

Homelessness Strategy

2018 - 2022

Wrexham County Borough Council

Full Report

October 2018



This Homelessness Strategy has been prepared by arc4 Ltd. on behalf of Wrexham County Borough Council. It provides a strategic response to preventing homelessness and rough sleeping within Wrexham.

Registered Address: arc4, 41 Clarendon Road, Sale Manchester M33 2DY
Email: contact@arc4.co.uk www.arc4.co.uk
arc4 Limited Registered in England & Wales 6205180 VAT Registration No: 909 9814 77
Directors - Helen Brzozowski – Michael Bullock

© 2018 arc⁴ Limited (Company No. 06205180)

Table of Contents

Foreword	4
1. Introduction	5
2. Our Vision.....	7
3. Building upon Success.....	9
4. Summary of the Homelessness Review Findings.....	11
5. Regional Approach to Preventing Homelessness	14
Reducing Homelessness across North Wales – Key Objectives	14
6. How we will reduce homelessness in Wrexham	16
Strategic direction and collaborative partnerships	16
Joint commissioning based on identified need	16
Making prevention everyone’s responsibility	17
Adopting a person centred approach	17
Strategic Priorities.....	17
Priority 1 - Developing a Robust and Effective Housing Options Service.....	18
Priority 2 - Delivering a targeted early intervention and prevention approach.....	20
Priority 3 - Working to end the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and reducing the use of temporary accommodation.....	22
Priority 4 - Improving and developing access to a range of supported and permanent housing solutions	24
Priority 5 – Ending the need for anyone to sleep rough in Wrexham.....	26
Prevention.....	26
Intervention	26
Recovery.....	27
Priority 6 - Meeting the housing and support needs of clients with multiple and complex support needs.....	29
7. Governance and Delivering the Homelessness Strategy.....	32
8. Commissioning of Homelessness Services.....	33
Appendix 1: Strategic Context	34
National Strategic Context.....	34
Regional & Local Strategic context	36

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce Wrexham County Borough Council's first Homelessness Strategy.

The reasons for being homeless or threatened with homelessness are multiple and often extremely complex. Many people have multiple needs that extend beyond the basic need for a home. It is not possible for the Council to meet those needs in isolation, but rather a successful strategic approach to preventing homelessness is dependent upon a coordinated multi-agency response, ensuring that the right advice and support is given at the right time.

The Council and its partners face considerable challenges in responding to increasing levels of homelessness and rough sleeping, set against a backdrop of welfare reform and increasing private rent levels and house prices.

Meeting this challenge will require a radical change in how we work; simply carrying on as before will not deliver the reduction in homelessness and rough sleeping that we need to achieve.

Wrexham needs to work with partners to develop a new culture for responding to homelessness. In order to be able to make our vision for homelessness a reality and to meet our objectives we need to adopt a fundamentally different approach and redesign services accordingly.

Our Homelessness Strategy focuses on preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and helping people who are homeless build a more positive future.

Our focus on prevention will involve working more closely with people using services to understand their strengths, and to support them holistically to achieve their goals. Over the life of the strategy we will build on existing services and continuously improve service delivery.

This is an exciting time with opportunities to transform our approach to tackling homelessness and ending the need for anyone to sleep rough. However our objectives are challenging, and in order to achieve them we need to work closely with our partners to make them a reality and transform the lives of many of our residents.

Our vision is simple –“To work in partnership to prevent and reduce homelessness, and end the need for anyone to sleep rough.” This Strategy reflects our strong commitment to realising this vision.

Cllr David Griffiths



1. Introduction

- 1.1 The prevention of homelessness and effectively tackling the need to rough sleep is a key priority for Wrexham County Borough Council and its partners.
- 1.2 Homelessness is the symptom of a complex interaction between a person's specific situation and a range of structural and social factors that are often beyond their control.
- 1.3 If we are to successfully tackle homelessness we need to find new ways of addressing the root causes of homelessness. This needs to be combined with a new focus on prevention that will involve working more closely with service users to understand their strengths and support them holistically to achieve their goals.
- 1.4 The implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 signalled both a legislative and cultural shift in the Council's response to homelessness. Wrexham County Borough Council seeks to intervene early and prevent homelessness wherever possible with a focus on delivering individually tailored solutions with customers. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, the Council works to rapidly support individuals into appropriate and sustainable accommodation.
- 1.5 This is Wrexham's first Homelessness Strategy following the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. This strategy for 2018-22 will build on the successes achieved to date by the Council's Housing Options Service and seeks to further develop and enhance existing services and initiatives.
- 1.6 This strategy has been developed in consultation with partner agencies and customers. The Council recognises that homelessness cannot be tackled by the Local Authority working in isolation, rather it is dependent upon effective joint working between the Local Authority and all organisations who are working to prevent and respond to homelessness.
- 1.7 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires every local authority to carry out a review of homelessness in their area and to develop and publish a homelessness strategy based on the review findings.
- 1.8 Under the Act, the Homelessness Strategy must seek to achieve the following objectives in the local housing authority's area:
 - a) The prevention of homelessness
 - b) That suitable accommodation is and will be available for people who are or may become homeless
 - c) That satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless.
- 1.9 This strategy has been developed in response to the findings of the Homelessness Review 2018, which provides a comprehensive understanding of homelessness across Wrexham. The Homelessness Review has identified issues and gaps in service provision, which this strategy will seek to address.
- 1.10 If we are to address the root causes of homelessness; poverty and disadvantage, unemployment, poor health and wellbeing and a lack of access to affordable and

sustainable homes, then a partnership approach is fundamental. Many people have multiple needs that extend beyond the basic need for a home. It is not possible for the Council to meet those needs in isolation, but rather a successful strategic approach to preventing homelessness is dependent upon a coordinated multi-agency response.

- 1.11 This strategy should be seen as a multi agency document. The Council has worked closely with its partners through the Homelessness Prevention Steering Group to produce this strategy. It is intended that the strategy be inclusive in its approach and partner agencies continue to work closely with the Council to assist in its delivery.
- 1.12 The strategy will cover the period 2018 to 2022 and will be monitored and reviewed by the Homelessness Prevention Steering Group, alongside the Council's internal performance management systems. Wrexham's Homelessness Forum will play a key role in the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy's action plan.

2. Our Vision

2.1 Wrexham's vision is:

To work in partnership to prevent and reduce homelessness, and end the need for anyone to sleep rough

2.2 This vision was developed in partnership with key partners involved in providing housing and homelessness services. In delivering this strategy we will ask all key partners working across Wrexham to sign up to this vision.

2.3 This strategy has been based around the following objectives.

2.4 Our objectives are to:

- Prevent homelessness by offering high quality, timely, realistic advice and support together with practical help.
- Develop a best practice approach to eliminate the need to sleep rough.
- In partnership identify and address the underlying causes of homelessness.
- Where homelessness does occur, provide support and assistance to find and sustain suitable homes.
- Make homeless prevention everyone's responsibility.
- Build upon the strengths and assets of our clients, empower individuals and build resilience, whilst promoting choice and a person centred approach.
- Continuously monitor and evaluate our performance to ensure high quality service delivery.

2.5 Over the lifetime of this Strategy we aim to:

- Ensure that no one should have to sleep rough in Wrexham.
- Deliver a first class Housing Options Service.
- Reduce crisis presentations.
- Ensure that homelessness is prevented wherever possible through the delivery of bespoke personal housing plans and access to affordable and sustainable accommodation.
- Reduce the number of households residing in temporary accommodation.
- Seek to end the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for all homeless households.
- Ensure that housing related support services are able to meet the diverse and complex needs of our homeless population.

- Increase the provision and range of accommodation options available to single homeless people.
- 2.6 Working in partnership is absolutely fundamental to achieving this vision and our objectives.

3. Building upon Success

3.1 While we have some way to go to meet our vision, this Homelessness Strategy is built upon a successful approach to homeless prevention following the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. These successes have been achieved through successful partnership approaches and include:

- Establishment of a multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Steering Group.
- Contribution to Regional Homelessness Objectives.
- Restructuring of the Housing Options team in response to the requirements of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- Introduction of personal housing plans.
- Effective joint working between Housing Options and Supporting People to effectively prevent homelessness.
- Development of an effective and successful Local Lettings Agency, with an HHSRS accredited staff.
- Prevention and relief of homelessness by assisting households to access accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Introduction of effective Severe Weather Emergency Protocol.
- Supporting People Single Gateway to access all supported provision in the County.
- Outreach mental health worker based within the Housing Options service.
- Establishment of an in-house outreach service.
- Single point of access service developed for homeless 16 & 17 year olds.
- Successful funding bid to develop container homes for homeless people.
- Positive working relationship with Shelter.
- Co-location with a range of key agencies.
- Involved in the development of Wales directory of private rented access schemes.
- Elements of Housing First pilot embedded.
- Development of multi-agency advice to rough sleepers.
- Dedicated Prison Liaison officer.
- In-house outreach worker working with rough sleepers.
- Establishment of Providers Meeting to develop operational response to tackle rough sleeping.

- 3.2 These successes have been achieved through the high priority placed on homelessness prevention and the continuing work in delivering practical homelessness solutions. As a consequence, a strong network of partnerships and services has been developed to support those who are either threatened with or experiencing homelessness.

4. Summary of the Homelessness Review Findings

- 4.1 The Strategy is based upon the findings of a comprehensive review of homelessness across Wrexham undertaken by arc4. This included both primary research and an in-depth desk-top analysis of data from the Council and other agencies to identify key issues and trends. This analysis has been supplemented by wider data on the population across Wrexham, economic factors, health inequalities, and the housing market, alongside extensive consultation with stakeholders and customers.
- 4.2 The Homelessness Review provides a very detailed understanding of the levels and causes of homelessness in Wrexham, together with an overview of the services available to those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The Review provides the evidence base upon which this Homelessness Strategy has been developed.
- 4.3 The key findings from the Homelessness Review are:
- Affordability is a significant issue within parts of Wrexham in relation to owner occupation and privately renting. Low levels of income and reliance on benefits among households in housing need further exacerbates the problem.
 - The main causes of homelessness in Wrexham are: loss of rented or tied accommodation, leaving prison, parents and relatives no longer willing to accommodate, relationship breakdown, and domestic abuse.
 - There is a need to develop a range of prevention tools focused at preventing the main causes of homelessness.
 - The Housing Options service has had success in preventing homelessness by assisting households to access alternative accommodation. However, more work needs to be done to fully embed a proactive prevention approach, with a particular emphasis on enabling households to remain in their existing accommodation.
 - Information suggests that there is an increasing demand on the Housing Options service following the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, there is however a need to introduce an effective recording system in order to understand the true demand on the service.
 - There is a need to review caseloads, structures and resources to ensure that caseloads remain at a manageable level and opportunities for effective homeless prevention are maximised. To achieve this there may be a need to invest more resources into frontline prevention and relief work.
 - There is a need to review systems, processes, procedures and paperwork to ensure that they are effective and up to date. This review will help to identify how resources within the team can be used more effectively to achieve improved customer outcomes.

- There is a need to reduce the high numbers of people accessing the service at the point of crisis, to enable opportunities for effective prevention and early intervention to be maximised.
- The use of temporary accommodation and Bed & Breakfast accommodation has increased significantly in the last year. Work will need to be undertaken to reduce these numbers, and ensure effective throughput and move on.
- There is a need to continue to source more suitable temporary accommodation properties to avoid the use of Bed & Breakfast. Further work is needed to more fully understand the temporary accommodation requirements, and how these are best met.
- There are a very high proportion of single people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Specific housing options and prevention solutions will need to be developed to meet the needs of single people, including those who would not fall into a priority need category.
- Young people are over-represented in the homelessness statistics and Supporting People data, when compared with census data, indicating a lack of suitable and affordable housing options for young people. It also indicates that young people are at a greater risk of becoming homeless.
- There is a need for a holistic approach that includes support around: debt, money management, resilience and worklessness. This approach needs to commence at the assessment stage and carry through to the delivery of the Personal Housing Plans.
- There are a very high number of complex cases, including both single people and families with multiple and challenging needs. The Housing Options service has struggled to find sustainable solutions for these households. There is a need to have a better quantitative and qualitative understanding of these issues, alongside understanding if existing provision meets the needs of these customers.
- There is a need to increase awareness of the Housing Options Service and other services available across Wrexham to ensure that partners and customers are aware of what is available and how to access it. This is especially important if early intervention and prevention is to be achieved.
- There are high levels of evictions from social housing due to rent arrears. It is essential that social housing tenants are able to access debt and money advice alongside the development of a pre-eviction protocol.
- There is a very high level of rough sleeping in Wrexham, concentrated within the town centre; there is a strong correlation between rough sleeping and the congregational use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS).
- There is need for a comprehensive review of rough sleeping to be undertaken to understand in more detail the issues in relation to rough sleeping within Wrexham, and to assess existing provision against best practice, and identify what, if any, changes are required to significantly reduce rough sleeping.

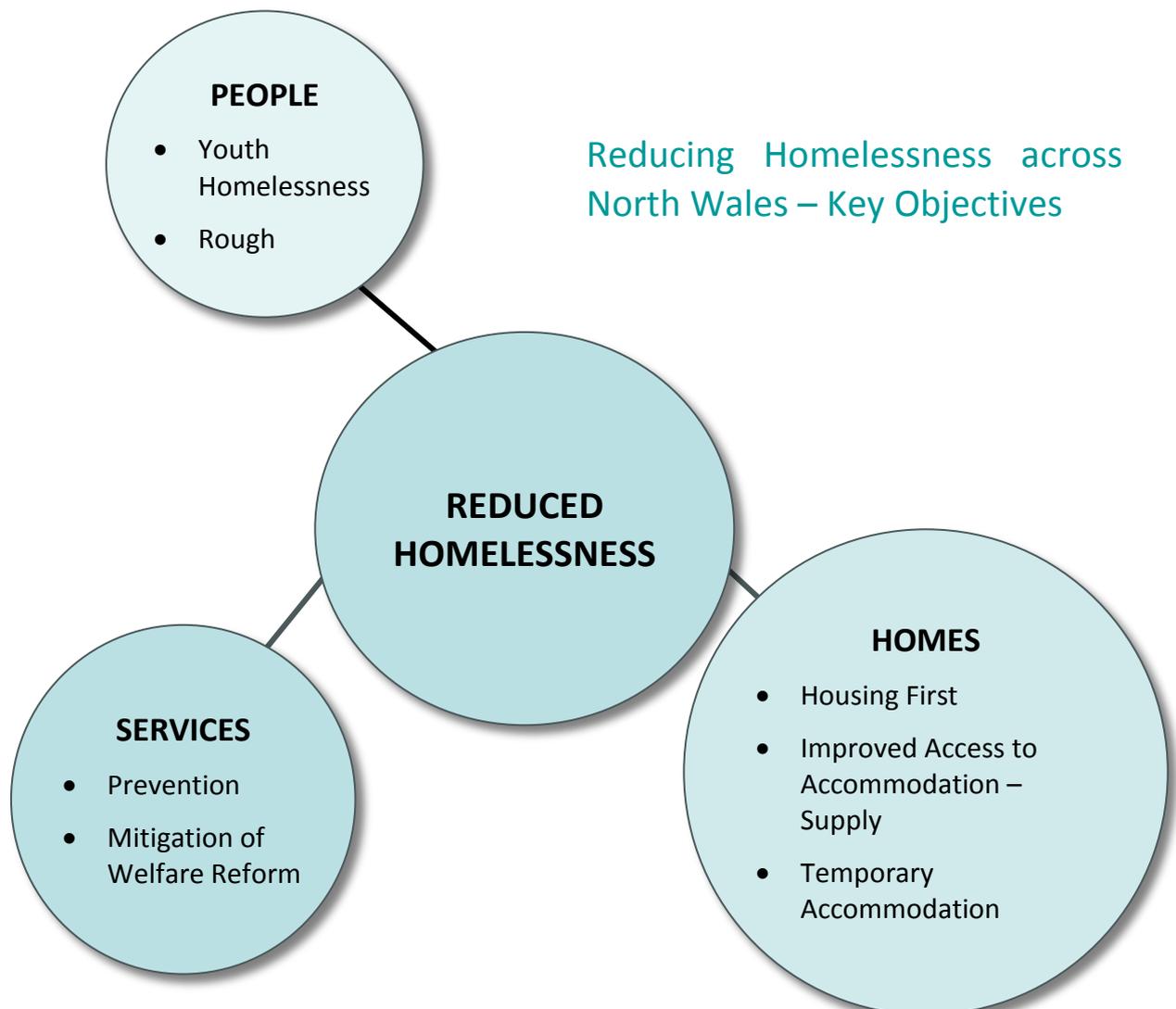
- There are high levels of demand for Supported Accommodation. Move on from Supported Housing can be problematic, with many single people struggling to find affordable and suitable move on accommodation.
- There is a need to develop greater options and provision for single people, specifically for people under the age of 35, including lodgings, house shares and high quality bedsit/HMO accommodation.
- Former prisoners account for a very significant number of Housing Options customers. There is a need to ensure that the Prisoner Pathway works much more effectively resulting in a more coordinated approach and better support for people leaving custody.
- The impact of welfare reform set against a backdrop of a difficult economic climate, and on-going personal debt will continue to pose particular challenges and make it even more important that services for those at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness, are as effective as possible. There is need to work in partnership with a range of key agencies to prepare clients for further changes to welfare benefits, and identify a range of strategies to prevent homelessness as a result of welfare reform.
- There is a need for an independent review to consider how the Housing Register and Allocations functions should be delivered moving forward. As part of this, consideration should be given to this function sitting with Housing Options, creating an integrated model of delivery ensuring that the customer becomes the central focus of service delivery; whereby they can have all of their housing options, including accessing social housing, met under one roof.
- Customer consultation identified that the vast majority of customers had a positive experience of the Housing Solution service. However, responses indicate that there is a lack of ongoing contact from the service.

4.4 An Executive Summary of the Homelessness Review can be found [link to website link](#)

4.5 The full Homelessness Review is available upon request from [link to website](#)

5. Regional Approach to Preventing Homelessness

- 5.1 The six Local Authorities across North Wales have committed to tackling homelessness across the region, and have developed a Regional Homelessness Strategy, which will be supported by six local delivery action plans.
- 5.2 The Regional Homelessness Strategy seeks to:
- Develop a regional approach to tackling homelessness in North Wales
 - Share best practice across the region
 - Develop shared services and collaboration where possible
 - Develop a better understanding of the causes of homelessness through better data capture across the region
 - Reducing homelessness in North Wales
- 5.3 The Regional Homelessness Strategy seeks to reduce homelessness across North Wales across the three themes of People, Homes and Services.



- 5.4 The core strategic commitment from the six local authorities in North Wales is to create a culture of better collaboration across the region, addressing the specific issues that give rise to homelessness across North Wales.
- 5.5 We are committed to working with our neighbouring authorities across North Wales to collaboratively reduce homelessness and create seamless journeys for customers accessing services across North Wales.
- 5.6 Our local response to tackling homelessness is contained within this Strategy and has been built around the priorities of the North Wales Homelessness Strategy. This Strategy identifies opportunities for regional collaboration, together with a targeted response to addressing the issues identified within Wrexham's Homelessness Review.

6. How we will reduce homelessness in Wrexham

- 6.1 The unprecedented level of rough sleeping in Wrexham, together with increasing levels of homelessness and pressures on the housing market signals that a radically different approach that drives whole system change is now necessary to successfully tackle homelessness.
- 6.2 The magnitude and complexity of the issues that face the Council and its partners over the lifetime of this strategy must not be underestimated; these include national increases in homelessness and rough sleeping, pressures on budgets and the impact of Universal Credit, set against an increasingly unaffordable and inaccessible housing market.
- 6.3 Wrexham needs to work with partners to develop a new culture for responding to homelessness.
- 6.4 Our Homelessness Strategy focuses on preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place and helping people who are homeless build a more positive future.
- 6.5 In order to be able to make our vision for homelessness a reality and to meet our objectives we need to adopt a fundamentally different approach and redesign services accordingly.
- 6.6 Our approach to this is outlined by the following principles:

Strategic direction and collaborative partnerships

- 6.7 We recognise that a partnership approach is the only way in which we can successfully tackle homelessness. This Strategy has been developed with partners to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness and create effective pathways out of homelessness.
- 6.8 We will provide strategic leadership and work with partners to deliver our vision and objectives for tackling homelessness in Wrexham. We will co-ordinate and support a strategic response to homelessness that delivers joined up and improved customer outcomes.

Joint commissioning based on identified need

- 6.9 We will work to understand the current and future needs and will work to jointly commission services that meet these needs, with a clear focus on improving value for money, improved quality and delivering improved customer outcomes. We will work to commission psychologically informed services that recognise the stresses and trauma that many homeless people experience. We will redesign services around the needs of our customers.

Making prevention everyone's responsibility

- 6.10 All agencies have a role to play and a responsibility to prevent homelessness. Alongside tackling the underlying causes of homelessness we will work with partners and local communities to ensure that the trigger points for homelessness can be understood and identified. By embedding this approach across Wrexham we aim to significantly reduce crisis and ensure effective homelessness prevention approaches are in place.

Adopting a person-centred approach

- 6.11 Our approach recognises the strengths and assets that individuals have, and seeks to build on these strengths, empowering individuals to build resilience. We will work with people with lived experience to become co-producers of effective prevention solutions.

Strategic Priorities

- 6.12 This 4 year strategy covers the period 2018–2022, and seeks to further strengthen the partnership approach to tackling homelessness across Wrexham and embed our new approach to tackling homelessness. This will be achieved through adoption of the following priorities. Key actions across each of the priorities are detailed in the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan.
- 6.13 The following strategic priorities have been adopted and are based upon the Homelessness Review findings, and link to the North Wales Regional Homelessness Strategy.

Services

Priority 1 - Developing a robust and effective Housing Options Service

Priority 2 - Delivering a targeted early intervention and prevention approach

Homes

Priority 3 - Working to end the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and reducing the use of temporary accommodation

Priority 4 - Improving and developing access to a range of supported and permanent housing solutions

People

Priority 5 - Ending the need for anyone to sleep rough in Wrexham

Priority 6 - Meeting the housing and support needs of clients with multiple and complex needs

Priority 1 - Developing a Robust and Effective Housing Options Service

- 6.14 We recognise that early intervention and prevention is the key to successfully tackling homelessness, alongside addressing its underlying causes.
- 6.15 Integral to this approach is the delivery of a customer-focused service that works with customers to develop bespoke personal housing plans that build upon their strengths. Through this approach we seek to empower individuals, by working collaboratively to identify their strengths and help them to build resilience to prevent homelessness re-occurring.
- 6.16 The provision of good quality timely housing advice and effective interventions are integral to being able to effectively prevent homelessness. Evidence from the Homelessness Review identified a large proportion of customers approaching the service at the point of crisis, with missed opportunities for homelessness prevention work.
- 6.17 To enhance opportunities for effective homeless prevention it is essential that customers contact the Housing Options service as soon as they begin to experience housing problems. We will therefore invest in an awareness raising campaign to raise the profile of the service internally within the Council, with partners and the wider public. In addition to this, we will develop resources, including web-based advice and factsheets to empower individuals to resolve their own housing issues. In the longer term an interactive Housing Solutions ICT package will be able to provide customers with bespoke personal housing plans.
- 6.18 We need to ensure that when people approach the Housing Options service for help we have the ability to effectively and promptly respond to these requests for help, either by enabling them to remain where they are or by facilitating a move into more appropriate accommodation. We will ensure that we have the right resources in the right places to meet this need, with effective systems and processes to support service delivery, with a strong focus on improved customer outcomes.
- 6.19 To effectively deliver a customer focused service we need to ensure that the customer is able to have all of their housing needs met under one roof. To this end we will explore the need for allocations and housing options to be aligned in order to provide a more streamlined and focused service to create a seamless customer journey.
- 6.20 Our response to homelessness will also provide access to other services promoting education, training and employment opportunities, health services, life-skills, debt and financial advice and benefits advice. These will strengthen people's chances of resolving their housing problems, and preventing repeat homelessness.
- 6.21 As this strategy emphasises, tackling homelessness requires a partnership approach. We will work with partner organisations to ensure that customers receive quality housing advice, referrals to the Housing Options team are at the appropriate time and services work together to provide a holistic package of advice and assistance. We will continue to identify opportunities to co-locate services and will build upon the success of the Care Hub. We will develop protocols further with key partners, complete joint

training and ensure effective referral arrangements are in place to assist with the delivery of personal housing plans.

- 6.22 Customer consultation was an essential component of the Homelessness Review and the Strategy, will build on this by ensuring that the customer sits at the heart of service delivery, and that services are developed in response to their needs. Services will be accessible, flexible and responsive to the needs of each homeless household, and we work with service users to co-produce services and prevention responses. We will ensure that customers are involved in the planning of services and how they are delivered; this will be achieved by working towards the Equal Ground Standard.

What we will do to develop a robust and effective Housing Options Service

1. Develop a high quality, accessible and customer focused Housing Options Service
2. Have the right resources in the right places
3. Explore the need for allocations and Housing Options to be aligned to create a streamlined service for customers
4. Increase the accessibility of the service by providing outreach surgeries, online and telephone advice and explore further opportunities for service delivery through the use of technology
5. In partnership develop an integrated and holistic approach to tackling the underlying causes of homelessness, through joined up service delivery, joint protocols and effective referral arrangements
6. Embed person centred principles across the service, and work with customers to identify their strengths and build resilience
7. Undertake an awareness raising campaign in relation to homeless prevention, and specifically the Housing Options Service

Priority 2 - Delivering a targeted early intervention and prevention approach

- 6.23 We will intervene earlier to prevent homelessness. In order to be able to do this we will identify the specific triggers, risk factors and causes of homelessness. Based upon this we will develop a range of interventions specifically targeted at responding to these.
- 6.24 Following the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the Housing Options team has achieved success in preventing homelessness, in particular, in assisting households to access social housing and private rented accommodation, however more work needs to be done to enable customers to remain in their existing accommodation.
- 6.25 We will work with households to enable them to remain in their current home or assist with planned and timely moves into suitable and sustainable accommodation. We will do this through the delivery of housing options advice, personal housing plans and appropriate referrals to support organisations.
- 6.26 We will develop targeted approaches that respond to the main causes of homelessness within Wrexham.
- 6.27 Welfare reform, economic pressures, together with new regulations in the private rented sector are reducing the housing options available for working age low income households. The economic crisis has led to uncertainty in the employment market, reduced wages and an increased cost of living, putting pressure on low income households.
- 6.28 It is anticipated that these factors will continue to place increased demand on the Housing Options service, and as such, service delivery models need to be reviewed to ensure effective and strategic approaches to customer demand management.
- 6.29 All agencies operating across Wrexham have opportunities to reduce housing crisis amongst their core client groups. This can be achieved by working in a more joined up way to identify those households at high risk of homelessness. This includes being able to identify the triggers for homelessness and ensuring that agencies can recognise the indicators of housing stress and be able to act appropriately to prevent homelessness. Preventing homelessness is everyone's responsibility across Wrexham and we will work with agencies to ensure they have the knowledge, tools and skills to achieve this.
- 6.30 In order to strengthen our approach to tackling homelessness we will gain support from the whole Council to prevent homelessness. We will seek commitment from both Members and Senior Managers across all service areas to work together to deliver a joined up and holistic approach to preventing and ending homelessness.

We will work across the Council to develop a coordinated approach to homelessness prevention across a range of services and programmes. We will also provide strategic leadership bringing all of the key partners together to deliver our vision to work in partnership to prevent and reduce homelessness, and end the need for anyone to sleep rough.

- 6.31 We will continue to commission and work with our partners to deliver effective, targeted homelessness prevention services. These services will be effectively targeted, accessible and able to respond to the diverse needs of all customers, providing innovative and flexible solutions.

What we will do to deliver a targeted early intervention and prevention approach

1. Ensure that we have a strong corporate commitment to a joined up approach to ending homelessness across all services
2. Ensure homelessness is prevented through an effective homelessness prevention toolkit targeted at the main causes
3. Ensure effective tools are in place to prevent end of assured shorthold tenancies leading to homelessness, through effective landlord and tenant support and mediation
4. Ensure all staff have access to appropriate training and development opportunities
5. In partnership with Estate Management and Housing Associations we will reduce evictions from social housing
6. Identify the key triggers for homelessness and work with partners to ensure that they are equipped to prevent homelessness and/or make seamless referrals where necessary

Priority 3 - Working to end the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and reducing the use of temporary accommodation

- 6.32 The use of temporary accommodation and Bed & Breakfast has increased significantly in Wrexham. While our intended improved approach to prevention and early intervention, once embedded, will help to stem the flow of new placements, there is a need to ensure a more effective strategic approach to temporary accommodation provision, together with improved operational management.
- 6.33 We will undertake a review of our approach to temporary accommodation to ensure that it meets the current needs, ends the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and supports our intended approach to use private sector offers to discharge the homeless duty. This review will respond to the immediate need, but will also take a longer term approach to ensuring a model that is flexible and responsive to the changing demand.
- 6.34 We will continue to source more suitable temporary accommodation properties to no longer necessitate the use of Bed & Breakfast. Further work is needed to more fully understand the temporary accommodation requirements, and how these are best met.
- 6.35 We will work to reduce the number of households placed in temporary accommodation and to minimise their length of stay. We will actively work with households in temporary accommodation to continue to review their housing options and plan their move into settled accommodation.
- 6.36 We will ensure that every household in temporary accommodation has a personalised move on plan.
- 6.37 We will aim to use Bed & Breakfast for emergency purposes only and where it is most appropriate for the needs of the service user, but for no longer than is absolutely necessary. In the longer term we will aim to end the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation.
- 6.38 We will work closely with providers of accommodation and support, to ensure that while households are in temporary accommodation they are provided with all the necessary advice and assistance to enable them to sustain future permanent accommodation and access training and employment.

What we will do to end the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation and reduce the use of temporary accommodation

1. Carry out a review of the use of temporary accommodation, identifying future need and appropriate delivery arrangements
2. Minimise, and in the longer term end, the use of unsuitable B&B accommodation
3. Develop a policy and procedure to discharge the main homeless duty with an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector
4. Ensure that appropriate accommodation is available for 16 and 17 year olds so that they are not placed in B&B
5. Develop a range of monitoring arrangements, processes and performance management measures to monitor and manage the use of temporary accommodation

Priority 4 - Improving and developing access to a range of supported and permanent housing solutions

- 6.39 In order to be able to tackle homelessness in Wrexham we need to develop a range of affordable and sustainable housing, alongside improving access to existing provision.
- 6.40 We are committed to delivering more homes to meet local needs and demand. Our new Housing Strategy sets out our aim to provide housing for all, within strong, providing and caring communities that have relevant services that support and develop prosperity for its inhabitants.
- 6.41 We will continue to make the most effective use of our own housing stock in meeting the needs of our communities, including those that are at risk of becoming homeless. We will regularly review our Allocations Policy to ensure that it is working for those in the greatest housing need, and supporting the prevention of homelessness. We will also work with our Housing Association partners to increase access to all forms of social housing for clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness.
- 6.42 Alongside our strategic commitment to the development of affordable housing, the Council recognises the increasingly important role that the private rented sector plays in meeting the housing needs of the residents of Wrexham, including those who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. We have successfully developed an effective Local Lettings Agency; we recognise the need to further expand this successful model to increase the provision of private sector housing available to Housing Options Clients.
- 6.43 We will develop a process that ensures we discharge our homelessness duty through the offer of a suitable private rented sector property. It is anticipated that this approach will underpin and strengthen existing housing advice and homelessness prevention activities and ensure homeless households are able to access suitable and secure accommodation. In order to ensure the sustainability of this tenancy model, effective and timely support to both tenants and landlords is critical.
- 6.44 The Homelessness Review identified that single people are disproportionately affected by homelessness in Wrexham, with single people accounting for 66% of all Housing Options customers. We are committed to addressing the housing and support needs of single people within Wrexham. We will work with Estate Management and Housing Association partners, alongside our own Local Lettings Agency to develop house share pilots to meet the needs of young single people within the County. We will promote lodging schemes to home owners and will work to identify opportunities for under-occupying tenants to rent out spare rooms. We will also learn from the Housing First pilots operating across North Wales and consider how the principles of Housing First might be implemented locally.
- 6.45 We will also consider how we can use our own housing stock to meet the high demand for single person's accommodation, including the reconfiguration of two and three bed units to create one bedroom provision.
- 6.46 The role that supported housing plays in preventing homelessness is critical. The Council is committed to investing in a supported housing model that acts as a place of change, not only meeting the housing needs of homeless people; but supporting

people to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness, raising their aspirations, empowering change and assisting them to access training, education and employment. We will work with providers to ensure that services and practices are psychologically informed, and build upon the assets of the individuals supported.

- 6.47 The Welsh Government’s Supporting People programme, funds a range of supported housing accommodation and floating support services for those that are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Wrexham. The Homelessness Review identified that demand for supported accommodation is high, and the needs of clients are becoming increasingly complex. It is therefore essential that we make the most effective use of the current provision ensuring that referrals are appropriate and based on a comprehensive assessment of need, and that vacancies are prioritised to those in the greatest need.
- 6.48 To ensure that supported housing provision is able to meet our customers’ increasingly complex and multiple needs, we will undertake a detailed needs assessment of housing related support services, to understand the current and future needs of our residents. This will provide the basis for a robust commissioning strategy.

What we will do to improve and develop access to a range of supported and permanent housing solutions

1. Expand the Local Lettings Agency to increase the supply of affordable private rented accommodation
2. Ensure the best use of social housing stock to prevent and relief homelessness
3. Develop a coordinated approach to increase the provision of, and move on from, supported accommodation to meet identified needs
4. Ensure that housing related support services, are reviewed, and meet the needs of our residents through a detailed needs assessment and the development of a commissioning strategy
5. Develop a range of affordable housing options for single people

Priority 5 – Ending the need for anyone to sleep rough in Wrexham

- 6.49 Through this strategy we are committed to ensure that we can end the need for anyone to sleep rough in Wrexham. Rough sleeping is harmful to both individuals and communities and we believe that no one should have to sleep on the streets.
- 6.50 We will deliver a reduction in rough sleeping and address the multiple harms it brings to individuals and communities through rapid intervention to offer a route off the street for all, improving health and wellbeing and resilience and tackling street activity associated with rough sleeping.
- 6.51 We will undertake a comprehensive review of rough sleeping to understand the issues in relation to rough sleeping in the County Borough, and, crucially, to assess existing provision against best practice and understand what changes are needed in order to effectively eliminate the need to sleep rough. This review will form the basis of a Rough Sleeping Strategy.
- 6.52 We will end the need for anyone to sleep rough through three clear strands: prevention, intervention and recovery.

Prevention

- 6.53 If we are to minimise the considerable harm caused by rough sleeping, the most important thing we can do is to prevent it from happening in the first place.
- 6.54 However, we can't do this in isolation, rather we need to ensure that the right support is in place from other key agencies, including health services, adult social care, prison, probation, police, the care system and the Job Centre working together to support the most vulnerable, with services in place that prevent people ending up in crisis.
- 6.55 We will identify the key triggers that lead to rough sleeping, and work with partner agencies to ensure that these key triggers and risk factors are identified and referrals are made.
- 6.56 We will also ensure that effective preventative work is targeted at groups who have a greater likelihood of becoming homeless and rough sleeping.
- 6.57 We will work to develop a Somewhere Safe to Stay project that will ensure that no one at risk of rough sleeping has to ever sleep rough.

Intervention

- 6.58 We will provide a rapid intervention for all rough sleepers which will offer a route off of the streets for everyone, through an assertive outreach service, that works effectively and rapidly with those new to the streets, alongside supporting more entrenched rough sleepers into accommodation and support. This outreach approach will sit alongside a clear approach to supported reconnections for those without a connection to Wrexham, to ensure that individuals are linked back to existing support networks.

- 6.59 We will build upon the success of the multi-agency Care Hub, and work effectively with our partners and providers to develop structured day service provision. We will ensure that all services are both effective and responsive to the needs of rough sleepers, challenge a street based lifestyle and work to end rough sleeping through a transactional exchange model.
- 6.60 We will ensure that no one in Wrexham has to sleep rough through the creation of a clear accommodation pathway from the streets into a range of accommodation options, which will include the development of a No Second Night Out offer. We will ensure that direct access provision supports a clear journey from the streets into support, offering stability and a person-centred, psychologically informed approach.
- 6.61 There is a lot of evidence to suggest that homelessness, especially rough sleeping, has significant and adverse consequences for an individual's health. It is widely recognised that there are strong correlations between homelessness and severe physical and mental health conditions, alongside significantly reduced life expectancy. We will work to improve access to health services for single homeless people to address both immediate and longer term needs, ensuring that they are given the same choices in relation to accessing health care services as the general population, while recognising that homeless people, may not find it easy to access mainstream service provision.
- 6.62 We will develop a coordinated approach to tackling street activity associated with rough sleeping, including begging, street drinking, substance misuse ensuring that the harms that this behaviour causes are minimised.
- 6.63 People engaged in street activity will not always be sleeping rough, however as with people who sleep rough they will have a range of housing and support needs and will often be vulnerable or contributing to the vulnerability of others.
- 6.64 As a last resort, and linked to support, we will take enforcement action against individuals and groups who persist in such behaviour.
- 6.65 We will ensure that vulnerable people displaced as a result of enforcement action are protected and have a plan in place to prevent them rough sleeping.

Recovery

- 6.66 A secure and stable home is essential to recovery, the sooner we are able to work with people sleeping rough and get them into accommodation the sooner we can begin to help them build a new future.
- 6.67 We will ensure that there are a range of accommodation options available to meet the diverse needs of this client group, including a rapid rehousing approach.
- 6.68 We will ensure that accommodation is linked into a flexible support provision, that can step up or down dependent upon an individual's needs, alongside working in the longer term to create access to education, employment and training opportunities.

What we will do end the need for anyone to sleep rough in Wrexham

1. Undertake a comprehensive review of rough sleeping to understand what changes are needed in order to effectively eliminate the need to sleep rough
2. Develop and adopt a Rough Sleeping Strategy
3. Work to prevent anyone from sleeping rough in Wrexham
4. Develop a rapid intervention for all rough sleepers through an assertive outreach service, and supported reconnection
5. Develop structured day services to engage with rough sleepers, support them in their journey off of the streets and provide opportunities for recovery
6. Develop a clear accommodation pathway off of the streets into a range of accommodation provision, based around No Second Night Out principles
7. In partnership develop a co-ordinated approach to tackling street activity
8. Work with partner agencies to ensure that all activity is focused upon supporting clients off of the streets, and not sustaining a street based lifestyle
9. Improve access to health services, and health outcomes for rough sleepers

Priority 6 - Meeting the housing and support needs of clients with multiple and complex support needs

- 6.69 We recognise that many homeless people can have multiple and complex needs. Many have a transient lifestyle, and the complexity of their needs can prevent or exclude them from being able to access or engage with mainstream accommodation and services.
- 6.70 For many people homelessness is not just a housing issue, it is closely linked with complex and chaotic life experiences. Mental health problems, drug and alcohol dependencies and experiences in prison or within the care system are often closely linked to more entrenched experiences of homelessness. These issues are complex and mutually reinforcing, often having their roots in entrenched disadvantage, and leaving people socially and economically excluded.
- 6.71 We cannot successfully tackle homelessness and rough sleeping without addressing the multiple needs of clients, and to do this we must work in partnership. Addressing one support need in isolation from others is unlikely to lead to successful outcomes for people who face complex issues. We therefore need to develop holistic approaches to recovery, supporting clients to address all of their issues simultaneously. The flexible funding pathway provides opportunities to tackle homelessness and prevent it from reoccurring by jointly commissioning services to address the multiplicity of needs that complex homeless individuals and families face. We need to ensure that all services recognise the trauma that homeless individuals may have experienced and are psychologically informed.
- 6.72 The Homelessness Review identified that there are a very high number of complex cases, including both single people and families with multiple and challenging needs. There is a need to have a better quantitative and qualitative understanding of these issues to ascertain if existing provision meets the needs of these households.
- 6.73 Former prisoners account for a very significant number of Housing Option's customers and is the second highest cause of homelessness in Wrexham. We will work with the criminal justice system to ensure that the Prisoner Pathway works much more effectively resulting in a more coordinated approach and better support for people leaving custody.
- 6.74 Substance misuse, particularly the visible use of New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) is a significant issue for Wrexham. In particular there is a very strong correlation between the use of NPS and rough sleeping within Wrexham, with individuals who have accommodation deciding to sleep rough due to the congregational drug use in the town centre. To successfully tackle rough sleeping we need to work with partners to address the use of NPS within the town, and other substance misuse, alongside rapid access to treatment.
- 6.75 The Review also identified a high level of homeless cases that were found to be intentionally homeless. In order to prepare for the removal of intentionality for homeless families we will work with Children's Services, Estate Management and Housing Associations to develop an integrated approach to working with complex families, through the provision of accommodation, intensive support and a focus on tackling the underlying causes of homelessness.

- 6.76 Throughout the Review the issue of poor mental health was a reoccurring theme, alongside a lack of a preventative response from mental health services, with engagement only happening at the point crisis; this usually will mean that a person's accommodation has been lost by this point. We want to build upon the success of the Mental Health Outreach Worker based within the Housing Options team, by working collaboratively with mental health services to ensure a joined up approach to prevention. We need to ensure a response from mental health specialists to prevent deterioration in mental health, and thus avoid crisis and prevent homelessness.
- 6.77 The Homelessness Review identified that young people are increasingly disadvantaged by the combined impact of high unemployment, low incomes, welfare reform, and limited housing options. A growing proportion of young people are leaving care or presenting as homeless from the parental home with complex needs – for example a combination of mental health problems, behavioural problems, substance misuse, and offending behaviour. Their needs do not fit into any one service area and responses to them from public sector agencies can be fragmented, reactive, often ineffective and have a high cost. The Review identified that young people are over-represented in the homeless population in Wrexham.
- 6.78 We are committed to ensuring that young people in Wrexham have the best start in life, and are able to develop well so that they can fulfill their potential and meet their aspirations.
- 6.79 To effectively prevent homelessness we will intervene as early as possible to prevent housing instability and homelessness from occurring or persisting. Prevention will focus on supporting young people to remain at home with their family, or in wider family networks, where appropriate and safe to do so. Where young people do become homeless, we will commission specialist services to provide respite, emergency and longer term accommodation and support that can effectively address the young person's housing and support needs, including those young people with multiple and complex needs.
- 6.80 We will commission education work in schools and other youth provision and develop social media platforms, to raise awareness of the available housing options and the reality and risks of homelessness. We will ensure that service pathways are planned and integrated to better meet the needs of young people experiencing housing instability and homelessness.
- 6.81 We will safeguard young people who are at risk because of housing instability or homelessness. We will work to ensure that care leavers do not become homeless upon leaving care by developing a clear housing and support pathway with safeguards in place.

What we will do meet the housing and support needs of clients with multiple and complex support needs

1. Prevent youth homelessness through education, peer mentoring, mediation and emergency respite accommodation
2. Develop an effective care leaver accommodation and support pathway
3. Remodel accommodation-based support services to ensure an integrated approach that meets the needs of people with multiple and complex needs
4. Develop an integrated approach to working with complex families to ensure homelessness and repeat homelessness is prevented
5. Ensure that the Prisoner Pathway works effectively to prevent homelessness on release from custody
6. Improve housing outcomes for clients with poor mental health
7. Improve housing outcomes for clients with substance misuse

7. Governance and Delivering the Homelessness Strategy

- 7.1 In order to meet our commitment to deliver the strategic priorities we need to ensure that together with partners, we have the skills, services, resources and infrastructure for the delivery of the Strategy's objectives.
- 7.2 To achieve the strategic priorities and objectives an action plan has been developed in partnership with partners and stakeholders to outline key actions to be delivered over the lifetime of this strategy.
- 7.3 The Homelessness Prevention Steering Group will be responsible for the delivery and monitoring of this Homelessness Strategy and action plan. The action plan will be monitored quarterly and reviewed annually so that it is responsive to emerging needs, policy and legislative changes and achieves the priorities contained within it.
- 7.4 The Homelessness Prevention Steering Group will feed into the Wrexham Housing Alliance, which will ensure both effective governance arrangements, alongside a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the prevention of homelessness.
- 7.5 A joined-up partnership approach is critical to delivering the ambitious and innovative plans detailed within this strategy and meeting Wrexham's vision for homelessness.
- 7.6 By delivering this whole system change we are committed to reducing and preventing homelessness and ending the need to sleep rough in Wrexham.
- 7.7 Wrexham County Borough Council will continue to contribute to the delivery of the North Wales Homelessness Strategy to ensure an effective regional collaborative approach to tackling homelessness across North Wales.

8. Commissioning of Homelessness Services

- 8.1 The Council will commission services that support and directly contribute to meeting the objectives set out in this strategy.
- 8.2 The Homelessness Strategy will inform the Supporting People Local Commissioning Plan. Services will be commissioned that meet the objectives contained within this Strategy and the Local Commissioning Plan priorities.
- 8.3 Commissioning homelessness services in Wrexham will be based upon the delivery structure for the Supporting People programme in Wales, focusing on local, regional and national working to achieve:
 - Improvement to services
 - Probity, accountability, transparency and scrutiny
 - Implementation based upon the principles of equality, collaboration and co-production
 - Provision of strategic oversight and direction in line with national, regional and local strategy and Supporting People Commissioning plans
 - A system underpinned by a robust and enforceable regime of governance.

Appendix 1: Strategic Context

Wrexham's Homelessness Strategy has been developed in the context of a wide range of national, regional and local policies, strategies and plans. These are covered in considerable detail within the Homelessness Review, however the key ones are detailed below.

National Strategic Context

National Housing Strategy – 'Improving Lives and Communities – Homes in Wales'

The Strategy recognises that investing in housing is not only about bricks and mortar issues, besides improving people's homes, it brings benefits for people too, contributing to improving their health, wellbeing and quality of life.

The Strategy's priorities are:

- Providing more housing of the right type and offering more choice;
- Improving homes and communities, including the energy efficiency of new and existing homes;
- Improving housing-related services and support, particularly for vulnerable people and people from minority groups.

Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales

In 2009 the Welsh Government published its 10 Year Homelessness Plan for Wales. The Ten Year Plan sets out some guiding principles for the development and delivery of homelessness services.

The strategic aims underlying the Plan are:

- Preventing homelessness wherever possible;
- Working across organisational and policy boundaries;
- Placing the service user at the centre of service delivery;
- Ensuring social inclusion and equality of access to services;
- Making the best use of resources.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Part two of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 created multiple changes in the duties that Local Authorities owe to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days. These changes include:

- New duties for local authorities to help prevent homelessness for anyone who asks for help

- Involving people in designing their own solutions, by jointly developing a Personal Housing Plan looking not just at immediate housing problems but also at any underlying issues
- Intervening early – within 56 days of homelessness – to prevent people’s situations escalating out of hand
- Removing automatic priority need for prison leavers
- Placing new duties on housing associations to cooperate in homelessness prevention; and
- Allowing local authorities to discharge homelessness duties with an offer of private rented accommodation without the consent of the applicant.

Rent Smart Wales

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014, also introduced the requirement for all private landlords to be registered. Rent Smart Wales ensures that all private rented property in Wales and their landlords are named on a central register. In addition, self-managing landlords and agents who let and manage property must have a licence. In order to get a licence, people must be trained in their rights and responsibilities when renting out property to tenants.

Equal Ground Standard

The Equal Ground Standard sets out guidelines to the standard of service that people should receive when they approach Welsh homelessness services. Organisations who sign up to the Equal Ground Standard will demonstrate their commitment to providing a quality, person-centred service. The Standard has been developed by past and current users of housing and homelessness services through the Shelter Cymru Take Notice Project.

Social Services & Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014

The Act provides the legal framework for improving the well-being of people who need care and support, and carers who need support, and for transforming social services in Wales. The Act changes the way people’s needs are assessed and the way services are delivered, giving people more of a say in the care and support they receive.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to carry out their functions in a sustainable way which improves economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being – in practice, this means delivering preventative services, considering both short and long-term needs, and working in collaboration with partners to deliver better outcomes and avoid duplication.

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act will make it simpler and easier to rent a home, replacing various and complex pieces of existing legislation within one clear legal framework.

With a limited number of exceptions, the act replaces all current tenancies and licences with just two types of occupation contract:

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

Welfare Reform

The Government has introduced a series of welfare reforms and changes to the welfare to work provision under the provisions of the Welfare Reform Act of 2012. Welfare Reforms include the introduction of Universal Credit, changes to Housing Benefit Regulations, and introducing a cap on the amount of benefits working aged people can receive.

Regional & Local Strategic context

North Wales Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee (RCC)

The establishment of the North Wales Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee (RCC) in 2012 has enabled a strategic overview of developments that affect Supporting People both locally and regionally through improved information sharing. This presents opportunities for closer regional working between Supporting People Teams across North Wales, which presents an additional opportunity for making efficiency savings, through the North Wales Strategic Commissioning Plan 2017, which identifies the following priorities:

- Domestic Abuse
- Prison Resettlement
- Rough Sleepers
- Learning Disabilities

North Wales Population Assessment

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to assess the care and support needs to the population and the support needs of carers.

The Homelessness chapter of the assessment suggests the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 is having a positive effect but there are still challenges, with a need for greater joined up work to focus on prevention, including responding to the impact of Welfare Reform and addressing gaps in services for single people, and specialist provision.

North Wales Population Assessment Regional Plan 2018-23

In relation to Housing and Homelessness the Plan identifies the following:

- People leaving prison need help with housing
- Changes to welfare benefits affect people's lives
- There's a need for specialist housing
- Housing and mental health services need to work together

Wrexham County Borough Council Corporate Plan 2017-2022

The Draft Corporate Plan's priorities are:

- Supporting a sustainable and thriving economy
- People - supporting active and self-reliant communities whilst safeguarding those in need
- Place - supporting a sustainable and diverse environment
- Organisation - building an efficient and effective organisation that can best support local well-being

Wrexham's Local Housing Strategy 2013-18

This Housing Strategy sets out Wrexham County Borough Council's direction of travel in housing and housing issues over the next five years.

The Strategy's three themes are:

- More Housing More Choice
- Improving Homes and Communities – preventing disrepair and raising the quality of housing
- Better services to improve people's lives

Work is currently underway to update the Strategy.

Wrexham Supporting People Commissioning Plan 2016/17-2018/19

Wrexham's Supporting People Vision is 'Supporting people to improve their quality of life'.

The current Supporting People strategic priorities are:

- Rough Sleeping Outreach Worker
- Complex Needs Scheme for Young People
- Referral Gateway
- Implementation of Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- New service for people with learning disabilities

- New service for people with drug and alcohol issues and/or with criminal offending behaviours
- Strategic input in service development
- Investigate how best to meet the needs of people with lower level mental health issues
- Evaluate the barriers and solutions to accessing move on accommodation