. No funding is available after April 21 should this additional resource be needed.

The Council has met with Cyfannol to ensure that both services are working closely for mutual benefit, particularly in respect of homeless prevention.

Recommendation

- To continue to work closely with Cyfannol and ensure the service is fully utilised by the Housing Options Team to support victims of domestic abuse.
- To provisionally aim to fund an additional Cyfannol Crisis Worker 0.5 wte through the Housing Support Grant Programme from April 2022, subject to a review assessment.

3. Put rapid re-housing at the heart of services and utilise a range of support models (i.e. Housing First, CTI, floating support, assertive outreach) for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Current Situation

At present the Council does not have a Rapid Re-housing mechanism that will apply generally apply to all homeless applications.

The Council will seek to establish 'rapid re-housing' through the mechanisms of the Rapid Re-housing Protocol detailed previously in this report. There will be a need to monitor this.

In addition, it is proposed that the Rapid Re-housing principal will also be supported by a proposed relaxation of housing register exclusion criteria and an introduction of designated and ring-fenced 'move-on' permanent social housing. The intended availability of Intensive Resettlement Support will also contribute to Rapid Re-Housing by providing reassurance to housing associations. The Re-Settlement Support will provide the following benefits:

Resettlement Support is linked to Temporary Accommodation Support. Support, therefore, will in effect have started prior to an offer of accommodation:

- No waiting list for support
- Assurance to RSL that intensive work to sustain tenancy is in place prior to sign up
- Support is tailored to the individual's needs over a 12 week period with scope for extension in 6 week periods under agreement from Gateway Assessment Officers.
- No 3 missed appointments and closure.
- Workers are expected to explore ways to engage the individual on their terms i.e. evening / weekend appointments if necessary.
- Support can be daily/intensive/ flexible from the start of tenancy and will tail off as needs are met and client is supported to engage in substance use / mental health services.
- No set hours per individual
- If it is agreed that support is needed to sustain tenancy going forward (identified at 12 weeks) steps are put in place to facilitate a move to a step down provider.
- Named support provider/work given to RSL for liaison.

Welsh Governments expectations are that Councils utilise a range of support services through the Housing Support Grant programme to meet local homeless need. The current availability of types of services is limited and is heavily reliant on generic floating support, which is more appropriate for low level and short-term support needs. Whilst it is considered there continues to be a need for generic floating support and it has the advantage of providing flexibility, it is considered it will not meet the higher needs or specialist requirements relating to the need in Monmouthshire.

The following are models of support needed in Monmouthshire:

- **Housing First** - the Council currently has at least four applicants that need this type of support including two applicants occupying vacant MCC office space. The Council has acquired funding to extend an existing service in Newport into Monmouthshire. There is no funding to extend this to beyond April 2021.
- **Temporary Accommodation Support & Intensive Re-Settlement Support** – This has been established as an interim arrangement to align with the Councils shared housing and B & B and to assist people to move on to permanent accommodation. The current arrangement is a good-will arrangement with one of the Councils Providers. It is considered that the arrangement needs to be formalised. However, there will be a cost of £20,000 for the remainder of 2020/21 and £40,000 for 2021/22. The Council will seek to recover the £20,000 from Welsh Government emergency homeless Covid-19 funding. This service is critical due to the high needs of many residents to minimise placement breakdowns and to provide assurances to landlords.

- **Young Persons Accommodation Support** – at the end of July 20 there were 25 young people (eg under 25) in temporary accommodation and a further three are expected to need accommodation imminently. This includes 3 x 16/17 year olds who are in B & B, all of whom are considered at risk of Sexual Exploitation' and have needed to be moved due to behaviour issues. Such cases need to be appropriately accommodated and going forwards such cases will benefit from the proposed dedicated young persons accommodation with specialist support.

Currently no funding has been identified for the dedicated support, until such time it can be potentially factored into re-commissioning of the Housing Support Grant Programme in 2022.

- **Assertive Outreach** - the Council currently has a temporary part-time arrangement with a Provider for a part time worker to support high need applicants such as rough sleepers and sofa surfers. This support is also currently supporting clients who are accommodated in the Councils hostel. The Council is seeking to recover the costs from the Welsh Government emergency homeless Covid-19 grant.

The Council has successfully secured further Welsh Government homeless grant funding to extend this provision to two full time posts until March 2021.

It is anticipated that there will be a need for this type of support beyond March 2021. However, at present there is no funding in place for 2021/22.

- **Floating Support** – there will be a need to continue with generic floating support, albeit with a lower capacity than currently to support people with lower needs and those who are able to move from specialist support due to their needs declining. This support is currently in place and Housing Support Grant available
- **Domestic Abuse** – the Modas service had 168 referrals last year and there are currently 32 open cases. In addition Cyfannol Womens Aid have seen referrals increase by 50% on 2019/20 demand. Abergavenny is a particular hotspot.

In addition to the above there is a need for specialist substance misuse and mental health support. In this regard, the Council has

Recommendation:

- Subject to on-going need, identify funding for the following for 2021/22
 - The continuation of Housing First - £36,000
 - A dedicated Young Person Accommodation Support Officer - £36,000
 - Temporary Accommodation & Intensive Re-settlement Support - £40,000
 - The continuation of Assertive Outreach Support - £72,000

4. Increase the availability of social housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Current Situation

The broad approach to making social housing available for homeless people is:

- The operation of lettings quotas for the allocation of vacant units of social housing. Over recent years a fixed quota hasn't been utilised because natural turnover has facilitated a 20-25% allocation of accommodation to homeless applicants. But a fixed, higher or lower, can be set if required. This is monitored on an on-going basis in relation to homeless demand.
- Increasing the development and availability of social housing is a priority for the Council. This is facilitated through the annual development programme, the core focus of which is Social Housing Grant funded accommodation. Typically, the programme provides additional General Needs accommodation which in benefits all Housing Register applicants including homeless applicants.

Due to the numbers of households currently in temporary accommodation, increasing the availability of social housing for homeless people will be achieved by:

- Continuing with working with the Homesearch Housing Register Partnership in respect of flexible quotas in respect of homeless applicants. This will continue to be monitored on a weekly basis.
- A current review of the Homesearch Allocation Policy is proposing that higher thresholds will apply for exclusion triggers meaning that there is expected to be a reduction in clients excluded from the Housing Register. It is anticipated that the Policy will be considered by Cabinet in September/October 20.
- It is anticipated that there will be a need to specifically factor homeless accommodation into the development programme on an annual basis. This will be reviewed annually and will be subject to need.
- Consider designating specific pending social housing development schemes as ring-fenced move on, permanent accommodation.

Recommendation

- For the Housing Options Team to liaise closely with the Homesearch Partnership in respect of all social housing vacancies and where appropriate, ring-fence to homeless applicants, particularly in the short-term.
- Reflect the requirement in the Homesearch Allocation Policy and continue with the review of the Policy, with the aim of completing in October 2020.
- Homelessness needs and requirements to be routinely considered in the annual development programme
- Liaise with RSL partners about potentially designating new social housing grant schemes as homeless move-on accommodation.

5. Increase the availability of private rented housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Current Situation

Access to the private rented sector in Monmouthshire is challenging for both housing applicants and the Council due to:

- The level of market rents in relation to the local housing allowance is high and that the percentage of properties let at local housing allowance levels is low. This is estimated at about 6%
- Recent research has identified that the rental market in Monmouthshire has contracted by approximately 50%
- Landlords and estate agents can be reluctant to take low income households and reliant on benefit. Homeless people are regarded as a risk.
- Landlords are able to easily find professional tenants. Monmouthshire is a commuter area to employment hubs such as Bristol (increasingly because of the Bridge tolls going), Cardiff and Birmingham.

To mitigate against the challenges, the Council has established Monmouthshire Lettings Service as arms-length branding under which to encourage private landlords to make available properties to the Housing Options Team. This is a 'no fee' service, which seeks to offer a range of flexible options for landlords such as property leasing; room leasing and a management service and bespoke solutions for individual landlords.

It is considered that this approach has been extremely successful and it is appropriate to continue to build upon this success. The Council's portfolio of accommodation is currently.

- 33 managed properties

- 49 leased self-contained properties (the number of leased properties has previously been higher but has needed to be reduced due to the loss of the temporary accommodation management subsidy.
- 70 leased rooms in shared houses
- 1 supported lodgings host

To continue to develop Monmouthshire Lettings it is considered that the timing is appropriate to refresh the approach to promoting/marketing and seek to develop further options to encourage landlords to engage with the service.

In recognition that the rental market in Monmouthshire is not only small but has also contracted, in developing Monmouthshire Lettings it is also considered that in addition to recruiting vacant private sector properties there should also be a focus on recruiting landlords who are already have tenants, but those tenants who may be starting to experience problems maintaining their tenancy. The approach, therefore, would also be recruiting landlords whose tenants may already be on the road to potential homelessness. This is very much a preventative and early intervention approach that it is hoped, would reduce the need for the Council to provide accommodation.

Recommendations

- To implement the following:
 - Survey all landlords and establish annual satisfaction and exit surveys to identify opportunities for service improvement.
 - Consider new incentive options eg 'buying' rent arrears of households at risk of homelessness in return for use of accommodation; finders fee etc
 - Explore good practice
 - Make greater use of social media and the Council's Communications Team
 - Improving Google search provision
 - Consider how MLS and work in collaboration with the Bond Scheme
 - To develop a dual approach and target existing landlords whose tenants may be starting to experience tenancy difficulties.

6. Bring empty properties back into use to house people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Current Situation

Bi annual letters are sent to positively encourage all empty property owners to contact the Council and discuss their property and options available to bring properties back into use and sign posting them accordingly, particularly in relation to promoting Monmouthshire Letting Service.

In addition the Council adopts a 'targetted approach', ie, long term empties (over two years) within in or around the town centres. This approach will then involve a yearly 2nd stage letter, property visits and photographs. This would build up a representation of a property which would document it's deterioration over time. This would then provide evidence should further enforcement action be needed.

Housing & Community Services liaise with Environmental Health in respect of complaints about properties or those that require their involvement and the possible use of their enforcement powers where there is sufficient evidence to warrant their intervention.

A survey of empty space above shops was undertaken in Abergavenny last year. Although this did identify a small number of shops where the space above was not being used, due to the current availability of resources, there was limited opportunity to convert and utilise such space as homes. However, it is considered appropriate to undertake similar surveys in the other main towns.

Recommendation:

- Continue with the above routine to engage with empty homes owners
- Subject to being safe to do so, undertake High Street surveys of space above shops for Monmouth, Usk, Caldicot and Chepstow with a view to identifying potential accommodation opportunities.

7. Provide Support for Young People experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Current Situation

It is a priority of the Council to strengthen both the homeless prevention and support roles of available staffing as well as increasing accommodation and support resources. The current dedicated support available is:

- **MCC Young Persons Accommodation Officer x 1:** To prevent homelessness and where not possible, find alternative accommodation. Housing Support Grant funded
- **Solas Young Persons Supported Hostel Accommodation – 21 units in Chepstow & Abergavenny:** To meet low level need. Housing Support Grant funded. This is currently the only dedicated provision in Monmouthshire.

This will be reviewed by the Partnerships Team to inform the future commissioning of Housing Support Grant from April 2022.

- **Solas Hostel Move On Accommodation – 3 units in Chepstow.**
- **Llamau Family Mediation Service –** To prevent homeless for young people aged 18-24 who are at risk of having to leave home or to support young people to return home. Welsh Government funded
- **Llamau – EMPHASIS Housing Support –** To support ‘non-engaging’ young people who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) / homeless or at risk of becoming NEET / homeless. Target group are young people aged 16 – 21. Housing Support Grant funded.

This will be reviewed by the Partnerships Team to inform the future commissioning of Housing Support Grant from April 2022.

- **Supported Lodgings Hosts x 1:** Accommodation for a young person in someone’s home.
- **MCC Compass x 1.5:** Provides the link between accommodation and homelessness with education, training, employment, physical and mental health, positive relationships, outside interests etc. Youth Enterprise funded

This is an extremely valuable additional resource. There is a need to ensure that the project is fully integrated with both the Housing Options Team and other homeless services, such as housing support, to ensure that it fully aligns with the Council’s statutory homeless responsibilities and there is effective partnership working and no duplication.

- **Pobl ‘Steps to Independence’ Young Persons Shared Accommodation:** This is a Gwent project. It is Welsh Government funded.

As yet there no shared accommodation under this scheme. It is hoped that when accommodation is sourced that homeless young people are accommodated.

As previously mentioned in this report there is a need for additional temporary accommodation for young people of a different type to the existing Solas Young Persons Accommodation. As stated, a proposal to establish this accommodation is being taken forward. There is, however, currently a funding gap in terms of on-site support provision.

A further gap identified is the level of support for young people with health needs, including mental health issues. The Council, therefore, has started to engage with Health to identify additional support that can possibly be facilitated for young people. Some provisional opportunities have been identified for 16/17 year olds and care leavers

Recommendation

- Liaise with the Compass Youth Homeless project to ensure that the service is fully integrated into homelessness. The aim is to maximise the staffing resource available to support homeless young people.
- Liaise with the 'Pobl Steps to Independence' project to identify homeless young people that can be accommodated.
- Partnerships Team to undertake a review of young persons Housing Support Grant Services to inform future re-commissioning of the HSG Programme.
- Identify £36,000 to fund a Young Persons Accommodation Support Officer.
- To potentially aim to fund dedicated young persons accommodation support through the Housing Support Grant Programme from April 2022, subject to a review assessment and need.
- Establish bespoke homeless information for young people
- Continue to engage with Health to facilitate the provision of health related support that will operate alongside housing support.

8. Multi-agency involvement at a strategic level and in the delivery of support.

This will be facilitated by the existing and emerging partnership arrangements.

9. The full adoption of a psychologically-informed (PIE) and trauma-informed approach to commissioning and service delivery within local authorities, housing and support providers.

Current Situation

Although some PIE or trauma informed practice is currently delivered by the Council's homeless service, such an approach isn't being delivered in a structured way nor has it been formally adopted. However, work has started in this regard, which was unfortunately was disrupted by Covid-19.

The Council has started working to develop a PIE and trauma informed service. An external agency has been commissioned to provide a two stage programme of training and service planning over five sessions to Housing staff. This started on 16th March 20 but remains incomplete due to Covid-19 restrictions. This will hopefully be resumed perhaps in October 2020.

The Council is keen that the delivery approach of homeless service is one that is good at listening, is sensitive, is sympathetic and offers empathy. Essentially, it is a priority that the service is regarded as kind and caring.

In addition to training, it was proposed to second an 'expert' from another organisation, to embed themselves within the team to fully understand the current method of delivery to and identify potential opportunities for change and improvement. A key priority is to enhance the service user experience for the homeless assessment part of the service and the living experience in relation to the Councils temporary accommodation. A bid to Welsh Government to fund the said secondment was, however, unsuccessful.

In addition, the findings of a Shelter Take Notice project and the pending link with the Gwent Community Psychology Team are further opportunities to identify changes.

It was proposed to second an expert in PIE into the team to identify opportunities to change the way the service is delivered and to support staff implement changes. The

proposal was to utilise Welsh Government homeless grant funding, but unfortunately this request wasn't successful.

Recommendations

- Resume PIE training as soon as safe to do, aiming for January 2021.
- On completion of training, use the training to inform service planning, giving particular attention to temporary accommodation.
- Utilise Shelter 'Take Notice' recommendations to inform future service planning

10. The appropriate combination and safe delivery of remote and face to face support.

Current Situation

As part of working towards adopting a Psychologically and Trauma service, face to face support is considered fundamental.

Prior to the Covid-19 crisis the Council had started working towards a model of an area/community based approach to managing temporary accommodation. The Council recognises the importance of engaging positively and proactively with residents to achieve the best outcomes for both the Council and residents.

Each Accommodation Assistant has a 'patch' of accommodation that they are directly responsible for. The expectation is that staff will have a regular and sustained presence on their area 'patches.' As close as possible to daily. The Council is keen that staff get to know both residents and any support workers together will having a good all round understanding of their support need together with a good knowledge of their patch as a whole. This helps the Council to be more responsive to situations eg ASB and intervene early. It also helps the Council to liaise closely with other agencies, particularly support providers, Social Services and the Police. Being familiar with and having good relationships with neighbours is also a priority.

Some properties have empty rooms, that can be used as informal/casual 'stopping-off' points from which Accommodation Assistants can utilise to base themselves for short periods of time. This accommodation can also provide 'hub' type locations to easily access other nearby accommodation.

The Council already uses CCTV to support the management of accommodation and will regularly engage with residents via personal mobile video apps. The Council is keen to develop this further to maximise networking with residents.

The current access arrangements to the Housing Options Team and homeless assessments is through a centralised telephone arrangement. The Council is keen to review this to achieve more face to face contact. Possible options being considered are a return to using surgeries, home visits, joint meetings with other agencies and the use of video technology, including equipment being available in the Council's four area Hubs.

Recommendations:

- Implement an area and patch based approach to managing accommodation
- Identify opportunities to maximise face to face contact with a particular focus on persons needing homeless advice or making homeless applications.

Recommendations

- To identify opportunities to increase face to face interaction with Housing Option Team service users, including exploring the use of technology.
- As soon as safe to do so, implement a 'patch and area based approach to housing management.

11. Up-skill and empower local volunteers and community assets to help deliver a strategic, coordinated response to ending homelessness.

Current Situation

The use of volunteers and community assets currently isn't part of the Council's homeless service, although the Council has used Monmouth Churches to provide a winter night-shelter for the last two years.

This Transition Plan currently doesn't include any proposals in relation to links with local volunteers or community assets.

However, the Council has close and established links with Monmouth Churches Partnership with whom the Council has worked closely with over the last two years in respect of winter night-shelter arrangements. Monmouth Churches also provides informal support to one of the client currently occupying the Council's vacant office space in Monmouth.

Also, the Gateway Church, Abergavenny has provided 'drop-in' space for the Gwent Drug & Alcohol Advisory Service until very recently.

It is, however, expected that the Council will engage closely with these organisations going forwards.

12. A collaborative approach to planning and delivery.

The Council is committed to the collaborative development of homeless services in Monmouthshire. A particular priority is to work in partnership with other agencies to particularly identify and maximise opportunities that strengthen prevention, facilitate additional accommodation and increase support to applicants. Some of the existing and emerging partnership arrangements include:

Emerging partnerships include:

- MCC Partnerships – Housing Support Grant Programme
- Housing Associations – permanent and temporary accommodation
- Gwent Community Psychology – mental health services for young people (16 & 17 year olds)
- Skills for Living – mental health services for Care Leavers
- Gwent Substance Misuse & Alcohol -
- Pobl – Steps to Independence shared living service. Pobl are due to acquire a property in Abergavenny which it is hoped can be used for homeless young people
- Cyfannol – acquiring two units of dispersed accommodation in the South. It is hoped that through closer links with Cyfannol this will benefit victims of domestic abuse.

13. Solutions for people with No Recourse to Public Funds.

Presentations from this group are extremely rare in Monmouthshire. Only one presentation has been received in the last few years. It is, therefore, anticipated that this is likely to be the case going forward. However, in the unlikely event of such a presentation, the Council would receive any approach sensitively.

14. Housing Options Team

Current Situation

In addition to the Welsh Government policy themes, it is also appropriate to give focus to give consideration to not just service delivery of the homeless service by the Housing Options Team but also ensure staff are fully supported in the context of a change in the nature of the demand.

Due to additional homeless need caused by Covid 19 it has been extremely challenging for staff to manage both the demand of applicants presenting and the need to provide accommodation. It has been extremely difficult to prevent homelessness due to the 'actual homeless' status of many applicants together with less availability of prevention 'tools,' such as letting agencies. It is considered though that there is a need to review arrangements to minimise the number of people coming through who may need accommodation.

Equally, although the Council has been relatively successful in acquiring additional Accommodation, the additional accommodation acquired together with the proposed temporary accommodation changes detailed in this report means that the Housing Options Team management responsibilities have increased such as sign-ups, voids, rent arrears, tenant welfare and support, health and safety and anti-social behaviour.

Discussions are well advanced with staff to identify issues and opportunities. Key areas emerging include:

- Identifying opportunities to improve service efficiencies and streamline procedures to enable staff to dedicate more time to homeless prevention, the priority being to minimise those applicants coming through who would need temporary accommodation.
- Closer working with partner agencies, such as support agencies and housing associations, but also private landlords
- Closer working with individual applicants to help facilitate the Trauma Informed approach
- Use the Monmouthshire Lettings Service (eg to support landlords) as a mechanism to seek to facilitate more households to remain in their current accommodation in anticipating that households may have fallen into arrears or lost their employment during the last few months and there may be an increase in landlords wanting to gain possession.
- Greater team involvement in supporting the development of Monmouthshire Lettings
- Maximising team flexibility to ensure there is adequate cover across all functions in the event of sickness, annual leave or the need to quickly respond to arising issues.
- Reviewing the staffing needs of the team.
- Reviewing staff training needs
- Ensuring staff are fully supported in the context of the change in the working environment and it being increasingly reactive and challenging. Keeping on top of day to day priorities and maintaining routine procedures is. This is currently facilitated by a temporary Senior Accommodation Officer post, which is working very well.

Recommendation

- Establish an action plan specific to the needs and priorities of the Housing Options Team, including a review of the existing team structure to particularly focus on homeless prevention.

Appendix

Summary of Proposals

Proposal	Funding 20/21	Funding 21/22	Funding 22/23	Comments
Housing Support				
Interim Remodelling of Existing Contracts x 3 to Create Temporary Accommodation & Intensive Re-Settlement Housing Support	£20,000 needed. No funding identified	£40,000 needed No funding identified	Potentially Housing Support Grant, subject to needs assessment and approval	Application to Welsh Government for £40,000 for 2020/21 was unsuccessful. Important to under-pin the principal of Rapid Re-housing and the Rapid Re-housing Protocol
Housing First Housing Support	£32,000 WG Homless Grant	£xxxxxx needed No funding identified	Potentially Housing Support Grant, subject to needs assessment and approval	
Family Accommodation				
Establish 4 units of self-contained family accommodation in Abergavenny	Social Housing Grant identified	Not applicable	Not applicable	
Establish 4 units of self-contained family accommodation in Caldicot	Social Housing Grant identified	Not applicable	Not applicable	

Finalise the Planning approvals and leasing arrangements in respect of emergency family accommodation in the South	No capital funding required. Property was purchased in 2019.	Not applicable	Not applicable	
Multiple Needs Accommodation				
Explore feasibility and viability of converting existing shared Family accommodation in Monmouth to self-contained accommodation and changing use to Multiple Needs	Feasibility and costs being determined by Property Services No funding identified. Grant application to Welsh Government unsuccessful.	No funding identified	No funding identified	
Develop five units of young persons accommodation in Abergavenny with on-site support	Capital - Social Housing Grant plus £298,464 Welsh Government homeless grant funding. Revenue - No funding has been identified for on-site support	On-site support – no funding identified	Revenue – Potentially Housing Support Grant, subject to needs assessment and approval	
As an interim arrangement (pending the development of 5 units of young persons accommodation) re-designate a shared property	No funding necessary for accommodation On-site support - no funding identified	On-site support – no funding identified	Revenue – Potentially Housing Support Grant, subject to needs assessment and approval	

as dedicated accommodation for young people with on-site support				
Provide an Assertive Outreach Service	£48,000 Welsh Government Homeless Grant	£72,000 needed No funding identified	Revenue – Potentially Housing Support Grant, subject to needs assessment and approval	
Housing Options Team				
Under the branding of Monmouthshire Lettings continue to engage with private landlords to either identify opportunities to access accommodation or to enable tenants at risk of becoming homeless to remain in their accommodation.	Housing Options Team Prevention fund	Housing Options Team Prevention fund	Housing Options Team Prevention fund	