

Homelessness Review

2017/18

Conwy County Borough Council

Full Report

February 2018

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This Homelessness Review has been prepared by arc⁴ Ltd on behalf of Conwy County Council. The Review itself provides a detailed analysis of the levels and nature of homelessness, an audit of the services and a review of the resources available to spend on homelessness within the county.

It also provides an evidence base for the emerging Local Housing Strategy as well as a specific Homelessness Strategy.

This Homelessness Review has been prepared and undertaken by arc⁴ Ltd on behalf of Conwy County Borough Council. As such this Review complies with the associated and relevant legislation (Part 2 (Homelessness) of the Housing (Wales) Act - 2014) along with the Welsh Government's Code of Guidance on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (2016).

This Homelessness Review will form the principle element of the required evidence base for Conwy CBC. It sets out to identify, capture and quantify the levels of current provision and future demand for homelessness services within the borough and through its findings will underpin and inform the development of both a local service level response as well as the development of a Sub-regional Homelessness Strategy for North Wales. This Homelessness Review forms part of a suite of similar commissioned reviews for the six* North Wales local authorities scheduled to be completed by arc⁴ Ltd in the first half of 2018.

** Conwy; Denbighshire; Flintshire; Gwynedd; Wrexham; Anglesey*

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires every Local Authority to carry out a homelessness review and formulate a strategy based upon that review. The Act stipulates that every Local Housing Authority must adopt their first Homelessness Strategy in 2018 and develop a new strategy, every four years thereafter.
- 1.2 The Homelessness Review must consider the following:
 - (a) Current and likely future levels of homelessness in the local housing authority's area.
 - (b) The activities which are carried out for the achievement of the following objectives (or which contribute to their achievement)
 - I. The prevention of homelessness
 - II. Securing that suitable accommodation is or will be available for people who are or may become homeless
 - III. Providing that satisfactory support is available for people who are or may become homeless.
 - (c) The resources available to the authority, other public authorities, voluntary organisations and other persons for the activities outlined in (b) above.
- 1.3 Tackling homelessness is a key priority for Conwy Council and its partner organisations, this comprehensive review will provide a sound evidence base to inform the Authority's emerging Local Housing Strategy and strategic homelessness plans. At the time of writing this review the six Councils of North Wales were in discussions with Welsh Government regarding the development of a Regional Homelessness Strategy with local delivery plans.
- 1.4 This review will provide a basis for a strategic approach to prevent homelessness and provide the services to support and accommodate those in housing need.

2. Homelessness Review and Strategy Development

- 2.1 Whilst Conwy County Council as part of its statutory duty has produced this document; it is not simply a review of the services provided by the Council. There are multiple and complex issues that can cause homelessness, therefore in compiling this review, the Council has worked closely with a variety of other statutory and voluntary agencies to gain a detailed understanding of homelessness in Conwy.
- 2.2 The review is a multi-agency document which recognises that partnership working is key to preventing homelessness and developing sustainable housing and support solutions.

Strategic Groups and Links

- 2.3 The Conwy Homelessness Prevention Steering Group is the formal delivery group that oversees the development of the Review and Strategy and will monitor the implementation of the strategy action plan.
- 2.4 The group meets on a regular basis and is made up of officers from a range of statutory and voluntary agencies.
- 2.5 This is one of a number of delivery groups which will report progress to the Conwy Strategic Housing Partnership.
- 2.6 To support the delivery group the County has established a Homelessness Forum, which is made up of a range of organisations who work across the area. This group aims to meet on a quarterly basis and provides a joint approach to tackling homelessness by information sharing, improving joint working and contributing to the delivery of the Homelessness Strategy action plan.
- 2.7 The Review process identified a number of strategic links that exist on a national, regional and local level. The importance of identifying these strategic links is necessary if the response to preventing homelessness is to be effective.

Methodology

- 2.8 The Review process sought to identify the needs of all homeless people, and those likely to become homeless. This was achieved by compiling a detailed picture of the past, current and future nature and levels of homelessness across the County.
- 2.9 The Review pulls together available data from a wide range of sources including Welsh Government Returns, Supporting People needs mapping data, outreach data, Citizen's Advice Bureau data and Shelter data. A number of consultation and mapping exercises were also completed. This information provides a detailed picture of the levels and causes of homelessness across Conwy, and used together with demographic data, the review identifies unmet need and future trends.
- 2.10 Consultation with staff, partners and customers was critical to the review process, and will continue to inform the development of the strategy and improvements to existing Council services.

3. Strategic Links and National Policy

- 3.1 In taking forward the recommendations from this review it is important to understand what is driving homelessness and housing demand, and how policy decisions at a national and local level are shaping the response.

National Strategic Context

United Kingdom Government Priorities

- 3.2 Derived from national policy, policy proposals, government departmental business plans and spending decisions, the government's ambitions can be summarised as:
- Reduce the national deficit.
 - Create a sustainable and resilient economy, across public, private and voluntary and community sectors.
 - Reduce health inequalities and improved health outcomes, with the health of the poorest improved the fastest. People should also have greater independence, choice and control throughout their lives. Mental health is of equal importance to physical health.
 - Child poverty is ended by 2020.
 - People and communities are empowered to make informed decisions about their own lives, get involved in shaping services and hold decision makers to account.
- 3.3 In order to reduce the national deficit, the British Government has significantly reduced public expenditure over a very short period of time, this has enabled greater local responsibility for spending decisions through the Localism Act 2011 and it expects private, voluntary and community sectors to make a greater contribution.

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

- 3.4 Published in 2010 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, well-being and quality of life. Investing public money in building and refurbishing homes also contributes to national and local economies, creating and supporting jobs and training opportunities. It helps regenerate communities; improving the way they look, their safety, and helping people feel good about where they live.
- 3.5 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

- 3.6 In 2009 the Welsh Government published its 10 Year Homelessness Plan for Wales. The 10 Year Plan sets out some guiding principles for the development and delivery of homelessness services.
- 3.7 The strategic aims underlying this 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.
- 3.8 The Plan's vision is to reduce homelessness and its impact. At the heart of achieving this vision is ensuring that everyone can receive the help they need to avoid becoming homeless. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, the Plan seeks to ensure that the amount of distress, deprivation and disadvantage that can be caused is kept to an absolute minimum. To do this, services need to be easily accessible, readily available, designed around, and responsive to, the needs of the people who use them.

Housing (Wales) Act 2014

- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.

- 3.11 These new requirements place increased pressure on homelessness services, whereby Councils owe a duty to any household threatened with Homelessness within 56 days; the impact of which is a much larger number of households requiring assistance from the Local Authority.
- 3.12 In order to be able to respond to this challenge and effectively prevent homelessness for these households, Local Authorities need to ensure that services are restructured to focus on early intervention and prevention, with a focus on achieving person centred outcomes.
- 3.13 In the longer term the Welsh Government has pledged to remove the intentionality test for all families. It is envisaged this will be introduced from April 2019. This will place further pressures on Local Authorities in being able to find sustainable housing options for potentially vulnerable families with multiple support needs.

Rent Smart Wales

- 3.14 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

- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 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

- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 It also promotes a range of help available within the community to reduce the need for formal, planned support.
- Services will be available to provide the right support at the right time
 - More information and advice will be available
 - Assessment will be simpler and proportionate
 - Carers will have an equal right to be assessed for support

- There will be stronger powers to keep people safe from abuse and neglect.

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- 3.19 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to carry out their functions in a sustainable way which improves the 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.

Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England & Wales) Regulations 2015

- 3.20 The Regulations 2015 are designed to tackle the least energy-efficient properties in England and Wales – those rated F or G on their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC). The Regulations establish a minimum standard of band E for domestic privately rented property, affecting new tenancies from 1 April 2018.

Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016

- 3.21 The Renting Homes (Wales) Act aims to make it simpler and easier to rent a home, replacing various complex pieces of existing legislation with one clear legal framework.
- 3.22 At the heart of the Act are the new 'occupation contracts'. 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.
- 3.23 The Act will require landlords to issue a written statement of the occupation contract which clearly sets out the rights and responsibilities of landlords and those renting from them. To help landlords comply with this requirement, the Welsh Government will provide free model contracts.
- 3.24 A minimum six-month occupation period will be maintained by the Act and landlords will have to ensure the property is fit for human habitation. The Act will also help protect people from being evicted simply for complaining about the condition of a property.
- 3.25 People who find themselves in difficult circumstances will also benefit from the Act. It will help to prevent current homelessness situations where a joint tenant leaves the tenancy, thereby ending the tenancy for everyone else. The new approach to joint contracts will also help victims of domestic abuse by enabling the person carrying out domestic abuse to be targeted for eviction.
- 3.26 Inequalities in how someone can succeed to a tenancy are also addressed, with a new succession right for carers created.

- 3.27 The Act will enable landlords to repossess an abandoned property without needing a court order, enabling the property to be re-let more quickly.

Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill

- 3.28 The Abolition of the Right to Buy and Associated Rights (Wales) Bill seeks to restrict, and then ultimately end, the Right to Buy (including the Preserved Right to Buy and Extended Right to Buy) and the Right to Acquire in Wales. The Welsh Government's stated purpose of the Bill is to safeguard Wales' social housing stock for people who are unable to acquire homes through the housing market. If the Bill is enacted this will limit the number of lost social housing units.

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

- 3.29 On 29 April 2015, the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act. The legislation aims to improve the public sector response in Wales to such abuse and violence.
- 3.30 The Act will:
- Improve arrangements to promote awareness of, and prevent, protect and support victims of gender-based violence, domestic abuse and sexual violence;
 - Introduce a needs-based approach to developing strategies which will ensure strong strategic direction and strengthened accountability;
 - Ensure strategic level ownership, through the appointment of a Ministerial Adviser who will have a role in advising Welsh Ministers and improving joint working amongst agencies across this sector;
 - Improve consistency, quality and join-up of service provision in Wales.

Right to be Safe

- 3.31 In 2010 the Welsh Government published 'The Right to be Safe' which is its strategy for tackling all forms of violence against women. The Right to be Safe contains four key priorities:
- Prevention and Raising Awareness of Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse;
 - Providing Support for Victims and Children;
 - Improving the Response of Criminal Justice Agencies;
 - Improving the Response of Health Services and Other Agencies.
- 3.32 The strategy states that wherever possible, victims should be kept safe in their own homes by the perpetrator having to leave, not the victim. Unfortunately, however some women see no other option but to leave because the risk to themselves and their children is so great. Preventing these women and their children becoming homeless is a priority.

Ten Year Welsh Substance Misuse Strategy -Working Together to Reduce Harm

- 3.33 Working Together to Reduce Harm recognises that housing and homelessness prevention services have a vital role to play in helping substance misusers to access the accommodation they need. Housing must be seen as a core element of wrap-around services and be reflected in planning mechanisms.

Financial Inclusion for Wales Strategy 2016

- 3.34 The Financial Inclusion Strategy set out its vision for everyone living in Wales to have access to appropriate and affordable financial services, be supported by quality assured information and advice services, and have the financial capability and motivation to benefit from the financial services available to them.
- 3.35 Delivering this vision will make an important contribution to tackling poverty and supporting those living in low-income households. Specifically the Strategy aims that:
- Everyone receives the financial education he or she needs, whether in schools, the community or other setting, carrying on throughout life and into retirement;
 - Everyone has access to objective and understandable information and advice on credit, debt, savings and pensions, delivered at the time and via the channel most suited to an individual;
 - Every adult has access to a transactional account of their own and the ability to make full use of it;
 - Everyone has access to affordable and appropriate credit from responsible lenders;
 - Everyone is encouraged to save, even in small or occasional amounts, to show the importance of a savings culture, to build up resilience against financial shocks and as an additional resource for retirement;
 - Everyone has access to the right insurance cover for his or her needs, at a fair price.

Welfare Reform

Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment

- 3.36 The UK Government's Welfare Reform Act 2012 legislated for the biggest change to the welfare system for over 60 years. The main elements of the Welfare Reform Act introduced two new benefits: Universal Credit (UC) which replaces six current Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) income related/based working age benefits for people in and out of work; and Personal Independence Payment (PIP).
- 3.37 The DWP started a limited programme of roll-out for UC in 2014. The national expansion of UC will include new single jobseeker claimants across the UK by March 2016. In February 2016, the DWP reported the full UC service for new claims would be delivered

nationally for all types of claimants on a phased roll out basis from May 2016, completing in summer 2018.

- 3.38 The DWP have been working closely with UK Government departments, devolved administrations, Local Authorities and Local Authority representative bodies to develop a Universal Support Delivered Locally framework to support the more complex, vulnerable claimants in the transition from legacy benefits to UC. Trials including two in Wales (Blaenau Gwent and Carmarthenshire), tested the supporting partnership arrangements for triage, financial (including personal budgeting support) and digital inclusion.
- 3.39 Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a benefit for people aged 16 to 64 with a long-term health condition or disability. Claimants currently in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) have been required at the point of renewal to make a new claim for PIP. The DWP is gradually inviting DLA claimants with a long term or indefinite award to make a claim for PIP.
- 3.40 Following the UK Government's Summer 2015 Budget and the 2015 Autumn Statement, the UK Government's tax and benefit changes to be introduced between 2015/16 and 2019/20 will reduce household income in Wales by around £600 million a year in total. Although the average annual cash loss for households in Wales is roughly the same as for the UK as a whole, this represents a higher percentage of income in Wales as average incomes are lower. This loss will add to the significant amount of income already lost as a result of earlier welfare cuts. The Welfare Reform and Work Bill is scheduled to receive Royal Assent in Spring 2016.
- 3.41 In 2015, the Welsh Government's Ministerial Task and Finish Group on Welfare Reform agreed a forward research programme, to assess the impact of the welfare reforms and consider likely impacts on different income groups, family types, and those with protected characteristics.
- 3.42 The impact of welfare reform set against a backdrop of a difficult economic climate 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.
- 3.43 Universal Credit will be rolled out in Conwy in 2018.

The ending of automatic entitlement to the housing costs element of Universal Credit for unemployed 18 – 21 year olds.

- 3.44 This change, due in 2017, is linked to the new 'Youth Obligation', placing a more rigorous conditionality on young people who are seeking work. There will be some exemptions, including care leavers, young parents and those living in supported housing. The detail of this policy change is not yet available, but the widespread view from youth and homelessness organisations is that there will be an increase in youth homelessness as a result.

Shared Room Rate

- 3.45 The shared room rate for under 35's, introduced in January 2012, means that the maximum Local Housing Allowance that can be paid for a single person under 35 is limited to the rate for a single room in a shared property or a bedsit. There are exemptions e.g. people who have previously spent at least 3 months living in supported accommodation- this may lead to individuals between the ages of 25 and 34 wishing to remain in supported accommodation for a longer period than they need, to benefit from this exemption.
- 3.46 The introduction of the shared room rate has reduced the housing options available to young single people.

Restrictions to housing benefits for under-occupiers

- 3.47 In April 2013 property size restrictions for working-age people in social housing were introduced, bringing the same rules in that apply to private sector lettings. This has become known as the "bedroom tax" and requires under-occupiers of social housing properties to pay a charge for each bedroom in excess of their needs, taken as a reduction in benefit payable.

Benefit Cap

- 3.48 From 7th November 2016 the benefit cap was reduced to £384.62 for couples and those with children and £257.69 a week for single people. There are exemptions for households where someone is in work and/or in receipt of DLA/ESA Support Group/carers.

Increase in non-dependent deductions

- 3.49 Increases in non-dependent deductions are reportedly leading to an increase in household members being asked to leave as there is not enough household income to sustain them.

Freeze on Up-rating of Benefits

- 3.50 Most commonly claimed working Age Benefits (JSA, ESA, WTC/CTC) are frozen with no annual up-rating. The value of these benefits will fall by 8% by 2020. Over the life of the Homelessness Strategy this freeze will have a big impact upon household income and affordability.

Reduction of ESA (WRAG)

- 3.51 New claimants to ESA will not receive the additional £29.50pw whilst in the Work Related Activity Group (WRAG).

Two Child Limit

- 3.52 New claims for Tax Credit /Universal Credit will be limited to 2 children per family for children born after April 2017.

Support of Mortgage Interest

- 3.53 The waiting period will return to the pre-recession length of 39 weeks from April 2016. Help with the costs for people unable to work will switch to a loan from April 2018.

Backdating Housing Benefit

- 3.54 The time limit for backdating Housing Benefit for working age claimants was reduced from 6 months to 4 weeks from 1 April 2016.

The Impact of Welfare Reform in Conwy

- 3.55 To better understand how the residents of Conwy have and will be impacted by the cumulative impact of the welfare reforms and which groups will be most heavily impacted, Welsh Government provided funding to Conwy, Anglesey and Gwynedd Council's to commission research by "Policy in Practice". The research also provides some key actions that the Council and its partners can take to support those who are and will be affected. The report predicts that some groups will face significant difficulties in meeting their housing costs, which will put additional pressure on the homelessness service.
- 3.56 The dataset used for the analysis by Policy in Practice was for those households in Conwy who are receiving either Housing Benefit or Council Tax support. At the time of the analysis there were a total of 11,506 households in receipt of the latter. 53.5% of the households were of working age. A summary of the main findings of the research can be seen below:
- 19.8% of the working age households living in social housing are affected by the spare room subsidy (commonly known as the bedroom tax), with an average deduction of £15.72 per week; 26.5% of the households affected have children (210 in total);

- 3,735 households (working age & pension) are affected by the Local Housing Allowance cap – 87.2% of these are charged rent higher than the LHA – average reported difference is £30.70 per week;
- 59 households have been affected by the lower benefit cap (£20,000), with an average loss of income of £49.12 per week;
- 53.4% of Conwy's working age benefit applicants will lose out when they transfer to Universal Credit and will need transitional protection;
- 2,600 households will require transitional protection estimated to be in the sum of £3,371,494;
- 986 households have seen a high impact from the welfare reforms (loss of more than £30.00 per week). Private renters and lone parents make up the majority of this group;
- Geographical impact – areas in the North of the county borough have been particularly hit by the reforms to date (Wards in Towyn, Kinmel Bay, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno have seen the highest income loss);
- Those under 35 find it very hard to find accommodation in the private sector. The shared room rate of LHA (£55) falls significantly short of the average market rate for a room in a house share. The lack of shared room options results in pressure on the social sector and housing options team.

Regional Strategic Context

Conwy and Denbighshire Public Services Board

3.57 The Public Services Board (PSB) is a collection of public bodies working together to improve the wellbeing of the County. Conwy and Denbighshire are working to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the Conwy and Denbighshire area by working to achieve the 7 well-being goals:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales.

3.58 The PSB has four main tasks

- To prepare and publish an assessment of the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Conwy and Denbighshire;
- To prepare and publish a Local Well-being Plan setting out local objectives and the steps it proposes to take to meet them;

- To take all reasonable steps to meet local objectives;
- To prepare and publish an annual report that sets out the Board's progress in meeting the local objectives.

North Wales Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee (RCC)

- 3.59 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.

North Wales Population Assessment

- 3.60 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.
- 3.61 The Homelessness chapter of the assessment suggests the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 with an emphasis on earlier intervention and prevention, is having a positive effect but there are still challenges. Progress may be affected if transitional funding is removed. There is a need for greater joined up work to focus on prevention. The key messages are:
- Welfare reform: especially changes to Housing Benefit and the introduction of Universal Credit expected to increase demand upon some services, especially for certain groups such as young people. For some people, reduction in funding will make it difficult to secure appropriate and suitable accommodation. Groups most adversely impacted, correlate closely with groups more exposed and vulnerable to homelessness. Concerns around Universal Credit - which compounds all benefit payments and does not automatically allow transfer of the rent element to the landlord; pilot areas found higher level of arrears which could impact on the sustainability of tenancies.
 - Gaps in service / support identified as:
 - Lack of single person accommodation
 - Limited hostel provision
 - Shortage of specialist provision for individuals with on-going medical conditions
 - Gaps in support services.

North Wales Population Assessment Regional Plan 2018 -23

3.62 The Plan identifies the following 5 priorities based upon the population assessment:

- Children & Young People
- Older people
- Learning Disabilities
- Mental Health and Substance Misuse
- Carers.

3.63 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.

Local Strategic context

Conwy People's Partnership

3.64 The Conwy People's Partnership is a strategic planning group, which brings together a wide range of services relating to all communities in Conwy. The Conwy vision for the partnership is 'Working Together for Wellbeing'. The partnership works to ensure that all people and communities within Conwy are treated fairly and according to their needs.

Local Safeguarding Children's Board

3.65 The Local Safeguarding Children's Board (LSCB) is responsible for protecting children and young people from significant harm, and for promoting their welfare. The LSCB decides how local child protection services should be planned, delivered and monitored. Conwy and Denbighshire work together on a joint LSCB for both counties. The LSCB has two main functions: to coordinate all agencies' work to promote the safety and welfare of children, and to ensure the effectiveness of that work. All agencies must comply with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures and the 'Safeguarding Children: Working Together under the Children Act 2004' guidance.

Safer Conwy

3.66 Safer Conwy is a partnership organisation that co-ordinates and brings together key agencies that are committed to increasing community safety in Conwy, through a reduction in local crime and disorder, including Conwy County Borough Council, Denbighshire County Council, North Wales Police, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, North Wales Probation, Conwy Local Health Board and Conwy and Denbighshire Youth Offending Team.

3.67 The Partnership has 5 subgroups to address its priorities:

- Serious Crime and Counter Terrorism
 - Fewer repeat victims of domestic abuse
 - More victims reporting domestic abuse for the first time
 - Reducing the availability of Class A drugs
- Local Priorities
 - Effectively tackling environmental crime
 - Reducing alcohol related crime
 - Reducing criminal damage and anti-social behaviour
- Reducing Re-Offending
 - Reduce the number of repeat offenders
 - Reduce juvenile re-offending
 - Reducing the number of offences committed by repeat offenders
- Tackling Substance Misuse
 - Increase referrals to structured treatment services
 - Increase the number of contacts engage with the harm reduction service
 - Alcohol misuse by under 18s
- Promoting Community Safety
 - Reducing the fear of crime
 - Increasing reassurance
 - Involve the community in delivering the action plan.

North Wales Heads of Housing Meetings

3.68 These meetings are held quarterly with the Heads of Housing from each of the six north Wales Local Authorities. Where responsibilities are split across directorates in a Local Authority, representatives are invited from individual sections to discuss regional strategic issues related to housing.

Conwy County Borough Council Corporate Plan 2017-2022 (Draft)

3.69 The Draft Corporate Plan's priorities are

- Skills – people are educated and skilled. We want to be known for excellent education. We will focus on:
 - improving education across schools
 - improving performance and results

- helping young people to develop skills and make the most of job opportunities.
- Safe - people are safe and feel safe. We want communities to work together to make sure vulnerable people are safe. We will focus on:
 - Strengthening safeguarding arrangements across the council
 - having communities that look out for vulnerable people
 - helping people know what they should do to keep themselves and others safe.
- Housing - People have good quality homes they can afford and that make their lives better. We will focus on:
 - increasing the number of affordable houses available to buy
 - planning the right accommodation in the right areas
 - stopping people from becoming homeless.
- Health – People are healthy and active. We want to promote healthy life choices. This can make a real difference to the quality of people's lives. We will focus on:
 - promoting healthy choices and healthy lifestyles
 - working with Health and Social Care services
 - making sure people can get the care they need when they need it.
- Growth – People live in a county which has a prosperous economy. We want to have enough jobs, services, goods and money. This is important if we're going to be healthy, strong and able to grow in the future. We will focus on:
 - encouraging new ideas and innovation
 - encouraging new jobs and businesses
 - developing winter tourism
 - developing skills and apprenticeship opportunities
 - working together with all business in the area.
- Environment – People value and look after the environment. We want our communities to be resilient to climate change. We need to think about the environment when making decisions. We will focus on:
 - protecting the environment for future generations
 - improving coastal flood defences
 - educating people to protect their own home from floods
 - recycling more
 - using more renewable energy.
- Culture – People live in a county where heritage, culture and the Welsh language thrive. We want to protect our culture and heritage for future generations. We want to encourage speaking Welsh as part of everyday life. We will focus on:
 - promoting and celebrating our culture

- using the arts to help people's well-being.
- Voice – People are informed, included, listened to, and can add to their community. It's important people have a say in decisions that affect their lives and their communities. We will focus on:
 - looking at how we involve people
 - looking at how we communicate and work with communities
 - making changes to improve how we work
 - helping people get involved
 - making good use of technology.

One Conwy

- 3.70 This document sets out a clear direction for all Public Service agencies, to improve the lives of the people of Conwy. In the past we have had to produce a number of different partnership plans to achieve these aims, but One Conwy merges all these plans and strategies into one, clear, long term plan:
- Children and Young People's Plan
 - Health, Social Care and Well-being Strategy
 - Community Strategy
 - Community Safety Plan
- 3.71 There has been extensive consultation with residents throughout Conwy regarding One Conwy. This has highlighted a number of housing issues which One Conwy aims to achieve;
- Provide and enable accessible, affordable and good quality housing for our communities;
 - Prevent homelessness;
 - Reduce the number of accidental house fires;
 - Bring empty houses back into use;
 - Develop sustainable and accessible transport options.

Conwy's Local Housing Strategy 2013-18

- 3.72 Conwy's Housing Strategy's vision is that the *"housing market supports the needs and aspirations of its community: a market that enables choice and accessibility by providing quality, affordable and sustainable homes."*
- 3.73 The Strategy sets out the Authority's five year plan for housing in Conwy. This includes the need for more affordable housing in the right locations, improving the quality of privately rented housing and ensuring that housing support is available to members of our communities with particular housing needs.

3.74 Work is currently underway to develop a new Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023. The draft Strategy has identified the four following challenges in relation to housing in Conwy:

- **Affordability**

We do not have enough affordable housing options for low income households and demand is escalating.

- **Appropriateness**

We have a diverse range of support and accommodation needs to meet with fewer resources.

- **Quality**

We need to improve the energy efficiency standards of the older housing stock and ensure that homes do not adversely affect people's health.

- **Informed Choice**

We need to inform people about the realities of finding and sustaining a home in our county to enable us to manage their expectations and choices.

3.75 The vision for the new strategy mirrors the corporate priority: *"People in Conwy have access to affordable, appropriate and good quality accommodation that enhances their quality of life."*

Conwy Strategic Housing Partnership

3.76 The Strategic Housing Partnership Board remit is to co-ordinate and strengthen housing related activities across the Council and its partner organisations.

3.77 The group oversees the development and implementation of the Local Housing Strategy and co-ordinates and strengthens housing related activities across all services and partner organisations contributing to One Conwy and the Building Resilient Communities & Tackling Poverty agenda.

The Conwy Local Development Plan

3.78 The Conwy LDP sets out the framework for the development and use of land within the County Borough (excluding Snowdonia National Park) and will deliver the spatial planning strategy for the location of new development until 2022.

3.79 Conwy's LDP identifies land to meet the projected requirement for the development of up to 6,350 dwellings (with a contingency level of up to 6,985 dwellings) over the remainder of the plan period. A key priority of the LDP is to increase the supply of affordable housing for local need, primarily through the provision of Affordable Housing for Local Need (AHLN) on allocated sites. The Affordable Housing Needs Calculation has identified a need for approximately 1,875 affordable housing units, of which 50% represents intermediate need and 50% for social housing need. The LDP sets a target to deliver the approximately 1,000 intermediate 'new-build' units over the plan period from the proposed 6,350 total housing supply. The remaining social housing will be met

through turnover of existing housing stock and through the other mechanisms identified in the LHS.

Eryri Local Development Plan (LDP)

- 3.80 The Eryri Local Development Plan was adopted by Snowdonia National Park Authority on the 13th of July 2011. The Eryri LDP sets out the planning framework for development within the National Park area. Land has been allocated within the plan for up to 830 new dwellings over the plan period. Approximately 50% of these will be delivered as affordable intermediate or social rented housing for local people in need who cannot afford open market housing. This stock of dwellings will be retained in perpetuity to establish a range of dwellings for the social and economic benefit of the National Park at lower cost than open market housing.

North Wales Regional Strategic Commissioning Plan 2017

- 3.81 The North Wales Regional Collaborative Committee has agreed the following priorities:
- Domestic Abuse - Regional working provides an opportunity for us to be more efficient and better meet the priorities of the Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act and for us to meet the high demand for services. North Wales has taken steps to ensure appropriate services are also available for men.
 - Prison Resettlement – The provision of adequate accommodation and support to facilitate effective resettlement is another priority for the region. Supporting People Teams and Homelessness have joined together to commission a piece of work to inform where improvements can be identified. This piece of work will be finalised in March and will include a review of current arrangements across Supporting People provision and Housing Solutions Services and will seek the views of those that have left prison and resettled in North Wales.
 - Rough Sleepers - The Regional Collaborative Committee is committed to preventing rough sleeping. The RCC will link into pilots being delivered in partnership with BCUHB to identify root causes and support required. The Regional Collaborative Committee will consider where amendments may be needed to prevent some individuals with support needs being excluded from current provision.
 - Learning Disabilities - The Regional Collaborative Committee has completed work to benchmark provision across the region and remains committed to a consistent approach to ensuring that all funding is delivering housing related support and is strategically relevant.

Legal Context

- 3.82 The legislation that covers the Council's main duties in respect of homelessness is the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Definition of homelessness

- 3.83 Section.55 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, states *“a person is homeless if he or she has no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for his or her occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy. A person will also be homeless where he or she has accommodation but cannot secure entry to it, or where he or she has accommodation that is a moveable structure (such as a caravan or house boat) and there is no place where it can be placed in order to provide accommodation. A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for him or her to continue to occupy it.”*
- 3.84 A broader definition of homelessness is provided by the Welsh Government:
'Where a person lacks accommodation or where their tenure is not secure'.
- 3.85 Examples of people covered by this definition will include people who are:
- Sleeping rough;
 - Living in insecure/temporary housing (excluding assured/assured shorthold tenants);
 - Living in short term hostels, night shelters, direct access hostels;
 - Living in bed and breakfasts;
 - Moving frequently between relatives/friends;
 - Squatting;
 - Unable to remain in, or return to, housing due to poor conditions, overcrowding, affordability problems, domestic violence, harassment, mental, physical and/or sexual abuse, unsuitability for physical needs etc;
 - Threatened with losing their home and without suitable alternative accommodation for any reason, e.g. domestic abuse;
 - Leaving hospitals, police custody, prisons, the armed forces and other institutions or supported housing without a home to go to, required to leave by family or friends or due to relationship breakdown, within 56 days of the end of tenancy, facing possession proceedings or threat of eviction.
- 3.86 A person is threatened with homelessness if he or she is likely to become homeless within 56 days.

Duty to prevent

- 3.87 The Housing (Wales) 2014 Act places a duty on Councils to prevent applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days from becoming homeless.
- 3.88 Local authorities in Wales also have a duty to help secure accommodation for all applicants assessed as homeless for a period of 56 days (or fewer if they feel reasonable steps to secure accommodation have been taken). After this period, the local authority only has a continuing duty to secure accommodation for those in priority need who have not become homeless intentionally (For further detail regarding intentionality see below).

3.89 If, having taken all reasonable steps, it has not been possible to prevent homelessness the Council is required to undertake a formal investigation; which involves applying five tests to determine if it has a statutory duty to secure permanent accommodation.

3.90 These “tests” are as follows:

- a) Homeless: Is the applicant actually homeless?
- b) Eligible: Does the immigration status allow the applicant to be housed by a public authority? Does the applicant have recourse to public funds?
- c) Does the applicant fall into a priority need category?
- d) Intentionality: Has the applicant done something or failed to do something resulting in them not being able to occupy accommodation that otherwise would have been reasonably available to them? *
- e) Local Connection: Does the applicant have a local connection with the area?

* The Welsh Government is intending to phase out the test of intentionality for certain priority need groups altogether by April 2019.

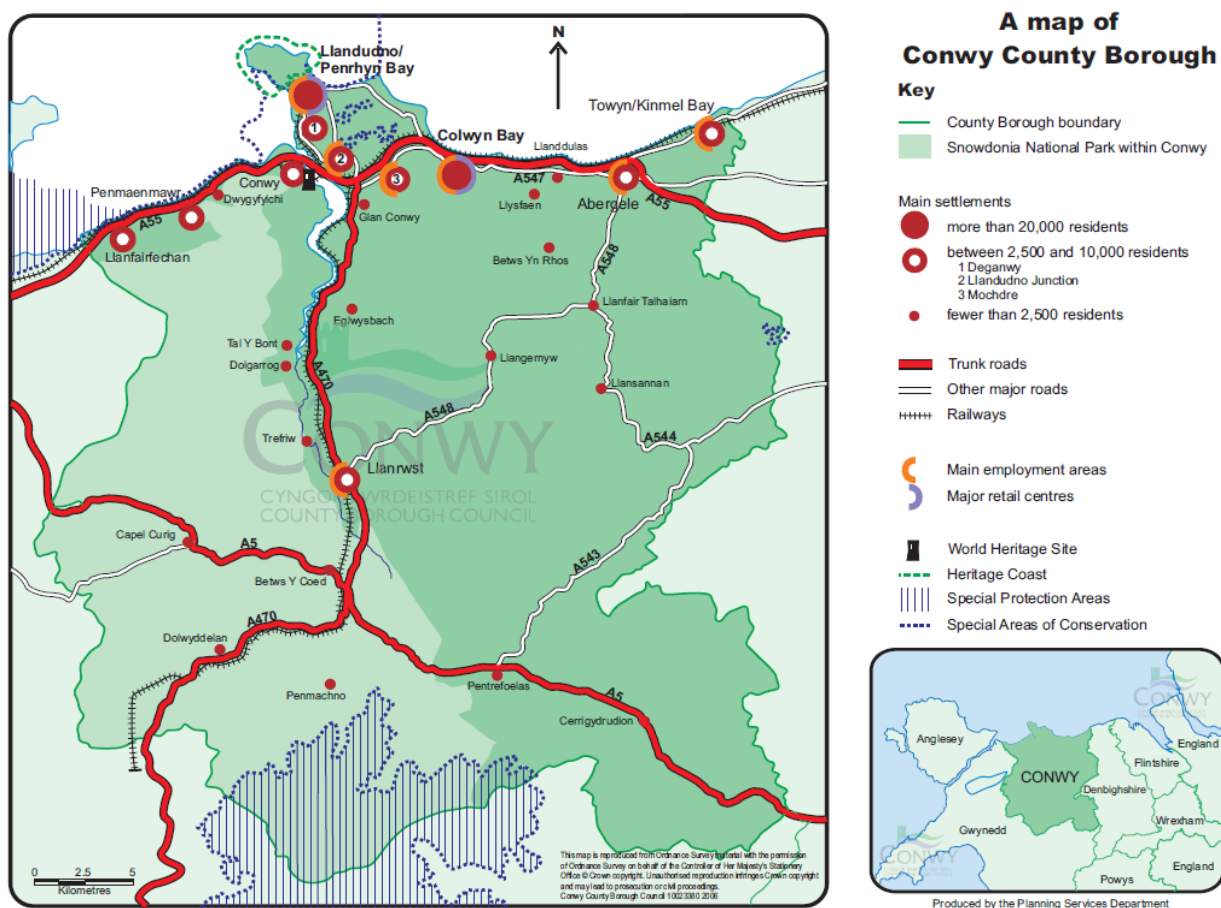
3.91 There is an interim duty to secure accommodation if an authority has reason to believe that an applicant is eligible, homeless and in priority need pending a full assessment of their circumstances.

3.92 Alongside the legislative changes, sits a Welsh Government-led drive to create a more person-centred service culture, so that people are more closely involved in identifying and putting into action the solutions to their housing problems.

4. Profile of Conwy

- 4.1 Conwy is located in North Wales covering an area of 1,360 square kilometres, it has a population of 116,550 people.

Map 4.1 Conwy County Borough



- 4.2 Conwy County Borough contains the major settlements of Llandudno, Llandudno Junction, Llanrwst, Betws-y-coed, Conwy, Colwyn Bay, Abergelle, Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan. Approximately 38% of the land area of the county borough lies in the Snowdonia National Park. The narrow coastal belt contains approximately 80% of Conwy's population, with the remaining population widely dispersed across the rural area.
- 4.3 It is an area of outstanding landscape with an economy heavily reliant upon tourism. Rural areas and their communities are dependent on agricultural and forestry activities, even though these sectors do not provide a high level of direct employment.

Population

- The population in Conwy County Borough was estimated to be 116,550 people in 2016.
- Since 2006 the population of Conwy County Borough has increased by 3,350, which is 3.1% – an average of about 0.3% per year.
- In 2015 there were 52,050 households in Conwy County Borough. Household numbers are expected to increase by 1,600 (3.1%) between mid-2015 and mid-2025. Average household size is expected to fall from 2.18 to 2.14. The biggest factor in this change is the expected growth in the number of single person households.
- Increasing number of single person households; 37.3% by 2036, 22.8% in 2011.
- 1 in 5 homes across all tenure in the County are currently occupied by a lone pensioner.
- By 2035 the proportion of over 65s will increase to 43%, currently 31%.
- Retaining young people is a major issue with a big gap in the age structure between the ages of 18-40.
- Fertility rates and death rates are both falling, in general. However, without migration, the population of Conwy County Borough would decrease as there are more deaths than births in the area every year.
- Over a ten year period, there is average net out-migration of about -300 in the 15-29 age group every year.
- There is average net in-migration of about +300 in the 50-64 age group every year.
- The median age of Conwy County Borough's population is 48.7 years (Wales = 42.4; UK = 40). The median age has increased from 45.3 to 48.7 years over the last decade.
- Conwy County Borough's 27.0% of the population aged 65 and over compares to 20.4% in Wales as a whole and 18.0% across the UK.
- Population density is low, at 1.0 persons per hectare across the County Borough as a whole but rises to over 20 persons per hectare in some urban areas on the coast.
- The greatest concentrations of people aged 65 and over are in the coastal settlements of Abergele, Rhos on Sea, Llandudno (Craig-y-Don and Penrhyn wards) and Deganwy. Craig-y-Don electoral division has the highest proportion of people aged over 65 in its population (39.1%).
- By far the youngest age profile in the County Borough is to be found in the Llysfaen electoral division / community council area, with only 12.9% of the population aged 65+, and 24.1% aged under 16.

Equalities Key Statistics

Table 4.1 Equalities Key Statistics					
Equality group	Description	Conwy CBC	Wales	Reference population	Source & date
Ethnicity	White British	95.4%	93.2%	All people	Census 2011
	Non-white	2.4%	4.8%		
	White UK national		93.0%	All people	Annual Population Survey 2016
	Non-white		4.5%		
Nationality	Born in Wales	54.4%	72.7%	All people	Census 2011
Gender	Males	48.6%	49.2%	All people	Mid year population estimates, Office for National Statistics 2015
	Females	51.4%	50.8%		
Age	0-15	16.3%	17.9%	All people	Mid year population estimates, Office for National Statistics 2015
	16-64	57.2%	61.9%		
	65+	26.6%	20.2%		
	85+	4.0%	2.6%		
Disability	Limiting long term illness	24.3%	23.7%	All people	Census 2011
	Work-limiting disabled		22.5%	Working age	Annual Population Survey 2016
Religion/belief	Christian	64.7%	57.6%	All people	Census 2011
Sexual orientation	Heterosexual		95.0%	All people aged 16+	Annual Population Survey 2015
	Gay/ lesbian / bisexual		1.6%		
Welsh language	Welsh speakers	27.4%	19.0%	All people aged 3+	Census 2011
	No knowledge of Welsh	60.6%	73.3%		
	Welsh speakers		28.4%	All people aged 3+	Annual Population Survey 2016

Note: The Annual Population Survey produces figures at Conwy CB level, but because of the limited sample size, they are not considered a robust source of data at this level. They are therefore not recommended for use at Conwy CB level and are not included in this bulletin. Wales figures have been included as they are considered robust.

Source Conwy Equalities Statistics Research Bulletin April 2017

Indices of Multiple Deprivation

- 4.4 The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2014 (WIMD) is the official measure of deprivation for small areas in Wales.
- 4.5 It measures different types of deprivation, called 'domains', to help identify areas where there are clusters of deprivation. The results for all Super Output Areas (SOAs,

subdivisions of electoral divisions/wards) in Wales are ranked against each other, to give relative measures of deprivation.

- 4.6 Conwy CB has four LSOAs in the most deprived 10% in Wales. These are Llysfaen 1, Abergele Pensarn, Tudno 2 and Glyn 2.
- 4.7 Areas in Conwy which fall within the top 10% most deprived in Wales for each domain are as follows:
- Multiple deprivation (overall index) - Abergele Pensarn 2; Glyn 2; Tudno 2; Llysfaen 1;
 - Income - Llysfaen 1; Tudno 2; Glyn 2; Abergele Pensarn 2;
 - Employment - Abergele Pensarn 2; Glyn 2; Rhiw 3; Tudno 2;
 - Health - Abergele Pensarn 2;
 - Education - Kimmel Bay 1; Tudno 2; Abergele Pensarn 2;
 - Access to services - Uwchaled; Llansannan; Uwch Conwy; Llangernyw; Eglwysbach; Betws yn Rhos; Caerhun; Trefriw; Betws-y-Coed;
 - Community safety - Glyn 2; Mostyn 2; Gogarth 1; Rhiw 3; Tudno 1;
 - Physical environment – none;
 - Housing - Llysfaen 1; Glyn 1; Gogarth 1; Glyn 2; Abergele Pensarn 2; Llangernyw; Mostyn 2; Tudno 2; Llysfaen 2; Uwch Conwy; Tudno 1.

Housing in Conwy County Borough

- There are 57,053 dwellings in Conwy County Borough.
- Over one third of the total housing stock is detached properties and this is very high when compared to national figures.
- In March 2016 there were 6,637 dwellings within the social housing sector. This was 128 for every 1,000 households, which was significantly below the all-Wales level of 175 for every 1,000 households.
- Conwy County Borough has a much higher proportion of sheltered and extra care housing in its social housing stock than the Welsh average. There was a net gain of 44 social housing dwellings between March 2015 and March 2016.
- Less than 15% of social housing stock is in one-bedroomed accommodation, which limits the opportunities for tenants to downsize if they are affected by caps on housing benefits due to under occupation in their existing accommodation (the so-called 'bedroom tax').
- Between April 2007 and March 2017 the average completion rate for new dwellings and conversions has been around 256 units per year, and was only 237 in 2016/17. New build rates have not kept pace with demand.

- There are relatively low levels of social renting within the housing market in Conwy County Borough and higher than average levels of private renting and home ownership (particularly for those who own their homes outright).
- Conwy CB has a higher proportion of HMOs in its housing stock than the national average, but a lower rate of licensed HMOs.
- Most single person households are pensioners living alone. In 2015 there were 9,200 lone pensioner households in Conwy County Borough– this was 17.7% of all households, and 52% of all single person households. The number of lone pensioner households is expected to increase.
- For each year since April 2007 the provision of new dwellings has fallen below the annual figure needed to reach the identified requirement of 6,800 additional dwellings by 2022.
- Around 2,200 household in the County Borough could be classed as overcrowded under the all-rooms definition, and around 1,400 under the bedrooms definition.
- Despite average (mean) house price in Conwy CB rising by 3.3% in the last year, house prices in Conwy CB are currently at only 98.6% of the level they were 10 years ago (UK average = 119.7%).
- At the median level, the income to house price ratio for Conwy CB is 1:6.05. Even with a 20% deposit – which brings the ration down to 1:4.84 – housing at the median price is out of the reach of people with average household income.
- In 2016/17 average weekly social housing rent levels in Conwy County Borough were about £2.24 higher than across Wales as a whole. Since the previous year, rents have risen at about the same rate as the national average.
- Numbers of housing benefit claimants have been on a generally slightly downward trend, and in February 2017 the total number of recipients was -3.5% lower than a year previously.
- The proportion of those receiving housing benefits who are housed within the private rented sector is much higher in Conwy County Borough than across the country as a whole, and this proportion has been rising steadily over the past 6 years.
- In February 2017, housing benefit payments were reduced by an average of £15.24 a week for 527 recipients due to the spare room subsidy/bedroom tax. This was 12.0% of all housing benefit recipients within the social rented sector. (Not applicable to tenants in the private rented sector).
- The first figures for the new Council Tax reduction scheme show a drop in the number of claimants between the end of the old system and the introduction of the new one, and the trend appears to be continuing downward, despite a slight uplift in total caseload in the early months of 2016.
- Though the number of mortgage possession actions shows a six-year downward trend, landlord possession actions (against tenants of rented properties) have not seen the same sustained decline – perhaps as a result in changes to housing benefits entitlements and payment processes, and the resurgence of the private rented sector in the housing market.

- Conwy County Borough has a lower proportion of properties in the A and B council tax bands than is the national average. This implies there are proportionally fewer of the lowest value properties within the dwelling stock than is found across Wales as a whole.

Economy

- 49,700 people were in employment in the last recorded quarter, which was a fall of 1,100 since the same period last year.
- The highest losses since 2009 are in the wholesale sector (-300 jobs), retail (- 200), and the information & communications sector (-100). The health sector saw the biggest growth (about +1,000 jobs).
- Levels of part-time working are high in Conwy CB – 41% of employees work part-time compared to 32% and 30% in Wales and Great Britain respectively.
- The production base has declined considerably over the past 20 years to about 4.3% of jobs by 2015, and there is a heavy skew towards employment in the service industries (particularly in the public sector) and the tourism sector.
- Employment in the high skills, high wage sectors of information & communication, finance & insurance, professional, scientific & technical, and business administration & support services is relatively low, totalling just 11% of all employment compared to 25% across GB as a whole.
- 12,200 jobs in total are provided by the tourism industry, which is well over a quarter of all employment in Conwy County Borough. Tourism brings in around £839 million each year to the local economy.
- More people travel out of Conwy for work than travel in to the County Borough – a net out-flow of about 6,200 commuters. Most of these outward commuters travel to the neighbouring Welsh authority areas (to Denbighshire in particular), though an estimated 2,800 people travel to England for work.
- 38.9% of the working age population had degree level qualifications or higher in 2016. There are fewer people with no/very low levels of qualification, and more people qualified at degree level or above compared to the Welsh averages.
- Unemployment in Conwy County Borough is generally seasonal – at its highest in the winter months, usually peaking around February. The claimant count unemployment rate for July 2017 was 1.9%, similar to the rate for the previous month but lower than the same period last year. Whilst unemployment rates have generally fallen in recent months, the reduction is not as sustained or stable as for the GB rate.
- 6,100 people were either unemployed or economically inactive and wanting a job in March 2017 but Jobcentre's Universal Jobmatch system showed only 550 jobs available within a 10 mile radius of Llandudno, and only 1,900 jobs available within a 20 mile radius.
- In November 2017 there were a total of 9,930 benefit claimants of working age. There was a decrease compared to the previous quarter (August 2016) of about 230

claimants. Since the previous year the overall number of claimants of DWP and UC benefits decreased from 10,180. Conwy CB has a high incidence of claimants of incapacity benefits, when compared to the GB average.

- Wage levels for jobs in Conwy CB are significantly below levels for Great Britain as a whole. The 2016 median gross weekly wage (including overtime and bonuses) for all full-time employees in Conwy CB was £451. This was only 84% of the British average.
- The annual average (median) household income fell by about -£500 between 2011 and 2016 to £24,800. Per head of population, the gross disposable household income (GDHI) for Conwy and Denbighshire was only 90.4% of the UK average.

Health & Social Care

- There is a growing number of people living with dementia, likely to be 8.9% of the over 65 population by 2035, currently 7.6%.
- There is a very high risk of loneliness and isolation amongst older people living in one third of the county's wards.
- An undersupply of supported older person accommodation has been identified.
- £1.2M spent on adapting properties for people with disabilities each year with demand increasing. An average grant cost of £7K per household.
- There are 491 falls per 100,000 population in the county, with an annual cost of A&E attendance £2,000 and the cost of hip fractures, £28K.
- A lack of specialist residential care places and nursing homes has been identified.
- Increasing referrals for support due to mental health needs across Conwy.

Rural Conwy

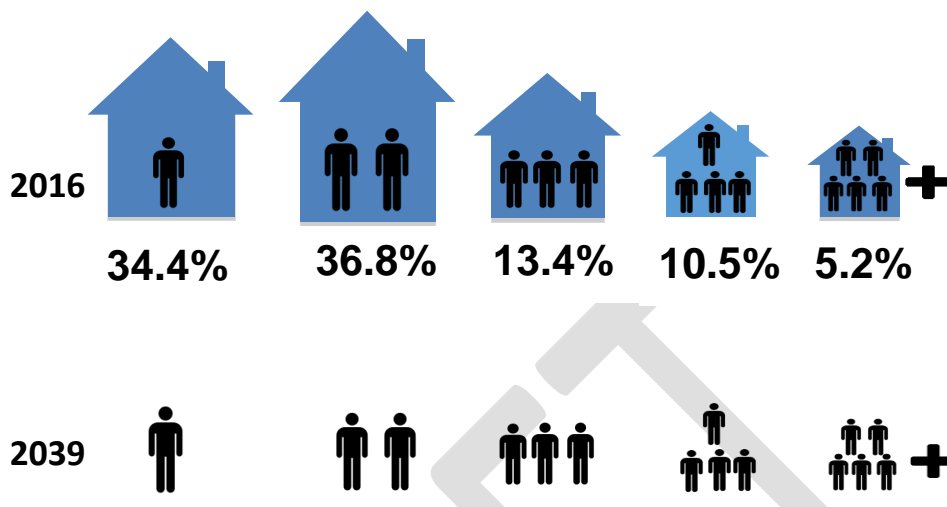
- Recent research found that there are strong communities in rural Conwy. Many of the individuals interviewed were happy living in their communities and enjoyed the strong community spirit and rural lifestyle.
- Many stated that they felt safe in their communities and that they would not wish to live anywhere else.
- Rural communities expressed concerns regarding depopulation of young people, due to lack of employment opportunities, lack of affordable housing and the closure of facilities such as local village shops. Communities stressed the importance of having a village school in order to retain and attract families to rural communities.
- Rural communities wanted to retain current services in their communities, to ensure that they remain strong and sustainable.
- Those that used Job Centre Plus wanted to see a base in rural Conwy, and an improvement in consistency and staff attitudes towards them.

- Many rural residents stated they were unsure where to get general advice, information and support.
- Rural residents explained that they expect to receive feedback from consultations that they participate in. Some rural residents did not feel listened to by Conwy County Borough Council and Town/Community Councils.
- Some rural residents who described themselves as computer illiterate raised concerns that they felt excluded because they are unable to use a computer to complete forms, find out information, and for shopping and banking. Some also stated that they felt socially excluded because they are unable to use social media. Those that lived in 'not spots' or did not have access to the internet at home raised the same concerns.
- Public transport in rural areas is vital to those service users that rely on the service.

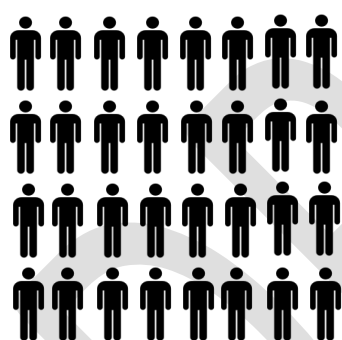
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5. Conwy's Housing Market

Key Statistics



Household size in Conwy is decreasing due to the number of single person households increasing, and average family sizes decreasing.



£23,730

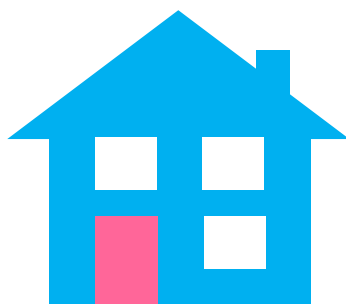
Median

£13,494

Lower Quartile

annual household income

New households will form in Conwy every year over the next five years



£145,000

Median House Price

£110,000

Lower Quartile House Price

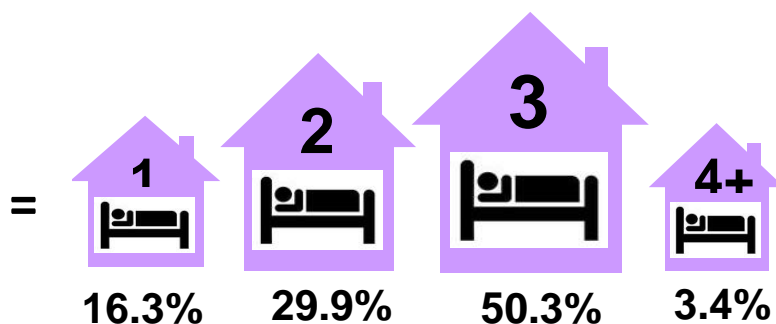


51.2%

of first time buyers and new households in Conwy are priced out of the market to rent or buy

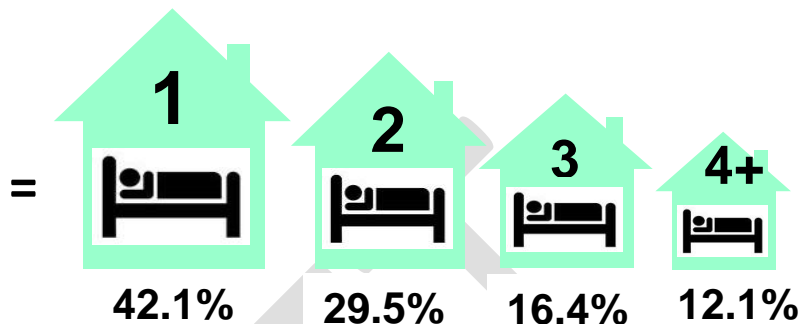
General Needs Social Housing Stock

(March 2017)



General Needs Social Housing Need

(SARTH Register August 2017)



Mismatch between social housing stock and demand



1,685

Empty Homes in Conwy March 2017

14.7%

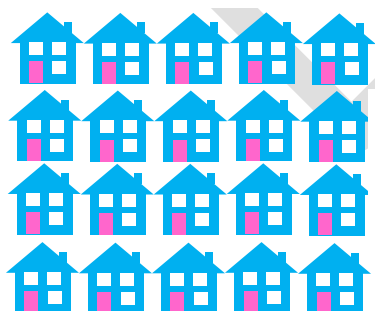
2001

For
Rent

18.3%

2011

The private rented sector is the only tenure in Conwy that is growing. Owner occupation has fallen since the 2001 Census. The private rented sector is predicted to continue growing as owner occupation becomes even less affordable



230

Additional
affordable homes needed
per year

+



159

Committed supply
of affordable housing

=



389

Affordable homes
need to be delivered each year
between 2016-2021

The information on the Housing Market is taken from Conwy's Local Housing Market Assessment 2017

Tenure

5.1 The table below shows the tenure of the housing market in Conwy.

Table 5.1 Tenure					
Tenure (2011 & 2001) Source: Census 2011 table KS402EW & Census 2001 table KS018	Conwy			Wales	
	2011 Census		2001 Census	2011 Census	2001 Census
	Number	%	%	%	%
All households	51,177	-	-	-	-
Owner Occupied Sector	35,501	69.4%	72.2%	67.4%	68.3%
Owned outright	20,409	39.9%	38.1%	35.4%	29.5%
Owned with a mortgage or loan	15,092	29.5%	34.1%	32.0%	38.8%
Shared Ownership* Sector	378	0.7%	1.1%	0.3%	0.6%
Private Rented sector	9,352	18.3%	14.7%	15.8%	11.9%
Private landlord or letting agency	7,729	15.1%	11.4%	12.7%	8.7%
Private rented: other***	1,623	3.2%	3.3%	1.5%	3.2%
Social Rented Sector	5,946	11.6%	11.9%	16.4%	19.1%
Social rented: from the Council**	-	-	7.8%	9.8%	13.2%
Social rented: RSL/Housing Association	5,946	11.6%	4.1%	6.6%	5.9%
*Pays part rent and part mortgage **Conwy County Borough Council transferred all its housing stock to Cartrefi Conwy in 2008 ***Includes employer of a household member and relative or friend of a household member, or living rent free					

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.2 The majority of properties are owner occupied (69.4%), with a significant proportion of these owned outright without a mortgage. The percentage of owner occupied housing in Conwy is slightly higher compared with the rest of Wales; however, it has decreased since 2001 both in Conwy and the rest of Wales.
- 5.3 The largest growing tenure is the private rented sector, both in Conwy and the rest of Wales. Conwy has a very large private rented housing sector (18.3%) compared to the rest of Wales (15.8%), which is predicted to continue to grow as home ownership becomes increasingly unaffordable.
- 5.4 Conwy has a small social housing sector (11.6%) compared with Wales (16.4%). This means that many households who are eligible for social housing are unable to access it due to the limited supply within the area, forcing them into the private rented sector where rents are typically a lot higher.

Owner Occupation Affordability

- 5.5 A significant proportion of would-be first-time buyers are priced out of the housing market. Median household income and median property prices within each LHMA area are laid out in Table 5.2. Mortgage lenders will typically lend a household three and a half times their household income. By comparing the median house price against the household's mortgage potential, we are able to calculate the household's shortfall to be able to buy a property. This doesn't include any deposit a household may have but provides an indication of the level of deposit they may need.
- 5.6 With ratios of income to prices standing between 5.8 and 6.1, households wanting to buy with a mortgage must fund the difference for themselves.
- 5.7 The situation for lower income households means that even the cheapest of properties are well beyond their means. Looking at the lower quartile, income to price ratios are higher, in a range of 7.8-8.0, and all relatively more unaffordable than the Welsh average. Although lower quartile property is cheaper, it is mostly smaller: one-bedroom properties and/or converted flats, or in need of refurbishment. We cannot assume that these smaller, cheaper properties provide suitable accommodation for all purchasers. Availability of these type of properties can also be an issue in some areas.

Table 5.2 Affordability ratios				
Median House Prices 2016 All Housing Types Source: Land Registry & CACI PayCheck	Median			
	Household income	House Price	Ratio	Shortfall
Conwy County Borough Council	£24,800	£150,000	6.1	- £63,200
LHMA1 West	£27,400	£167,750	6.1	- £71,850
LHMA2 North	£23,850	£145,000	6.1	- £61,525
LHMA3 Central	£24,350	£147,000	6.0	- £61,775
LHMA4 East	£23,350	£134,950	5.8	- £53,225
LHMA5 South	£25,500	£155,000	6.1	- £65,750
Wales	£24,950	£145,000	5.8	- £58,200
Lower Quartile House Prices 2016 All Housing Types Source: Land Registry & CACI PayCheck	Lower Quartile			
	Household income	House Price	Ratio	Shortfall
Conwy County Borough Council	£13,494	£110,000	8.2	- £62,711
LHMA 03 Menai	£13,500	£120,000	8.9	- £72,750
LHMA 09 Bala	£13,350	£92,500	6.9	- £45,775
LHMA 10 Dyffryn Conwy	£13,900	£114,750	8.3	- £66,100
LHMA 11 Llandudno	£13,600	£120,000	8.8	- £72,400
LHMA 12 Bay of Conwy	£13,100	£102,125	7.8	- £56,275
LHMA 13 Rhyl	£12,100	£95,000	7.9	- £52,650
LHMA 15 St Asaph	£16,200	£124,500	7.7	- £67,800

Source: LHMA 2017

- 5.8 The table below shows the percentage of first time buyers and new households priced out of the market to either rent or buy a flat or terraced type property.

Table 5.3 First Time Buyers/New Households priced out of market			
Priced out of the market Source: Land Registry, CACI PayCheck & CCBC	% All Households priced out of market	% Households in need of Social Housing #	% of Households in need of Intermediate Housing ##
Conwy County Borough	46.0%	34.0%	12.0%
LHMA1 West	52.2%	29.5%	22.6%
LHMA2 North	46.7%	35.8%	11.0%
LHMA3 Central	37.5%	35.2%	2.3%
LHMA4 East	52.0%	36.3%	15.7%
LHMA5 South	51.5%	32.8%	18.6%
# Households below 60% of GB median income (%)			
## % priced out minus households below 60% of GB median income (Those in need of social housing)			

Source LHMA 2017

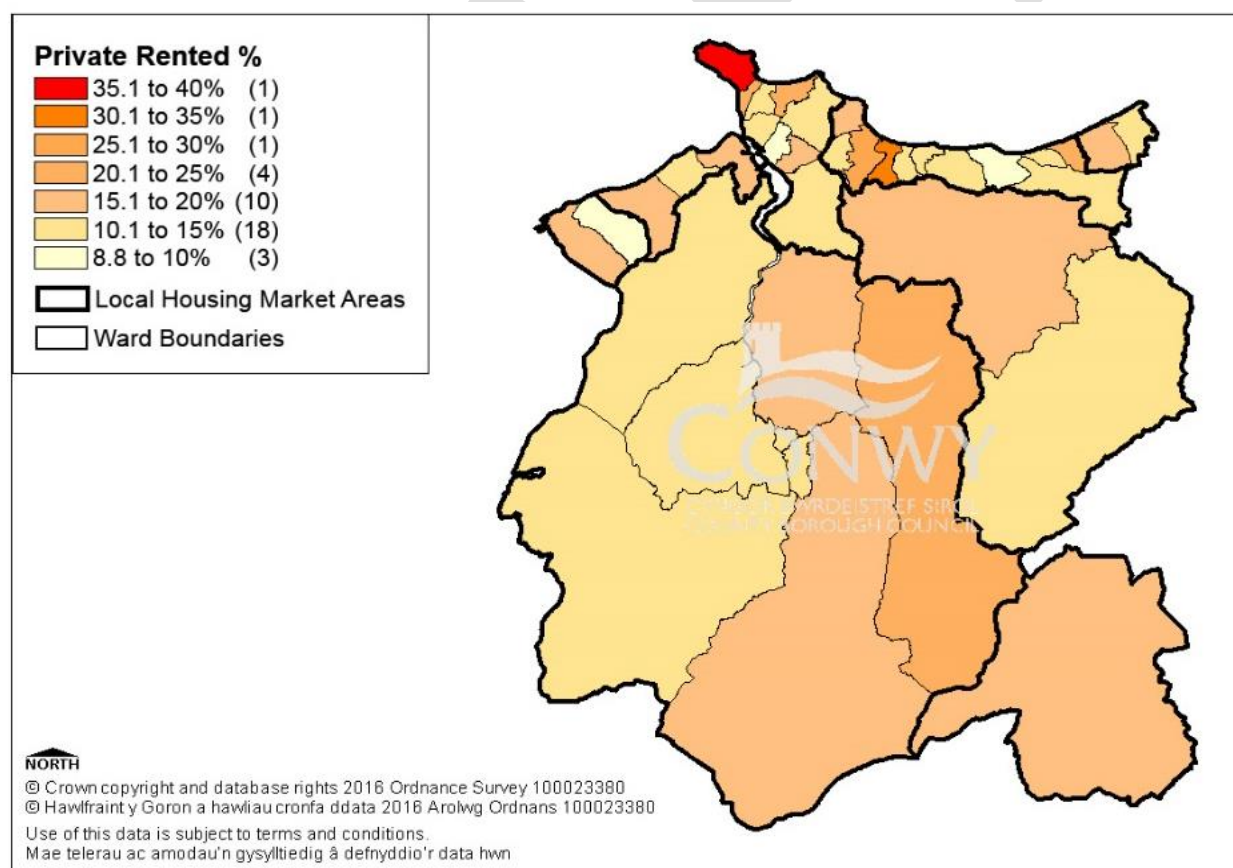
Private Rented Sector

- 5.9 The private rented sector (PRS) plays a crucial role in local housing markets as it provides a variety of housing options and enables mobility within the market for a range of households. The flexibility of renting rather than owning a property is advantageous to households who need to move frequently due to their employment. The PRS is relied upon by many households on lower incomes who are unable to access mortgage finance and afford home ownership. It is also the only option for those requiring somewhere to live once the scarce social housing is allocated to those in the greatest need and this role is likely to increase in the future as more households are priced out of the market and unable to buy.
- 5.10 However, the sector can have significant disadvantages for tenants. The standard 6 month fixed term tenancy is perceived to be insecure. It is common for each tenancy to incur additional upfront costs: deposits and agency fees and that rents are relatively high. Often monthly rental rates are higher than mortgage repayments would be.
- 5.11 There are significant barriers facing some would be tenants. Would be renters must pass credit reference checks and some must be able to demonstrate they earn sufficient income before being considered for any vacancy. References from former landlords may be required and a reliable rent payment history established. Prospective tenants with children, pets, who smoke, are under 25 or over 65, may find landlords unwilling to rent to them. Some research indicates that some prospective tenants face discrimination because they are disabled, or from an ethnic minority. The Immigration Act 2014 'right to rent' regulations operating in England, have made landlords nervous about letting to some people. The principal barrier though, is for those claiming benefits. Recent industry surveys place the proportion of landlords declining to take new tenants in receipt of Universal Credit as low as 20% (National Landlords Association) or even 13% (Residential Landlords Association). Concerns over the administration of Universal Credit; the gap

between the level of benefits and actual rent levels; and the experience in the pilot areas of an increase in rent arrears, combined with a healthy demand for rental properties, mean that landlords can operate policies discriminating against benefit recipients easily. Mortgage lenders and insurers also place restrictions on renting property to benefit recipients.

- 5.12 The map below details the percentage of privately rented properties across Conwy. There is a high concentration of privately rented housing in the Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and southern rural areas. However, the availability of private rented housing in some rural areas is very limited. Here privately-owned property can command higher return as holiday lets, or be used as second homes, leaving very few let for domestic tenure. Although the cheaper prices of rural properties may attract speculative buy to let purchasers from out of County and some lets are long standing agricultural estate property.
- 5.13 There are pockets along the coastal belt where the private rented sector is very low compared to the 18.3% average for Conwy as a whole (see table 1). The Llanddulas and Rhyd Y Foel community council area has just 9.4%. While Colwyn Bay, 28.3%.

Map 5.1 Size of the Private Rented Sector



Source LHMA 2017

- 5.14 Information about private rental costs is very difficult to obtain and there are severe limitations with the data that is currently available. Rent Officers Wales (part of Welsh

Government's Housing Policy Division) produce annual figures at the unitary authority level. These are presented below because they are the only data that are available about private rents in Conwy at the moment. The table below shows rent levels based on the annual report from Rent Officers Wales.

Table 5.4 Rent levels					
Monthly rent levels (2016) Source: private sector rents, Rent Officers Wales	Conwy				Wales
	Sample Size	Median Rent	Lower Quartile Rent	Upper Quartile Rent	Median Rent
1 Bedroom	295	£395.00	£346.67	£450.00	£400.00
2 Bedroom	676	£525.00	£460.00	£575.00	£495.00
3 Bedroom	353	£625.00	£550.00	£695.00	£550.00
4 Bedroom	102	£792.50	£650.00	£895.00	£750.00

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.15 The data indicates that renting two and three-bedroom properties in Conwy is considerably more expensive than the Welsh average. Four-bedroom properties are in line with Welsh median prices, and one-bedroom properties are slightly cheaper than the Wales median price.
- 5.16 The table below taken from the LHMA compares the cost of renting with median and lower quartile household incomes in Conwy, to show the percentage of the household income needed to pay rent.

Table 5.5 Affordability of rents				
Monthly rent levels (2015) Source: Private sector rents, Rent Officers Wales	Median Household Income & Median Rent	Median Household Income & LQ Rent	Lower Quartile Household Income & Median Rent	Lower Quartile Household Income & LQ Rent
1 Bedroom	20.0%	17.7%	35.1%	31.1%
2 Bedroom	26.5%	23.3%	46.7%	40.9%
3 Bedroom	30.1%	27.8%	52.9%	48.9%
4 Bedroom	37.9%	34.1%	66.7%	60.0%

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.17 Monthly median household incomes are £1,977.50 (£23,730 per year) and lower quartile are £1,124.50 (£13,494 per year). According to research by Shelter and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation housing costs above 30% of the households' income are unaffordable. Evidently private rents for households with a lower quartile (LQ) income are unaffordable at both LQ and median rental prices. Larger properties with three or four bedrooms are also unaffordable for households with a median household income

except three-bedroom properties where the property is priced within the lower quartile bracket.

- 5.18 The table below compares the current median PRS cost against Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and social rental costs. The gap between the cost of the PRS and both LHA and social rent is significant, particularly with larger properties.

Table 5.6 LHA versus rent							
2016 Monthly Rental Cost	PRS (Median)	LHA	shortfall between PRS & LHA	%	Social Rent	shortfall between PRS & social rent	%
1 Bedroom	£395.00	£346.67	£48.33	12%	£316.36	£78.64	20%
2 Bedroom	£525.00	£448.76	£76.24	15%	£362.30	£162.70	31%
3 Bedroom	£625.00	£535.51	£89.49	14%	£417.38	£207.62	33%
4 Bedroom	£792.50	£650.00	£142.50	18%	£456.22	£336.28	42%

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.19 The above figures illustrate that the average rental prices are not affordable for households in receipt of Local Housing Allowance. Using the above data, for a household requiring a one-bedroom property in receipt of LHA, there would be a shortfall of £48.33 per month in their ability to meet the rent. This is £10 a month higher shortfall when compared with the neighbouring Borough of Denbighshire. For a household requiring a two-bedroom property the shortfall would be £76.24 compared to £56.24 in Denbighshire.
- 5.20 These are considerable monthly shortfalls and most households in receipt of benefits or on a low income would struggle to finance such a shortfall.

Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)

- 5.21 Dwellings which contain more than one household are known as houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Well managed and maintained HMOs are an important tenure choice for households on low incomes, in particular single persons under the age of 35 who typically are only eligible for housing benefit at the shared accommodation rate.
- 5.22 The following table provides an estimate of the total number of HMOs present within Conwy and shows them as a proportion against the Welsh Government's estimate of total dwelling stock in the area.

Table 5.7 HMOs

HMOs, March 2016 Source: hazards and licences data collection, Welsh Government	Conwy		Wales
	Number	As % all dwellings	As % all dwellings
Licensed HMOs	370	0.6%	0.6%
Known HMOs	1,101	1.9%	1.0%
Estimated total HMOs	1,200	2.1%	1.3%

Source LHMA 2017

Social Rented Sector

- 5.23 Conwy has one of the lowest social housing stocks per head of population in the whole of Wales. This lack of social stock has resulted in many households in need of social housing relying on the PRS for accommodation in Conwy.
- 5.24 There is a higher proportion of socially rented properties within parts of Llandudno, Colwyn Bay and Llanrwst, compared with pockets along the coastal belt and northern rural wards where social housing accounts for less than 5% of the total housing stock.
- 5.25 The table below details the social housing stock in Conwy by housing type.

Table 5.8 Social Housing

Social housing stock, March 2017 Source: Social landlord stock and rents data, Welsh Government	Conwy		Wales	Change since last year	
	Number	%	%	Number	%
Total stock	6,727			90	1.4%
All self contained	6,133	91.2%	95.7%	63	1.0%
General needs	4,370	65.0%	82.4%	59	1.4%
Sheltered	1,503	22.3%	10.7%	-2	-0.1%
Other supported	79	1.2%	1.7%	6	8.2%
Extra care	181	2.7%	0.9%	0	0.0%
All non-self contained	207	3.1%	1.8%	13	6.7%
Non self-contained bedsits	27	0.4%	0.2%	0	0.0%
Hostels and shared housing	180	2.7%	1.6%	13	7.8%
Intermediate & other	387	5.8%	2.5%	14	3.8%

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.26 There was a net gain of 90 social housing dwellings between March 2016 and March 2017.
- 5.27 The table below details the Registered Social Landlords operating within Conwy. Just over half of all social stock is managed by Cartrefi Conwy. Conwy County Borough Council transferred all of its social housing stock to Cartrefi Conwy in 2008.

Table 5.9 Social Housing Providers

Social housing stock providers, March 2017 Source: Social landlord stock and rents data, Welsh Government	Conwy County Borough	
	Number	%
Total stock	6,727	
Cartrefi Conwy	3,833	57.0%
North Wales Housing Association	1,529	22.7%
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	619	9.2%
Grŵp Cynefin	385	5.7%
Wales and West Housing	285	4.2%
Abbeyfield	54	0.8%
Hafan Cymru	12	0.2%
First Choice Housing Association	8	0.1%
Bangor Diocesan Housing Association	2	0.0%

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.28 The number of bedrooms within general needs stock across Conwy are detailed in the table below. Just over half of the stock has at least three-bedrooms at 54%, this is higher than the all-Wales figure of 48%. Less than 16.1% of stock is in one-bedroomed accommodation, which limits the opportunities for tenants to downsize if they are affected by caps on housing benefits due to under occupation in their existing accommodation

Table 5.10 General needs by bedsize

GENERAL NEEDS Social housing stock by number of bedrooms, March 2017 Source: social landlord stock and rents data, Welsh Government	Conwy County Borough		Wales
	Number	%	%
All general needs dwellings	4,370		
One bedroom	712	16.3%	17.6%
Two bedrooms	1,308	29.9%	35.7%
Three bedrooms	2,200	50.3%	44.2%
Four bedrooms	134	3.1%	2.3%
Five bedrooms or more	16	0.4%	0.2%

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.29 The following table details the rent levels for social housing by property size.

Table 5.11 Rent levels by bedsize						
Rent levels by number of bedrooms (general needs dwellings), 2017/18 Source: social landlord stock and rents data collection, Welsh Government	Conwy CB			Wales		
	2017/18	Change since 2016/17		2017/18	Change since 2016/17	
		£	%		£	%
All general needs dwellings	£89.77	£3.69	4.3%	£86.61	£3.24	3.9%
One bedroom	£75.96	£3.56	4.9%	£74.80	£2.55	3.5%
Two bedrooms	£85.59	£3.91	4.8%	£83.99	£3.14	3.9%
Three bedrooms	£95.61	£3.73	4.1%	£92.19	£3.66	4.1%
Four bedrooms or more	£104.38	£3.99	4.0%	£106.54	£3.99	3.9%
Five bedrooms or more	£118.81	£4.05	3.5%	£127.67	£3.29	2.6%

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.30 Between 2016/17 and 2017/18 the weekly cost of social housing in Conwy increased by 4.3%, which is a slightly lower increase than across Wales which saw social housing costs rise by 3.9%. Overall the cost of social housing in Conwy is comparable with the rest of Wales.

Empty & Second Homes

- 5.31 Empty dwellings in the private sector housing stock are a major issue in Conwy. The number of long term empty dwellings in the county remains fairly consistent.
- 5.32 The table below details the level of occupancy in Conwy's housing stock compared with the rest of Wales and England.

Table 5.12 Empty Homes				
Household spaces by occupancy type Source: 2011 Census, table KS401	Conwy		Wales	England & Wales
	Number	%	%	%
Total household spaces	56,200		1,385,500	24,429,600
With residents	51,200	91.1%	94.0%	95.6%
Vacant	5,000	8.9%	6.0%	4.4%

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.33 According to the 2011 Census, Conwy had a higher level of vacant properties in its stock than across the country as a whole. These vacant properties will be a mix of both long- and short-term empty properties, and those which had no residents on Census day because they were second homes or dwellings which were used as rented holiday accommodation. The Conwy coastline and location within the Snowdonia National Park

mean that tourism has a role to play in the housing market within the County. Conwy currently features in the top 20 local authorities in England and Wales with second homes used for holidays. This results in higher house prices and supply issues in holiday hot spots as local residents are priced out of the market due to the lower household incomes in Conwy compared with the GB average.

- 5.34 The Map and table below taken from the LHMA shows the percentage of second homes across Conwy compared to the total household spaces as recorded by the 2011 Census. The Dyffryn Conwy LHMA area has the highest percentages of second homes within its dwelling stock, with particularly high concentrations in the Bro Machno (21.5%), Capel Curig (12.1%) and Dolwyddelan (11.5%) community council areas.

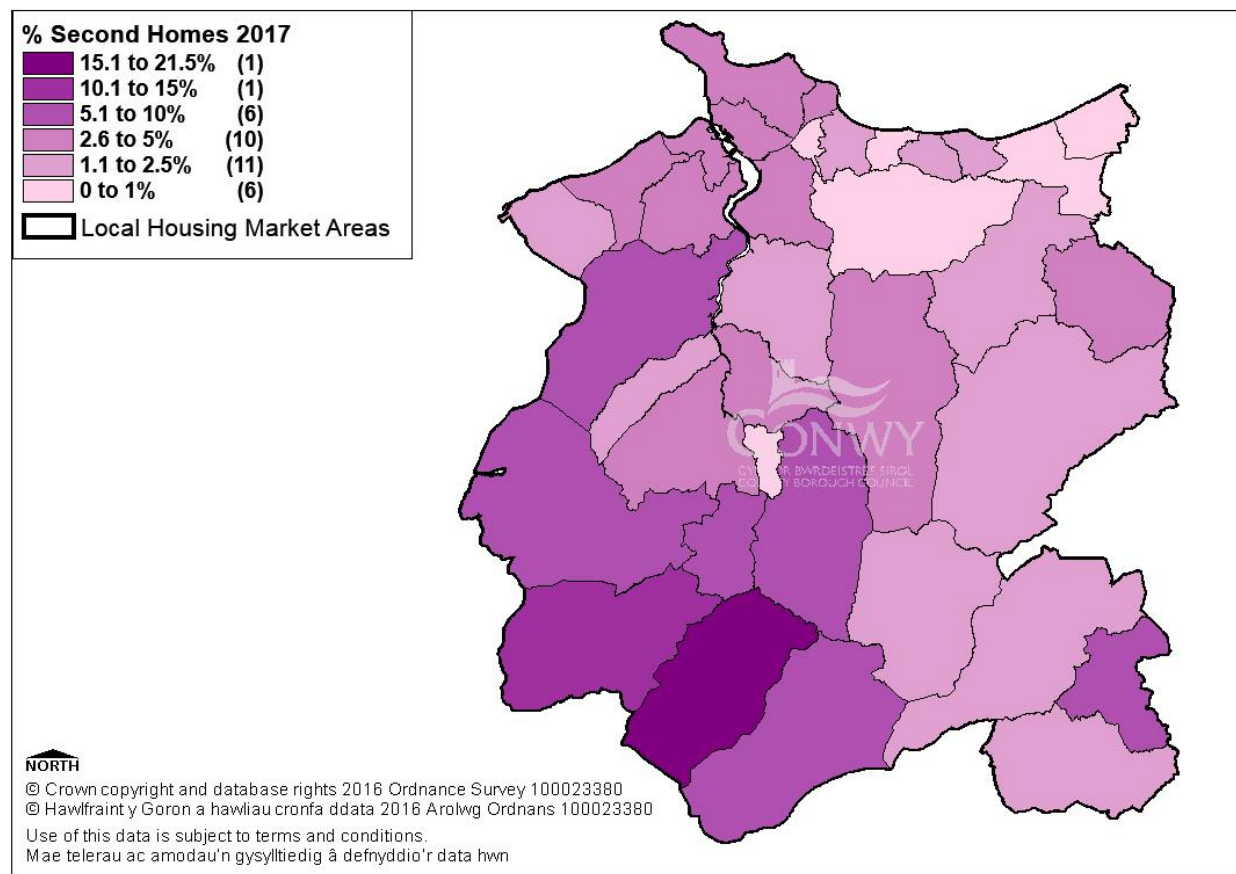
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Table 5.13 Second Homes

Table 30 Second Homes by Community Council Area Source: CCBC Council Tax	Number	Household Spaces (2011 Census)	% second homes in area
Bro Machno	96	446	21.5%
Capel Curig	15	124	12.1%
Dolwyddelan	34	295	11.5%
Betws-y-Coed	26	290	9.0%
Caerhun	55	687	8.0%
Bro Garmon	28	365	7.7%
Ysbyty Ifan	8	105	7.6%
Henryd	16	355	4.5%
Conwy	297	7352	4.0%
Llangernyw	19	474	4.0%
Llandudno	378	10489	3.6%
Llanddoged and Maenan	9	273	3.3%
Llangwm	7	228	3.1%
Trefriw	13	429	3.0%
Rhos on Sea	112	3912	2.9%
Penmaenmawr	63	2269	2.8%
Llansanffraid Glan Conwy	29	1077	2.7%
Llanfairtalhaiarn	13	484	2.7%
Llanfairfechan	43	1683	2.6%
Eglwysbach	11	434	2.5%
Llansannan	12	578	2.1%
Llanddulas & Rhyd-y-Foel	16	855	1.9%
Cerrigydrudion	6	352	1.7%
Bae Colwyn Bay of Colwyn	72	5116	1.4%
Betws-yn-Rhos	6	460	1.3%
Llysfaen	14	1101	1.3%
Towyn & Kinnel Bay	36	3795	0.9%
Abergele	45	5334	0.8%
Old Colwyn	30	3699	0.8%
Llanrwst	11	1592	0.7%

Source LHMA 2017

Map 5.1 Second Homes



Source LHMA 2017

- 5.35 The following table provides a count of all dwellings which have been empty for six months or longer. In recent years there has been a generally upward trend in the number and proportion of long-term empty properties within the housing stock in the County Borough, possibly as a result of the downturn in the housing market since the 2008 recession. In April 2016 there were 20 fewer long-term empty properties than the previous year.

Table 5.14 Long term empty homes

Empty dwellings – Council Tax class C exemptions Source: Council Tax register, Conwy County Borough Council	All dwellings	Empty for:			
		6 months or longer	1 year or longer	5 years or longer	10 years or longer
At 1st April 2017	57,053	1,685	1,273	306	111
At 1st April 2016	56,685	1,560	1,142	284	108
At 1st April 2015	56,612	1,580	1,134	296	106
At 1st April 2014	56,272	1,570	1,139	260	96
At 1st April 2013	55,984	1,491	1,113	253	81
As % all dwellings					
At 1st April 2017	-	3.0%	2.2%	0.5%	0.2%
At 1st April 2016	-	2.8%	2.0%	0.5%	0.2%
At 1st April 2015	-	2.8%	2.0%	0.5%	0.2%
At 1st April 2014	-	2.8%	2.0%	0.5%	0.2%
At 1st April 2013	-	2.7%	2.0%	0.5%	0.1%
Note: The definition of empty dwellings used in this table does not exactly match that used in table 29					

Source LHMA 2017

Housing Supply

5.36 The table below details house building activity since 2001 across Conwy.

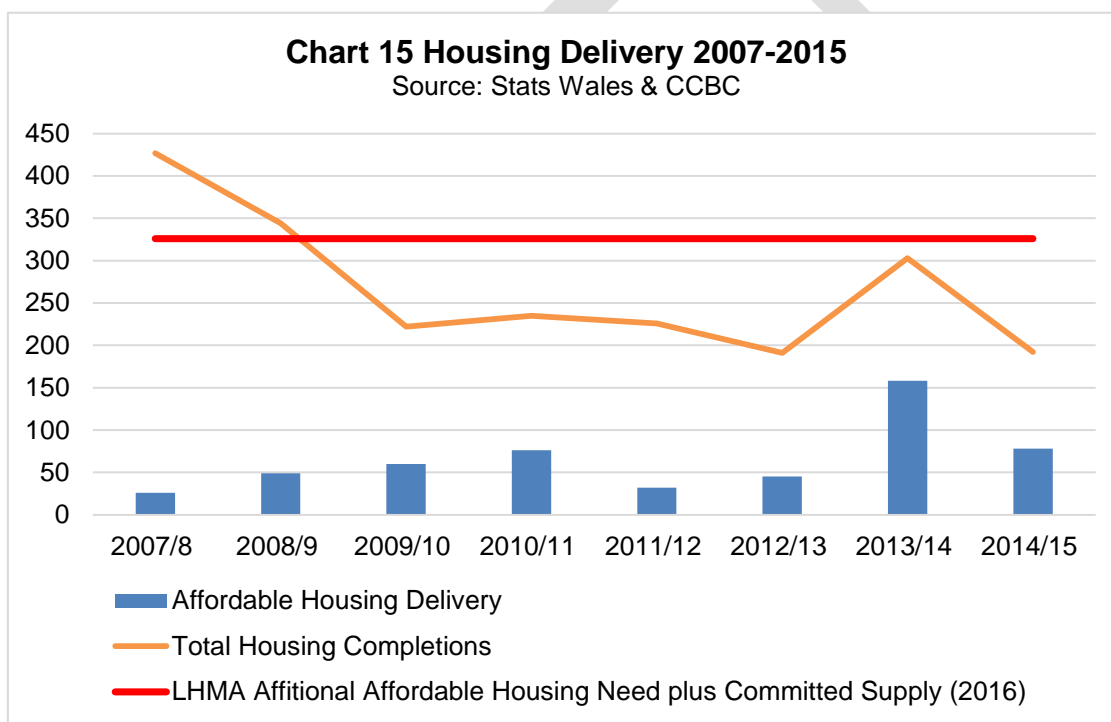
Table 5.15 Housebuilding

House building activity Source: Joint housing land availability study, Planning Policy team, CCBC	Completions	Under Construction	Not yet started
2015/16	187	413	980
2014/15	192	291	518
2013/14	303	353	906
2012/13	191	435	1,164
2011/12	226	194	1,730
2010/11	235	193	2,300
2009/10	222	249	2,531
2008/09	344	319	2,667
2007/08	427	331	2,671
2006/07	326	362	2,140
2005/06	392	305	1,909
2004/05	424	339	1,887
2003/04	503	342	1,930
2002/03	349	343	2,149
2001/02	356	308	2,171
* Figures are for the Local Planning Authority area, which excludes the part of Snowdonia National Park that is within Conwy County Borough			

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.37 Over the last ten years the average completion rate for new dwellings and conversions has been around 265 units per year. Since the economic downturn in 2007/08 there has been a general downward trend in the number of new dwellings which are built annually within the County Borough and across Wales. In 2013/14 there was a significant rise in house-building activity, in part due to the completion of a number of large developments by registered social landlords, many of which were for extra care units reserved for people aged 55 plus. However, figures for other years since 2008/09 were particularly low, and have not kept pace with demand. If this level of house building continues then supply will continue to be overshadowed by demand, and the Council will not achieve the additional affordable housing requirements set out within the LHMA.
- 5.38 The chart below taken from the LHMA details the level of housing completions each year against the number of affordable homes delivered and the annual need identified by the LHMA calculation.

Chart 5.1 **Housing delivery 2007-2015**



Source LHMA 2017

- 5.39 Conwy hasn't delivered on or above the current LHMA figure since before the 2008 economic crash and has never delivered the level of affordable units which are required by the LHMA. On average Conwy has delivered 78 affordable homes annually over the last 5 years, with a peak in 2013/14 due to the availability of subsidy from welsh Government to build extra care social housing for the over 55s.

Local Housing Market Assessment 2017

- 5.40 The Local Housing Market Assessment provides a comprehensive understanding of the local housing market and a robust evidence base on which to make informed decisions about future housing provision in terms of both market and affordable housing delivery, number of bedrooms required and affordable housing tenure.
- 5.41 There is a need to increase the supply of affordable housing in Conwy as the market analysis indicates that 51.2% of first time buyers and newly forming households are priced out of the market to either rent or buy a flat or terraced property, with 27.5% of these needing social housing and 23.7% needing low cost home ownership (intermediate).
- 5.42 Conwy has the second lowest rate of social housing stock in the whole of Wales with just 12 social houses per 100 households, compared to a rate of 17 for Wales as a whole. This lack of social stock has resulted in many households who are eligible for social housing relying on the private rented sector for accommodation.
- 5.43 However, the private rented sector is not always affordable for households on lower incomes. Analysis shows that private rents for households with a lower quartile annual household income (£13,494) are unaffordable, and larger properties with three or four bedrooms are also unaffordable for households with a median annual household income (£23,730) as the household would need to pay more than 30% of their household income on their housing costs.
- 5.44 Overall the supply of new housing, particularly affordable housing, has not kept pace with demand in Conwy. The LHMA has identified the need for 230 additional units per year the plan period (2017-2022).

Table 5.16 Housing Need	
Annual Social Housing Need	166
Annual Intermediate Housing Need	64
TOTAL ANNUAL SOCIAL AND INTERMEDIATE HOUSING NEED (2013-2018)	230

Source LHMA 2017

- 5.45 The LHMA has also shown an increasing need for smaller house types with one and two bedrooms. Conwy's average household size is decreasing as the number of single person households' increase, and average family sizes decrease. Therefore it is proposed that new residential developments consider an appropriate mix of housing types on new sites in order to cater sustainably for current and future housing needs.

- 5.46 The following table defines the recommended mix of market housing types on residential sites. Housing Schemes that propose a higher mix of one or two-bedroom units than the recommended mix are encouraged as the need for these smaller units is clearly evidenced through population projections.

Table 5.17 Housing Mix				
Recommended Housing Mix Market Housing				
1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed+	Total
10%	20%	35%	35%	100%

Source LHMA 2017

6. Homeless Levels across Conwy

National Picture across Wales 2016/17

Headlines

- During 2016-17, 9,210 households were assessed as threatened with homelessness within 56 days (s.66). For 5,718 households (62%), homelessness was successfully prevented for at least 6 months compared with 65% in 2015/16.
- During 2016-17, 10,884 households were assessed as homeless and owed a duty to help secure accommodation. Of these, 4,500 households (41%) were successfully relieved of their homelessness and helped to secure accommodation that was likely to last for 6 months (s73).
- During 2016-17, 2,076 households were assessed to be unintentionally homeless and in priority need. Of these, 1,674 (81%) households were positively discharged through acceptance of settled suitable accommodation.
- At 31/3/17, 2,013 households were in temporary accommodation across Wales.
- At 31/3/17, 189 households were in Bed & Breakfast accommodation across Wales.

Threatened with Homelessness within 56 days

- Swansea reported the highest number of households threatened with homelessness within 56 days at 1,143 and Merthyr Tydfil the lowest at 102. However, taking into account the number of households in each area the highest rate of households threatened with homelessness within 56 days was in Torfean at 109.8 per 10,000 households and the lowest was in Powys at 29.3 per 10,000 households.
- In Wales as a whole, 69.1 per 10,000 households were assessed as threatened with homelessness within 56 days in 2016/17 compared with 53.7 in 2015/16. In Conwy 70 per 10,000 households were assessed as threatened with homelessness within 56 days, which is in line with the national average.

Households successfully prevented from becoming homeless (s.66)

- Of the 9,210 households that were assessed as threatened with homelessness within 56 days, 62% had their homelessness successfully prevented for at least 6 months. In Conwy 56% of households threatened with homelessness had their homelessness successfully prevented, which is below the national average for Wales.
- Swansea reported the highest number of households for whom homelessness was successfully prevented (831 households) and Merthyr Tydfil the lowest (63 households). However, taking into account the number of households in each area the highest rate of successful prevention was in Swansea at 78.1 per 10,000 households and the lowest was in Powys at 17.9 per 10,000 households.

- During 2016/17 the number of households across Wales for whom homelessness was successfully prevented for at least 6 months was 42.9 per 10,000 households, compared with 34.7 during 2015/16. The higher rate during 2016/17 reflects the increased number of households assessed as being threatened with homelessness. In Conwy the rate was slightly below the national average at 41 per 10,000 households.

Households assessed as being homeless under duty to help to secure accommodation (s.73)

- 10,844 households were assessed as being homeless and owed a duty to help to secure accommodation (s73). 41% of these households were relieved of their homelessness following intervention by the Local Authority and helped to secure accommodation that was likely to last for 6 months. This compares with 45% the previous year.
- Cardiff had the highest number of households assessed as homeless under s73 at 2,163 households. However, taking into account the number of households in each area Newport had the highest rate at 177 per 10,000 households.
- The Isle of Anglesey had the lowest number at 111 households and the lowest rate at 36.2 per 10,000 households.
- For Wales as a whole, 81.7 per 10,000 households were assessed as homeless compared with 51.9 in 2016/17. This reflects the increased number of outcomes recorded in 2016/17.

Households owed a final duty under s75

- 2,076 households were accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need and owed a duty for accommodation to be secured (under s.75).
- 1,674 of these households (81%) were positively discharged/relieved through accepting an offer of suitable accommodation, this compares with 1,245 (80%) in 2015/16.
- For the remaining 402 households assessed as homeless the final duty was brought to an end.

Prevention and Relief

- In Wales 1,138 households were successfully prevented from becoming homeless and able to remain in their existing accommodation, accounting for 23% of all successful preventions.
- The most successful prevention actions were:
 - Resolving housing issues (rent arrears and benefit problems) -28%
 - Negotiation/intervention for private sector accommodation – 22%

- Financial payments and advice – 19%
- Other specialist support (including domestic abuse) – 19%
- Mediation and Conciliation – 12%
- In Wales 4,380 households were successfully prevented from becoming homeless through assistance to secure alternative accommodation, accounting for 77% of all successful preventions.
- The types of accommodation secured to prevent homelessness were:
 - Private rented accommodation – 43%
 - Social Housing 42%
 - Accommodation with relatives, friends or returning home – 7%
 - Supported accommodation – 6%
 - Other – 2%
- 4,500 households were successfully relieved of their homelessness due to Local Authority assistance in securing alternative accommodation. This represents 41% of the total 10,882 households assessed as being homeless during the year.
- The types of accommodation secured to relieve homelessness were:
 - Private rented accommodation – 32%
 - Social Housing 33%
 - Supported accommodation – 22%
 - Accommodation with relatives, friends or returning home – 9%
 - Other – 4%

Priority Need

- Of the 2,076 households accepted as eligible, unintentionally homeless, and in priority need and owed a duty to provide accommodation the main reasons for their priority need were:
 - Dependent children - 41.7%
 - Vulnerable - 31.1%, of which 17.9% were due to mental health and 10.1% due to physical disability
 - Fleeing domestic abuse or threatened abuse – 11.4%

Reasons for Homelessness

- The main reasons for being threatened with homelessness under s66 in order of the highest reason were:
 - Loss of rented or tied accommodation
 - Parents, relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate

- Relationship breakdown.
- The main reasons for being homeless in order of the highest reason under s73 were:
 - Parents, relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate
 - Relationship breakdown
 - Loss of rented or tied accommodation.
- The main reasons for being homeless in order of the highest reason under s75 were:
 - Parents, relatives or friends no longer willing to accommodate
 - Loss of rented or tied accommodation
 - Relationship breakdown.

Temporary Accommodation

- At the end of March 2017 there were 2,013 households accommodated in temporary accommodation across Wales, compared with 1,875 in 2016.
- The highest number of households were accommodated in Cardiff (582 households) and 39.1 per 10,000 households, and the lowest were in Merthyr Tydfil based on actual numbers (12 households), but in Anglesey based on population at 3.9 per 1,000 households.
- Of the 2,013 households accommodated in temporary accommodation:
 - 39% were in private rented accommodation
 - 27% were in hostel or refuge accommodation
 - 21% were in LA/RSL stock
 - 9% were in Bed & Breakfast
 - 3% were in other forms of accommodation.
- At the end of March 2017 there were 189 households accommodated in Bed & Breakfast accommodation of which 9 (5%) were families with children.
- Of the households accommodated in temporary accommodation 54% were single people and 41% were families with children.
- 67% of households had spent less than 6 months in temporary accommodation at the end of March 2017, while 11% had been there for longer than a year.
- Over two thirds of the 2,076 households who left temporary accommodation during the year accepted an offer through the allocations scheme. A further 10% accepted a private sector offer and 7% voluntarily ceased to occupy.

Homelessness in Conwy

Data Comparisons

- 6.1 The data collected under the previous legislation (Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) was based only on the final assessment decision made by local authorities on households who applied for assistance with housing. From April 2015 onwards, local authorities are required to record all the outcomes of assessments made about households who apply for assistance with housing and receive an assessment under Section 62 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. It is possible for a single household to have up to three separate outcomes under this process depending on the outcomes of each duty within the legislation.
- 6.2 It is not possible to directly compare the number of 'homeless households' collected under the current and previous legislations. Under the previous legislation, households accepted as homeless (i.e. were eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need) were owed a main homelessness duty by the local authority to secure suitable accommodation.
- 6.3 Under the new legislation, households owed a main homelessness duty to secure accommodation (under Section 75) would meet the same criteria as those under the previous legislation (under Section 193). However, the data cannot be compared because, under the new legislation, in some cases, homelessness for households who met the same criteria may have been relieved through earlier intervention (Section 73). It is not possible to quantify the number of homeless households (that were eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need) that were successfully relieved through earlier intervention (Section 73) because an assessment of intentionality or of priority need may not have been made at this point in the process.
- 6.4 The data on homeless households in temporary accommodation are no longer directly comparable due to changes to those cases qualifying for the provision of temporary accommodation, with the removal of the automatic priority need for prisoners.
- 6.5 More generally, the new legislation extends the time limit for being threatened with homelessness to 56 days which will impact on the overall numbers recorded on the statutory homelessness data collection returns for April 2015 onwards.
- 6.6 As a result of this the data for 2015/16 onwards is not directly comparable with data from previous years.

Homelessness Data

- 6.7 Conwy County Council are required to provide homelessness statistics in the forms of quarterly submissions to Welsh Government, which record the numbers of households who have approached the Council as homeless or threatened with homelessness and what duties are owed.
- 6.8 Whilst this data provides a useful insight into the levels and nature of homelessness it only covers those households who approach the Council. To understand the levels and causes of homelessness fully a range of other data collected by a number of other agencies is also taken into account this includes:

- Housing Solutions
- Homelessness Statistics submitted to Welsh Government
- Housing Register data
- Housing Association data
- Rough Sleeper's Count
- Supporting People Pathway referrals
- Citizens Advice Bureau data
- Shelter Cymru data.

6.9 All of the data contained in this document needs to be read in context. Low figures could result in higher percentages and distort some of the results.

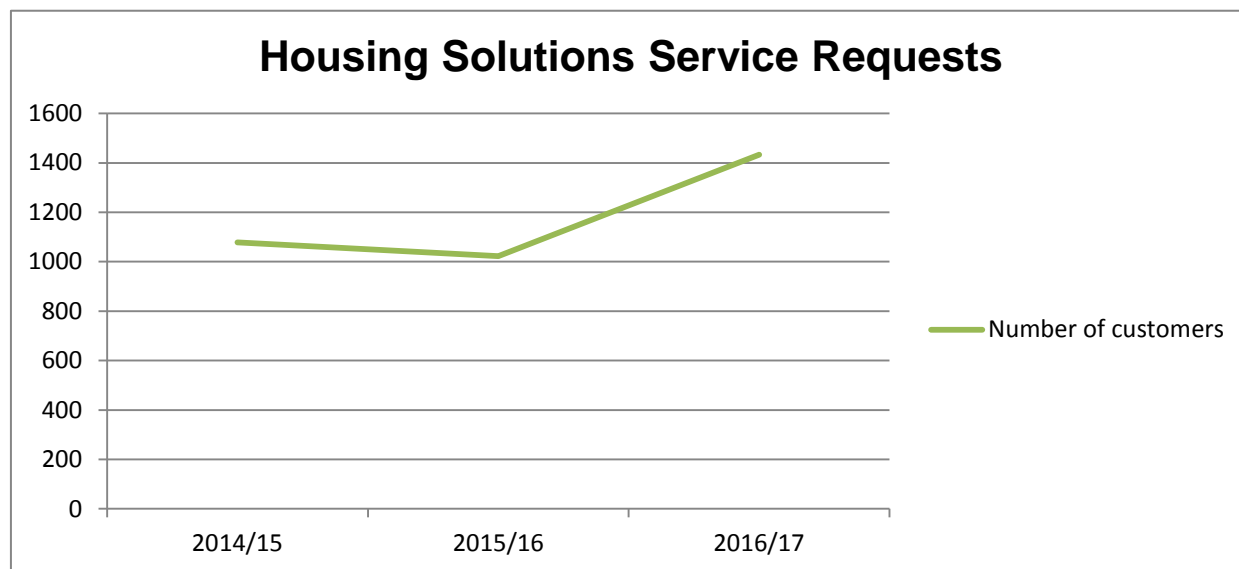
Housing Solutions

- 6.10 Conwy Housing Solutions provide housing advice and assistance, together with working to prevent and relieve homelessness, and assistance to those that do become homelessness.
- 6.11 Conwy Housing Solutions provide a telephone triage system through SARTH (Single Access Route to Housing). In 2016/17 the service carried out 2,620 triages, and in the first six months of 2017/18 carried out a further 1,133 triages. This triage advice covers a whole range of housing issues, including issues that relate to the Housing Register, it provides a useful indication of the number of households approaching the Council for some form of housing advice.
- 6.12 Since the introduction of the new legislation, demand on Conwy's Housing Solutions Service has been increasing year on year. As at the end of March 2017, the Service had experienced a 32.9% increase in service requests since the introduction of the new legislation.
- 6.13 The table below shows the number of service requests for the last three years.

Table 6.1 Housing Solutions service requests

Financial Year	Number of service requests	% Increase
2014 / 2015	1078	
2015 / 2016	1222	+13.4%
2016 / 2017	1433	+17.3%

Source Housing Solutions data

Chart 6.1 Housing Solutions service requests

Source: Housing Solutions database

Homelessness Statistics

Outcomes

6.14 The following table summarises the recorded outcomes under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

Table 6.2 Outcomes of Housing (Wales) Act 2014

Outcomes	2015/16 Total	2015/16 of which single	2016/17 Total	2016/17 of which single	2017/18 Total Q1 & Q2	2017/18 of which single
Total applications for assistance that resulted in s62 assessment	-	-	1013	593	464	255
Ineligible	2	2	1	1	4	4
Eligible but not homeless or threatened with homelessness	138	81	102	55	24	12
Threatened with homelessness, prevention assistance provided (s66)	217	100	364	143	184	81
Homeless, subject to duty to help secure accommodation (s73)	302	231	549	388	246	165
Eligible, homeless but not in priority need	83	82	119	112	55	49
Eligible, homeless and in priority need but intentionally so	10	6	7	4	2	0
Eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need (s75)	17	9	69	30	27	11
Total outcomes	769	511	1211	733	542	322
Total prevention/relief	284	157	495	252	209	115

Source Welsh Government Returns

Assessments

- 6.15 In 2016/17 there were a total of 1,013 applications for assistance that resulted in a S62 assessment, 58% of these applications were for single people. In the first six months of 2017/18 there were 464 S62 assessments, of which 55% were from single people. This suggests that a very high proportion of single people are homeless or threatened with homelessness across Conwy.
- 6.16 523 of the households assessed had a female as the main applicant (52%) and 490 had a male as the main applicant (48%). In relation to ethnicity 510 individuals were white, 6 were of mixed/multiple ethnic group and 1 was recorded as other. For 496 (49%) of cases no ethnicity was recorded. There is a need to improve data recording in relation to ethnicity.
- 6.17 The majority of cases (75%) that were assessed for assistance were aged over 25 years, and 24% were aged between 18-24 years. According to population data 15-24 years olds make up approximately 0% of the general population of Conwy; as such, young people are over-represented in homelessness statistics when compared with the population data.
- 6.18 In 2016/17 only one case was found to be ineligible, in the first 6 months of 2017/18, 4 cases were found to not be eligible, all of these were single people.

Not Homeless

- 6.19 In 2016/17, 102 households were found not to be homeless following the S62 assessment of which approximately half were single people, this was a slight reduction on the previous year. The data from the first six months of 17/18 indicates that a further reduction is likely. This suggests that effective triage arrangements are in place.

S66

- 6.20 In 2016/17 a total of 364 households, of which 39% were single people, were assessed as being threatened with homelessness within 56 days and owed a duty under S66, this was a 40% increase from the previous year. In the first two quarters of 2017/18, 184 households were owed a duty under S66; this suggests a similar level to 2016/17 based on the initial six months data.

S73

- 6.21 In 2016/17 549 households, of which 70% were single, were assessed as being homeless and owed a duty under S73. This was an increase of 45% on the previous year.
- 6.22 There was a higher than anticipated proportion of customers who approached the service when they were homeless on the day, this accounted for 33% of all assessments. There was no opportunity for homelessness to be prevented in these cases. There is a need to raise awareness and encourage customers to seek help at a much earlier point in order for opportunities for effective early intervention and prevention to be maximised.

- 6.23 It is notable that a very high percentage of people owed a duty under S73 were single people. While the reasons for this are not clear there is a possibility that the service is struggling to prevent single people from becoming homeless due to a lack of options available for single people and as such single people may be progressing to S73. There is also a possibility that single people are not approaching the service for assistance until they are actually homeless. There may be some benefit to understand why single people are significantly over-represented as being owed a S73 duty, in order to develop a more targeted approach and prevent single people from becoming homeless.

No Priority Need

- 6.24 In 2016/17 a total of 119 households were found to not have a priority need of which 94% were single, this high percentage of single people would be expected as households with dependent children or a pregnant woman would automatically have a priority need.
- 6.25 A higher number of households were found to not have a priority need compared with 2015/16; this is in line with the increase in the total number of outcomes.

Intentionally Homeless

- 6.26 In 2016/17 a total of 7 households were found to be intentionally homeless of which 4 households were single. This was a reduction on the previous year. To date only 2 households have been found to be intentionally homeless in 2017/18.
- 6.27 The Welsh Government has pledged to remove the intentionality test for all families. It is envisaged this will be introduced from April 2019. It would be beneficial for the Council to begin to collate robust information on intentionality decisions, to understand in more detail what the impact of this will be on Conwy.
- 6.28 In preparation for this the Council may wish to work with key partners in Children's Services and Housing Associations to develop a pilot proposal for accommodating intentionally homeless families with intensive support and management.

S75

- 6.29 In 2016/17, 69 households, of which 43% were single households, were found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need, and owed a S75 duty. This is an increase of 75% on the previous year. A similar level is anticipated for 2017/18. This was the highest number across North Wales, followed by Denbighshire at 54 households. Flintshire and Wrexham had the lowest number of households owed a S75 duty at 15 and 6 respectively.
- 6.30 A total of 52 cases had the S75 duty positively discharged in 2016/17 compared with 12 the previous year.

Loss of Contact and Non-cooperation

- 6.31 In 2016/17, 89 applications were withdrawn due to loss of contact (of which 57 of these applications were from single people). This accounts for nearly 7% of all outcomes. There is a need to understand the reason for this and whether this is linked to customer expectation. The homeless duty was discharged for a further 55 cases due to non co-operation (of which 35 of these applications were from single people).

Prevention and Relief

- 6.32 A total of 495 prevention and relief outcomes were recorded in 2016/17, which was an increase of 43% on the previous year. 51% of these prevention and relief outcomes were for single households. Prevention and relief is explored in more detail in the section below.

Prevention & Relief

- 6.33 In 2016/17, of the 364 households owed a duty to prevent them from becoming homeless (S66), 211 households (58%) were successfully prevented from becoming homeless. In 2015/16, 70% of cases were successfully prevented. While this represents a drop in performance in terms of the percentage of cases successfully prevented, it is important to note that in actual terms 59 more households were prevented from becoming homeless in 2016/17 compared with the previous year.
- 6.34 Of those that were not successfully prevented the reasons for this are; 72 households (20%) were unsuccessfully prevented from becoming homeless, a further 25 households failed to co-operate with the Local Authority, 6 households withdrew their application and further 49 households had their application cancelled due to loss of contact. One household was recorded as other reasons.
- 6.35 The following table illustrates the successful prevention measures used to enable a household to remain in their accommodation. A total of 54 households were prevented from losing their accommodation in 2016/17, compared with 42 the previous year.

Table 6.3 Successful preventions		
Prevention Tool	2015/16 Successful Preventions	2016/17 Successful Preventions
Mediation and conciliation	15	5
Financial Payments	0	0
Debt and financial advice	0	0
Resolving housing & welfare benefit problems	3	3
Resolving rent or service charge arrears	2	13
Measures to prevent domestic abuse	0	0
Negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure someone can remain in accommodation in the private rented sector	7	24
Mortgage arrears interventions or mortgage rescue	0	0
Providing other assistance or specialist support for problems	10	9
Total	42	54

Source WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 6.36 The most successful prevention tool used to enable households to remain in their existing accommodation was negotiation or legal advocacy to ensure someone can remain in the private rented sector.
- 6.37 Only 26% of all successful prevention outcomes enabled households to remain in their accommodation. There is a need to ensure the Housing Solutions team are able to more effectively prevent homelessness by helping people remain in their accommodation and a need to ensure that there are a range of tools in place to enable the team to do this.
- 6.38 In 2016/17 a total of 157 households had their homelessness prevented under S66 by being assisted to find alternative accommodation, and a further 232 households had their homelessness relieved under S73. The following table details the successful relief outcomes. A total of 389 households were supported by the team to find alternative accommodation, this was an increase of 40% on the previous year.

Table 6.4 Successful relief outcomes						
Prevention Tool	2015/16 Successful Prevention (s66)	2015/16 Successful Relief (s73)	2015/16 Total	2016/17 Successful Prevention (s66)	2016/17 Successful Relief (s73)	2016/17 Total
Any form of non-self contained supported accommodation	4	13	17	3	25	28
Self-contained supported accommodation	13	13	26	9	31	40
Private rented sector accommodation with landlord incentive scheme	11	17	28	43	56	99
Private rented sector accommodation without landlord incentive scheme	67	35	102	53	53	106
Accommodation arranged with friends, relatives or returning home	3	9	12	7	25	32
Social Housing – Local authority	2	3	5	1	1	2
Social Housing - RSL	15	29	44	34	37	71
Low cost home ownership scheme, low cost market housing solution	0	1	1	1	0	1
Other assistance or support	0	0	0	6	4	10
Total	115	120	235	157	232	389

Source WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 6.39 The most successful tool in enabling households to obtain alternative accommodation is assisting households to access the private rented sector accounting for a total of 205 cases, 106 of these were achieved without a landlord incentive and 99 with an incentive.
- 6.40 A total of 96 of these households were helped under section 66, before they became homeless, and 109 under section 73 after they became homeless.
- 6.41 The next most successful outcome was assisting households to access social housing, which accounted for 73 outcomes, of which 71 accessed Housing Association accommodation.
- 6.42 A further 68 households were assisted to access supported accommodation, of which 40 households accessed self-contained accommodation, and a further 32 households were able to stay with family or friends.
- 6.43 In 2016/17, 42% of those owed a relief duty had their homelessness successfully relieved, this compares with 40% the previous year. In actual numbers an additional 112 households had their homelessness successfully relieved compared with the previous year.
- 6.44 The following table shows the total prevention and relief outcomes achieved.

Table 6.5 Prevention and Relief summary

Prevention and Relief	2015/16 Total	2016/17 Total
Homelessness prevented - households able to remain in existing home (s66)	42	54
Homelessness prevented – Household assisted to obtain alternative accommodation (s66)	115	157
Homelessness relieved - households able to remain in existing home (s73)	120	232
Total	235	389

Source WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 6.45 In spite of the increased number of households approaching the Council for assistance and the growing pressures of high caseloads, the service prevented or relieved homelessness for an additional 154 households in 2016/17 compared with the previous year. This indicates improved performance in relation to prevention work. This positive performance in relation to prevention appears to carry on into 2017/18 with a total of 191 (107 - prevention, 84 – relief) households who have had their homelessness prevented or relieved in the first six months of the year.
- 6.46 In 2016/17 a total of 55 households failed to co-operate, and the duty owed was brought to an end. A total of 89 cases had their applications withdrawn due to a loss of contact, this is a significant number and represents 7% of all outcomes recorded. From the information available it is not clear whether these households resolved their own housing situation. There was a view from staff members that some customers approached the Housing Solutions service with the expectation of being able to access social housing, when it was explained to them about the lack of availability of social housing across Conwy they no longer pursued their application.
- 6.47 The tables below provide an overview of prevention activity across North Wales in 2016/17.

Table 6.6 Overview of prevention activity

	Homelessness successfully prevented (S.66)	Homelessness successfully relieved % (S.73)	Positively discharged % (S.75)
Anglesey	73%	63%	100%
Gwynedd	78%	66%	71%
Conwy	58%	42%	75%
Denbighshire	54%	31%	76%
Flintshire	63%	49%	80%
Wrexham	64%	62%	60%
Wales	62%	41%	81%

Source: Statutory Homelessness data collection from Local Authorities

- 6.48 In relation to prevention activity, Conwy had the second lowest percentage of cases where homelessness was successfully prevented across North Wales, and was below the Wales average, Denbighshire had the lowest percentage. Conwy had the second lowest percentage of cases where homelessness was relieved, although was slightly higher than the average for Wales.
- 6.49 The above data shows that Gwynedd had both the highest percentage of successful prevention outcomes (Section 66) and of successful homelessness relief outcomes (Section 73) in Wales during 2015-16 at 78% and 66% respectively.
- 6.50 However, the tables below provide more useful comparative data.

Table 6.7 Prevention activity – comparison by County					
	Households threatened with homelessness with 56 days (S.66)	Households threatened with homelessness within 56 days - rate per 10,000 households	No. of households where homelessness successfully prevented	% of cases where homelessness successfully prevented	Prevention rate per 10,000 households
Anglesey	183	59	135	73	43
Gwynedd	210	39	162	78	30
Conwy	363	70	210	58	41
Denbighshire	288	70	156	54	38
Flintshire	387	60	243	63	37
Wrexham	411	70	264	64	45
Wales	9,210	69	5,718	62	43

Source: Statutory Homelessness data collection from Local Authorities

- 6.51 In 2016/17 Conwy had the third highest number of households threatened with homelessness within 56 days and the joint highest rate per 10,000 households with Wrexham and Denbighshire. Conwy had the third highest number of cases where homelessness was successfully prevented. In relation to successful prevention per 10,000 households Conwy was the fourth highest across North Wales.

Table 6.8 Relief rates – comparison by County					
	Households assessed as homeless and owed duty to help to secure accom (S.73)	Households owed S73 rate per 10,000 households	No. of households where homelessness successfully relieved	% of cases where homelessness successfully relieved	Relief rate per 10,000 households
Anglesey	111	36	69	63	23
Gwynedd	207	39	135	66	25
Conwy	549	106	231	42	45
Denbighshire	369	90	114	31	28
Flintshire	306	47	150	49	23
Wrexham	669	115	414	62	71
Wales	10,884	82	4,500	41	34

Source: Statutory Homelessness data collection from Local Authorities

- 6.52 Conwy had the second highest number across North Wales of cases where a S73 duty was owed, and a higher rate per 10,000 households than the average for Wales. In terms of actual numbers Conwy successfully relieved homelessness for 231 households, this was the second highest across North Wales.

Reasons for Homelessness

- 6.53 The table overleaf demonstrates the main reason for homelessness for households assessed under each duty for all cases in 2016/17.

DRAFT

Main reason for homelessness	2015/16 Duty to prevent (s66)	2016/17 Duty to prevent (s66)	2015/16 Duty to help (s73)	2016/17 Duty to help (s73)	2015/16 Found no priority need or Intentional	2016/17 Found no priority need or Intentional	2015/16 Homeless Acceptance (s75)	2016/17 Homeless Acceptance (s75)
Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	24	17	46	47	21	9	1	4
Other relatives or friends no longer or able to accommodate	18	48	35	100	17	25	4	8
Non-violent breakdown of relationship	12	19	21	63	1	15	0	2
Violent breakdown of relation involving partner	12	25	34	89	4	0	3	21
Racially motivated violence or harassment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Violence or harassment due to religion/belief	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Violence or harassment due to gender reassignment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Violence or harassment due to sexual identity/orientation	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Violence or harassment due to disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Violence or harassment due to other reason	8	9	14	13	0	2	0	3
Mortgage arrears	2	4	2	4	1	1	0	1
Rent arrears on social sector dwelling	3	13	4	2	3	2	0	0

Continued overleaf/...

Table 6.9 Reasons for homelessness (continued)								
Main reason for homelessness	2015/16 Duty to prevent (s66)	2016/17 Duty to prevent (s66)	2015/16 Duty to help (s73)	2016/17 Duty to help (s73)	2015/16 Found no priority need or Intentional	2016/17 Found no priority need or Intentional	2015/16 Homeless Acceptance (s75)	2016/17 Homeless Acceptance (s75)
Rent arrears on private sector dwelling	14	21	4	16	1	5	0	2
Loss or rented or tied accommodation	99	169	53	101	12	26	7	15
Current property unaffordable	3	6	0	5	0	0	0	1
Current property unsuitable	8	19	3	11	0	3	0	0
Prison leaver	9	1	55	66	21	27	1	7
Leaving institution or care	2	8	7	15	4	1	1	0
Other reason	3	5	24	16	8	9	0	5
TOTAL	217	364	302	549	93	126	17	69

Source WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 6.54 As households can be assessed up to three times, it is not possible to total the main causes of homelessness under each duty, for risk of double counting.
- 6.55 However, the main cause of homelessness in Conwy against each of the above outcomes is the loss of rented or tied accommodation for the last two years. In 2016/17 this accounted for 46% of cases where there was a duty to prevent (s66), 18% of cases where there was a duty to help secure accommodation (s73), 21% of cases found to have no priority need or to be intentionally homeless and 22% of accepted homeless cases (s75).
- 6.56 Between 2015/16 and 2016/17 there was a 41% increase in the number of households owed a S66 duty due to the loss of private rented accommodation, and a 48% increase in the number of households owed a S73 duty.
- 6.57 The other main causes of homelessness in Conwy are relatives no longer willing to accommodate (13% of S66, 18% of S73), violent relationship breakdown (domestic abuse) (7% of S66, 16% of S73), relationship breakdown (5% of S66, 11% of S73), leaving prison (18% of S73) and parents no longer willing to accommodate (5% of S66, 9% of S73).
- 6.58 People leaving prison accounted for 18% of households where there was a duty to help to secure accommodation (s73). This indicates that the prisoner pathway is not working effectively as more of these households should be assisted prior to leaving prison.
- 6.59 Prevention work needs to focus against these main causes of homelessness.

Loss of Private Rented Accommodation

- 6.60 There is a need to ensure that there is a much more targeted approach to preventing people losing their home in the private rented sector. Both landlords and tenants need to be able to access immediate support and advice as soon as difficulties arise in the tenancy. Landlord and tenant liaison/mediation alongside a dedicated resource to resolve any difficulties at the outset will provide an important prevention tool.

Family/Friends Evicting

- 6.61 There is also a need to ensure a much more targeted and pro-active response for households who are being asked to leave by family or friends. Effective and timely mediation, together with home visits, and planned moves into alternative accommodation should be introduced.

Non-violent Relationship Breakdown

- 6.62 Access to mediation and relationship counselling services may assist in preventing homelessness and buying time to enable planned moves into alternative accommodation.

Domestic Abuse

- 6.63 Timely access to a range of options, including emergency provision and support, floating support, planned moves and target hardening may assist in helping to prevent and resolve homelessness.

Prison Leavers

- 6.64 Work will need to happen both nationally and locally to ensure that the Prisoner Pathway is working effectively and provides opportunities to find accommodation solutions prior to release.

Priority Need

- 6.65 The table below illustrates the reason for priority need for households found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need for the last two years.

Table 6.10 Priority need by reason		
Priority Need - Reason	2015/16	2016/17
Dependent children	7	22
Pregnant	0	3
Vulnerable due to old age	1	0
Vulnerable due to physical disability	0	3
Vulnerable due to mental health/learning disability	1	6
Vulnerable due to other reason	0	1
Care leaver or at risk of exploitation (18-21yrs)	1	3
16/17 year olds	3	2
Domestic abuse or threatened violence	3	24
Leaving armed forces	0	0
Former prisoner	1	5
Emergency	0	0
TOTAL	17	69

Source WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

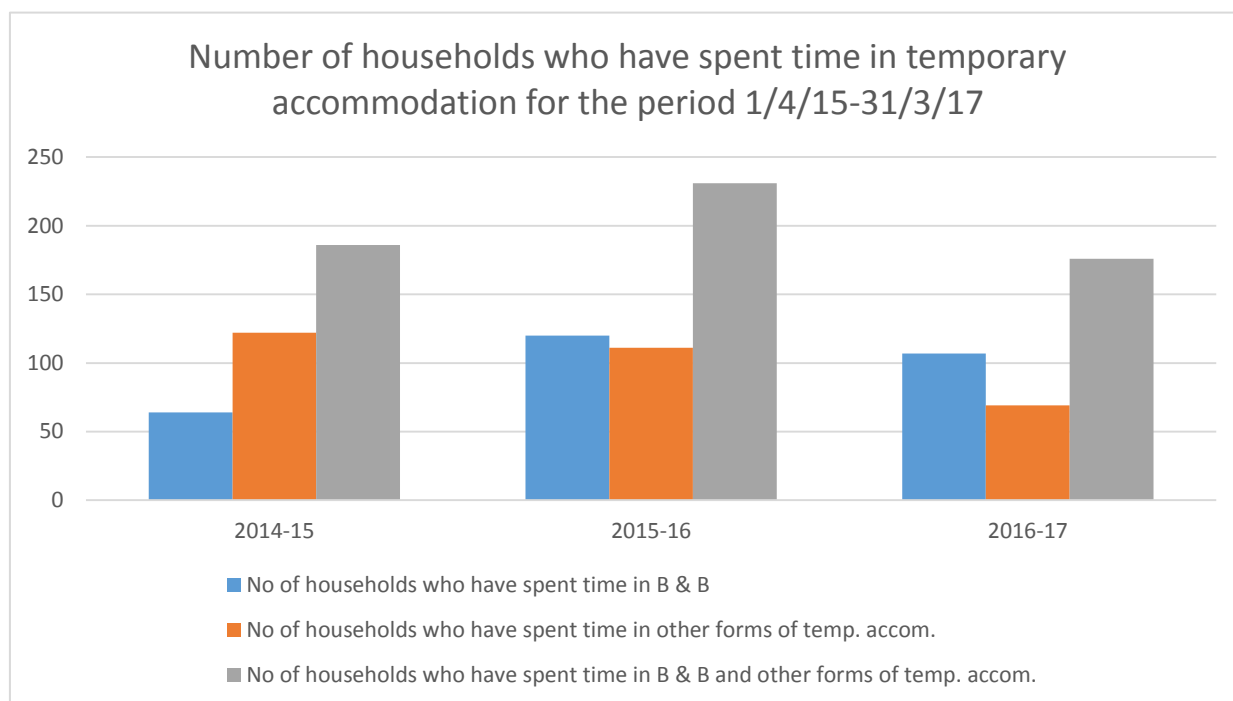
- 6.66 In 2015/16 the main reason for priority need was due to dependent children, in 2016/17 the main reason was due to fleeing domestic abuse, accounting for 35% of all cases owed a S75 duty or threatened violence, followed by dependent children (32% of those owed a S75 duty).

Temporary Accommodation

- 6.67 At the end of the 31st March 2016 there were 75 households in temporary accommodation, this figure had increased to 113 at the 31st March 2017.

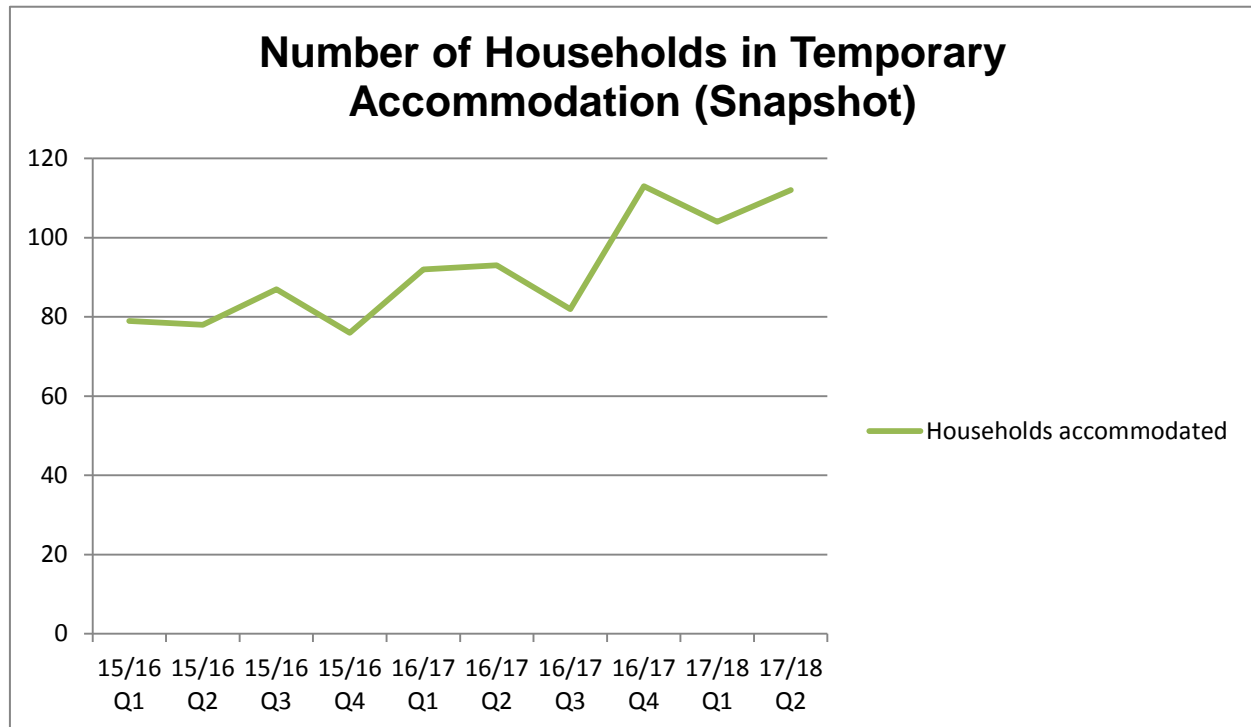
- 6.68 At the end of the 31st March 2016 there were 12 households in Bed & Breakfast, this figure had increased to 24 at the 31st March 2017.
- 6.69 The chart below shows the number of placements in emergency and temporary accommodation for the period 1/4/15 – 31/3/17.

Chart 6.2 Households who have spent time in Temporary Accommodation



Source: Housing Solutions Data

- 6.70 As can be seen from the above, the total number of households who have spent time in any form of temporary accommodation increased in 2015/2016 but reduced in 2016/2017.
- 6.71 The graph overleaf shows the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation (including B&B) at the end of each quarter. This figure is a snapshot in time, and therefore does not represent the total number of households placed in temporary accommodation.

Chart 6.3 **Snapshot of households in Temporary Accommodation**

Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 6.72 Over the last two and a half years there has been an increase in the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation at the end of each quarter. At the end of Quarter 2 2017/18 there were 112 households in temporary accommodation, this is a 29% increase from Q1 2015/16.
- 6.73 This increase in the use of temporary accommodation is in line with the increased demand on the service both in terms of actual numbers and those owed a S75 duty.
- 6.74 At the end of September 2017 there were 112 households accommodated in temporary accommodation, of which 64 were families with dependent children. A total of 26 households were accommodated in B&B of which 11 (42%) had dependent children.

Table 6.11 Temporary accommodation by type

Type of temporary accommodation	2015/16 Q4	2016/17 Q4
Directly with a private sector landlord	0	1
Private sector accommodation leased by LA	62	55
Private sector accommodation leased by RSL	0	0
Council stock	0	0
RSL stock	0	0
Hostel	1	2
Women's Refuge	1	31
B&B	11	24
Other	0	0
Homeless at home	1	0
Total	76	113

Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

6.75 The majority of households are placed in temporary accommodation in the private rented sector leased by the Local Authority. There was a very significant increase in the use of refuge accommodation in 2016/17 and this corresponds with the increase in the number of households found to be in priority need due to domestic abuse.

6.76 The table below provides a snapshot showing how long the households in temporary accommodation had been accommodated on the last day of each financial year.

Table 6.12 Temporary accommodation by length of stay

Length of Stay	2015/16	2016/17
Under 6 months	36	50
6-12 months	18	35
Over 1 year	22	28
Total	76	113

Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

6.77 The snapshot indicates that the majority of households accommodated in temporary accommodation had resided there for less than six months (44% in 2016/17). However, there is an increase in both the number of households residing in temporary accommodation for 6-12 months (49% increase) and for over a year (21% increase). Of the households accommodated in temporary accommodation for over a year in 2016/17, 15 of these households included dependent children.

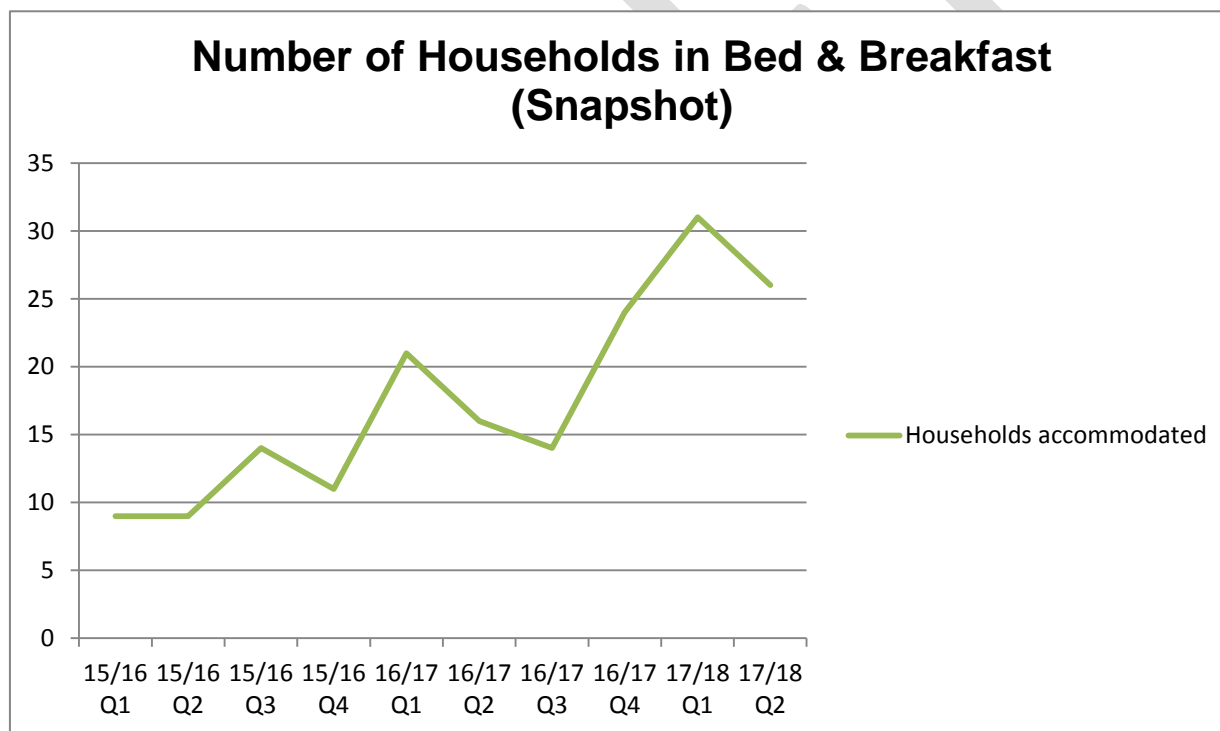
6.78 At the end of 2016/17 the average length of stay in temporary accommodation was 292.48 days, this is a very slight increase from the previous year. Given the high pressure on the service and increased demand on temporary accommodation, the fact that the average length of stay in temporary accommodation has not increased is very positive.

- 6.79 Move on from temporary accommodation is generally into social or private rented accommodation, both of which are becoming increasingly difficult to secure.
- 6.80 Failure to maintain timely move on from temporary accommodation would have a significant impact on the limited portfolio resulting in bed blocking the provision. This in turn would have a significant impact on the use of emergency accommodation/B&B with households having extended stays at a significant cost to the Authority.

Emergency Accommodation/Bed & Breakfast

- 6.81 The use of B&B accommodation shows an increase over the last two years, at the end of 2016/17, 21% of all households in temporary accommodation were in B&B.
- 6.82 The graph below shows the number of households accommodated in B&B at the end of each quarter. This figure is a snapshot in time, and therefore does not represent the total number of households placed in B&B.

Chart 6.4 Households in Bed & Breakfast

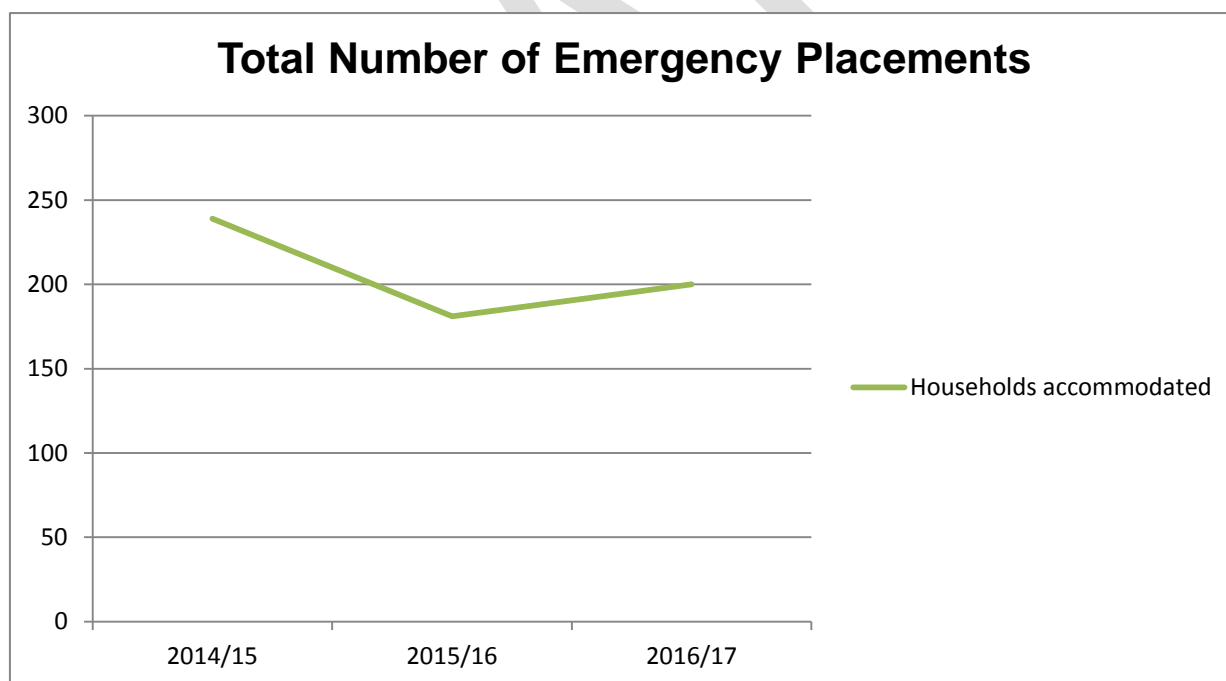


Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 6.83 There has been an ongoing increase in the use of B&B accommodation over the last two and a half years, although a slight decrease was seen in the last recorded quarter, however this still represents an increase of 65% on the first quarter of 2016/17.
- 6.84 The average length of time spent in B&B accommodation in 2016/2017 was 41.78 days, this was an increase on the previous year end performance which was 38.55 days.

- 6.85 The average for 2016/17 was impacted by 3 cases who resided in B&B in excess of 100 days. All 3 cases accessed specialist supported housing as they were vulnerable and needed specialist accommodation and support. Excluding those 3 cases, performance would have been closer to 38 days which would have been in line with the previous year end.
- 6.86 The average length of stay for families accommodated in B&B at the year end 2016/2017 was 28.90 days, this is a slight increase on the previous year which was recorded as 27.04.
- 6.87 The use of B&B accommodation remains high in Conwy; this is in part due to a lack of more appropriate temporary accommodation, an ongoing increase in the number of households to whom the Council owes a homeless duty, and minimal throughput of the units available.
- 6.88 Whilst the majority of placements (58%) were for single people in 2016/17, a significant number of families are placed in B&B annually. B&B accommodation is not suitable for families, often facilities are shared, and the use of this accommodation will impact on the well-being and schooling of children.
- 6.89 The graph below shows the total number of emergency placements made over the last three years.

Chart 6.5 **Number of emergency placements**



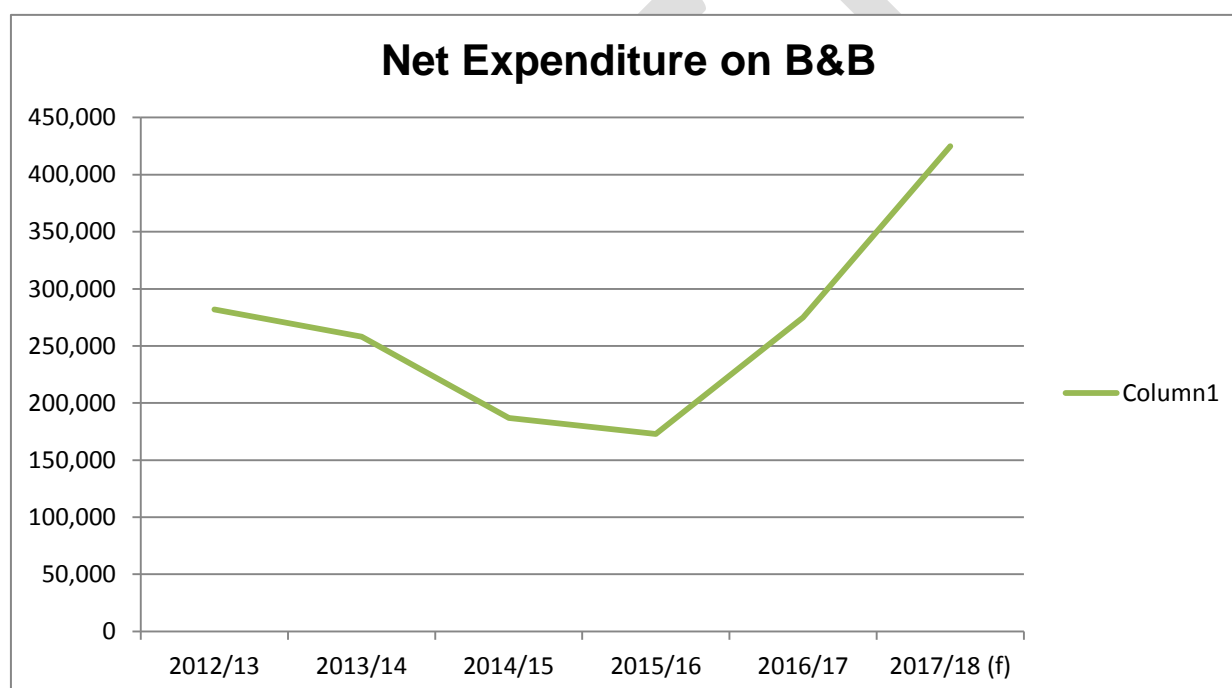
Source: Housing Solutions Data

- 6.90 The following table shows the annual budget and expenditure on emergency accommodation since April 2012.

Table 6.13 Annual expenditure on emergency accommodation

Year	Budget	Expenditure
2012/13	£285,000	£282,000
2013/14	£285,000	£258,000
2014/15	£275,000	£187,000
2015/16	£225,000	£173,000
2016/17	£225,000	£275,000
2017/018	£225,00	£425,000 (Projected)

Source: Housing Solutions Data

Chart 6.6 Net expenditure on Bed & Breakfast

Source: Housing Solutions Data

- 6.91 The result of the increasing demand and changing profile of the households requiring assistance has placed pressure on the emergency accommodation budget. As can be seen from the above, the budget was over spent by £50,000 in 2016/17, with 2017/18 budget currently being predicted to be over spent in the sum of approximately £200,000.
- 6.92 The service is experiencing an increase in the number of families requiring assistance, which is also impacting on the emergency accommodation budget. Of the 31 households in emergency accommodation at the end of Quarter 1, 10 were families with children.

Households leaving temporary accommodation

- 6.93 The table below shows the number of households leaving temporary accommodation in 2015/16 and the reason for the discharge of the section 75 duty.

Table 6.14 Households leaving temporary accommodation		
Reason	2015/16	2016/17
Ceased to be eligible	0	0
Withdrawal of application	0	2
Mistake of fact	0	1
Became homeless intentionally	3	4
Accepted an offer of accommodation through the allocation scheme	7	36
Accepted a private sector offer	5	17
Voluntarily ceased to occupy	0	1
Refusal of an offer of accommodation through the allocation scheme	1	3
Refusal of an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector	0	0
Refusal of an offer of suitable interim accommodation	0	0
Refusal to co-operate	1	5
TOTAL	17	69

Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 6.94 In 2016/17, the majority of households (52%) were accommodated in social housing, followed by the private rented sector (25%). Given the low level of social housing voids occurring on an annual basis there is a need to maximise the use of the private rented sector for discharging the S75 duty, potentially through the Social Lettings Agency. This would have a positive impact upon the overall number of households in temporary accommodation, the length of stay and reliance on B&B.

Homelessness Reviews

- 6.95 The Regional Reviewing Officer position was established in 2015 by the North Wales Heads of Housing as a proactive and positive response to the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- 6.96 The homelessness legislation within the Act increased the number of 'decision making points' where an applicant can request a legal review of the decision on their homelessness application made by their local housing authority. Therefore, the North Wales Heads of Housing agreed it was sensible to implement a structured approach through which the challenges against decisions could be effectively managed and, more importantly, ensure there was a consistent approach to the interpretation and the implementation of homelessness legislation across North Wales local authorities.
- 6.97 In addition to their primary role of managing the legal reviews, the Regional Reviewing Office provides additional support to North Wales local authorities, this includes the following:

- undertaking reviews of homelessness case files, ensuring legislation is being applied correctly, quality standards are attained and providing appropriate guidance where professional development is needed.
- providing training to local authorities on the homelessness legislation.
- mitigating the potential for legal challenges by providing guidance on sensitive cases pre-decision.
- identifying and disseminating examples of best practice models, summary of relevant case law, etc., across the North Wales local authorities.

6.98 In 2016/17 Conwy received 11 requests for reviews on homelessness decisions, of these 6 were upheld, 4 were overturned and 2 were quashed. Of the 3 review decisions received in the first half of 2017/18 all have been upheld.

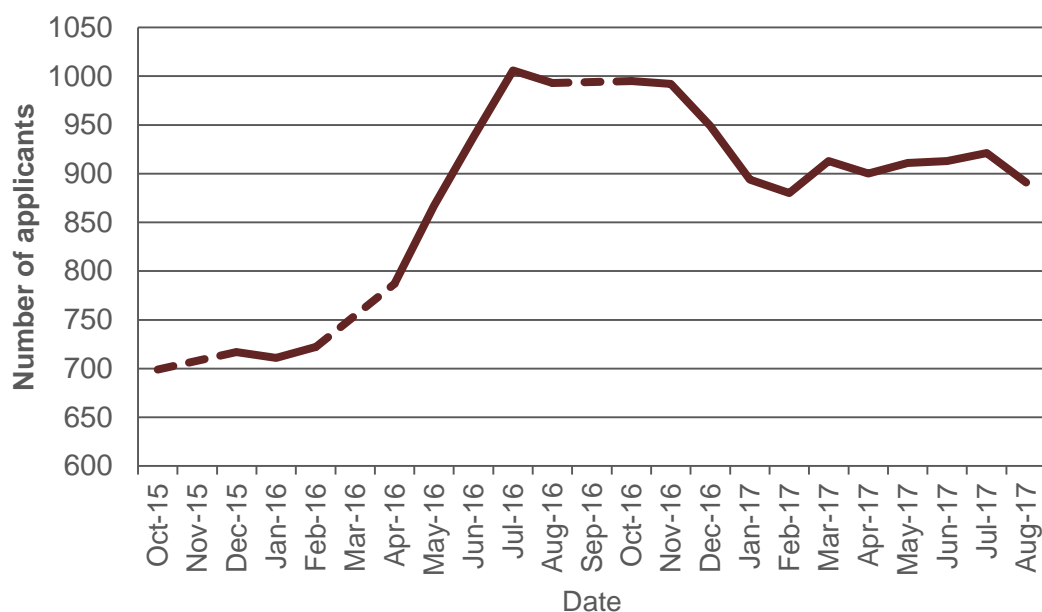
Table 6.15 Homelessness decision reviews

Date	Review Reason	Review Decision
April 16	Intentionality	Overturn
July 16	Unsuitable offer	Uphold - suitable
August 16	Unsuitable offer	Overturn - unsuitable
August 16	Unsuitable offer	Uphold - suitable
September 16	Non Priority/Reasonable Steps	Uphold NP/Quash RS
September 16	Intentionality	Uphold
September 16	Intentionality	Quashed
October 16	S73 UFTC	Quashed and re-assess
October 16	Non priority	Overturned
November 16	Unsuitable offer	Uphold - suitable
December 16	Unsuitable offer	Overturn - suitable
May 17	Suitability of S68	Uphold - suitable
June 17	End of S68 - intentionality	Uphold
August 17	Suitability of S75 interim	Uphold - suitable

6.99 The main reason for review requests was on the grounds of suitable offers; of the 5 received, 2 of these were overturned.

Housing Register

6.100 The following graph details the number of households on the Housing Register since October 2015.

Chart 6.7 Households on Housing Register

Source: LHMA – SARTH Housing Register

- 6.101 The table below details the number of households who have joined the Register as opposed to a snapshot of who was registered at any one time, over the last 5 years, broken down by bedroom need, this includes both general need and sheltered.
- 6.102 This demonstrates that although the number of registered applicants remain fairly constant the number of applications registered for accommodation has increased significantly.

Table 6.16 Housing Register 2012-2017

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4 Bed	5 Bed	6 Bed	7 Bed	8 Bed	Total
2012/13	580	330	109	20	6	0	0	0	936
2013/14	631	404	158	29	3	0	0	0	1225
2014/15	611	335	143	36	4	1	1	1	1132
2015/16	660	327	145	44	12	2	1	0	1191
2016/17	711	376	195	69	10	4	0	0	1365

Source: SARTH Housing Register

- 6.103 In April 2015 the new SARTH register was launched. SARTH (Single Access Route to Housing) is a partnership project between all the major social landlords in northeast Wales, covering the local authority areas of Conwy, Denbighshire, and Flintshire.

- 6.104 It brought together the separate waiting lists held by each RSL operating in Conwy. This provides a more robust evidence base to calculate housing need. It ought to be noted that the eligibility criteria for being accepted on the new Housing Register were tightened, preventing direct comparison with previous years. The numbers on the Register initially plateaued just below 1,000, but since the start of 2017 demand has averaged about 900 applicants.
- 6.105 The table below breaks down the demand for property type for households on the Housing Register at the end of 2016/17. Please note that some households are on the list for more than one property type.

Table 6.17 Housing Register – demand by property type		
Social Housing Register Analysis (August 2017)	Number	%
Source: Cartrefi Conwy		
Total applicants	891	
Priority need		
B1 - urgent need	118	13.2%
B2 - in need, not urgent	642	72.1%
B3 - urgent need but no local connection	3	0.3%
B4 - in need, not urgent no local connection	128	14.4%
Bedrooms required		
1	375	42.1%
2	263	29.5%
3	146	16.4%
4	78	8.8%
5 or more	29	3.3%
1 bed - aged under 35	86	9.7%
1 bed - aged 55+	153	17.2%

Source : LHMA

- 6.106 In 2017, 42.1% of all applicants needed one-bed accommodation as it is suitable for both single persons and couples, however one-bed accommodation accounted for just 16.1% of stock.
- 6.107 12.1% of all applicants require 4 or more bedrooms. Just 3.5% of stock has 4+ bedrooms and many communities do not have 4-bed properties. Families with 3 or more children, especially where there is a lone parent have, and will, feel the impact of welfare reform measures relatively acutely. Consequently, families are turning to the social housing sector as they find private rents unsustainable. On average only 4 units of 4-bed+ accommodation become available each year.
- 6.108 The following table details the number of households on the Housing Register who were in a reasonable preference category over the last three years.

Table 6.18 Housing Register households in preference category

Reasonable Preference Category	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Overcrowding	157	176	120
Financial Hardship	52	55	19
Welfare/Medical	206	243	170
Homelessness	297	394	208

Source Conwy Housing Solutions

6.109 The largest proportion of clients were in a reasonable preference category due to homelessness, this accounted for 33% of all Housing Register applicants.

Social Housing Provision

6.110 The table below shows the total Social Housing Stock across all RSLs in Conwy.

Table 6.19 Social Housing stock

		General Needs	% of General Needs	Sheltered	% of Sheltered	Total	% of Total
All Property Types	Total	4,370		1,503		5873	
	1 bedroom	712	16.3%	1,109	73.8%	1,821	31.0%
	2 bedrooms	1,308	29.9%	394	26.2%	1,702	29.0%
	3 bedrooms	2,200	50.3%			2,200	37.5%
	4 or more bedrooms	150	3.4%			150	2.6%
Houses/ Bungalows	Total	2,994		483		3477	
	1 bedroom	57		289		346	
	2 bedrooms	650		194		844	
	3 bedrooms	2,138				2,138	
	4 or more bedrooms	149				149	
Flats	Total	1,368		945		2313	
	1 bedroom	647		745		1,392	
	2 bedrooms	658		200		858	
	3 bedrooms	62				62	
	4 or more bedrooms	1				1	
Bedsit	Total	8				8	

6.111 General needs three-bedroom properties account for 37% of the social housing provision and 50% of the general needs provision. When comparing the social housing provision

against the need for property sizes there is a clear mismatch between provision and demand.

- 6.112 Conwy Council transferred its Housing Stock to Cartrefi Conwy in 2008. As such Cartrefi is the biggest social housing provider in Conwy. It owns a total of 3,855 social housing properties in Conwy.
- 6.113 The table below details the number of lets made to Housing Register applicants over the last three years, broken down by property type.

General Needs Lets

Table 6.20 General Needs Housing Register lets					
	Total Number	Number of 1 bed	Number of 2 bed	Number of 3 bed	Number of 4+ bed
2015/16	239	77	91	73	7
2016/17	305	91	136	75	5
2017/18 to date (to 30/1/18)	210	61	84	62	5

Source: Conwy Housing Solutions

Sheltered Lets

Table 6.21 Sheltered Housing Register lets					
	Total Number	Number of 1 bed	Number of 2 bed	Number of 3 bed	Number of 4+ bed
2015/16	153	113	40	2	
2016/17	129	93	31	5	
2017/18 to date (to 30/1/18)	100	71	28	1	

Source: Conwy Housing Solutions

- 6.114 The annual number of lets in 2016/17 is just over 7% of the social housing provision.
- 6.115 There is a very low turnover of all property sizes when compared to need, this is particularly the case for one and two-bed accommodation.
- 6.116 The 91 one-bedroom properties let in 2016/17 contrasts starkly with the 375 households on the Housing Register requiring one-bedroom accommodation. The same is true in relation to the demand for two-bedroom accommodation, with a total of 263 households requiring this accommodation against 136 lets in 2016/17.

Allocation of Social Housing

- 6.117 SARTH (Single Access Route to Housing) is a partnership project between all the major social landlords in northeast Wales, covering the local authority areas of Conwy, Denbighshire, and Flintshire.

- 6.118 The overall aim of SARTH is to provide a common access route to a range of affordable housing options, which is transparent, legal, efficient and accessible to all sections of the community.
- 6.119 A shared applications process and shared housing register for social housing gives customers one route to apply for social housing in the area where they want to live. Their application will be placed on a single shared register, so they can be prioritised by all landlords with properties in their chosen areas at the same time.
- 6.120 The project aims are to:
- Make services more accessible
 - Meet housing need with a wider range of solutions
 - Using stock more effectively
 - Encourage balanced and sustainable communities
 - Ensure Value for Money
 - Enhance customer service
 - Take into account applicants' individual needs and preferences.
- 6.121 SARTH has been operating in Conwy since 2015. The Allocations Policy has recently been reviewed and the agreed changes will be implemented in 2018.
- 6.122 While there are many clear advantages to operating a single point of access Housing Register, the differing Housing Markets across Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire does mean that the priorities for each local authority area differs.
- 6.123 Given the huge housing pressures facing Conwy County Borough there will be a need to continuously review the SARTH partnership to ensure that social housing can be used to address the local issues and priorities identified within Conwy. Where this is no longer the case the Council may wish to consider whether there is a need for separate allocation policies for each Council area within the SARTH partnership to ensure a greater focus on meeting the local need and pressures.

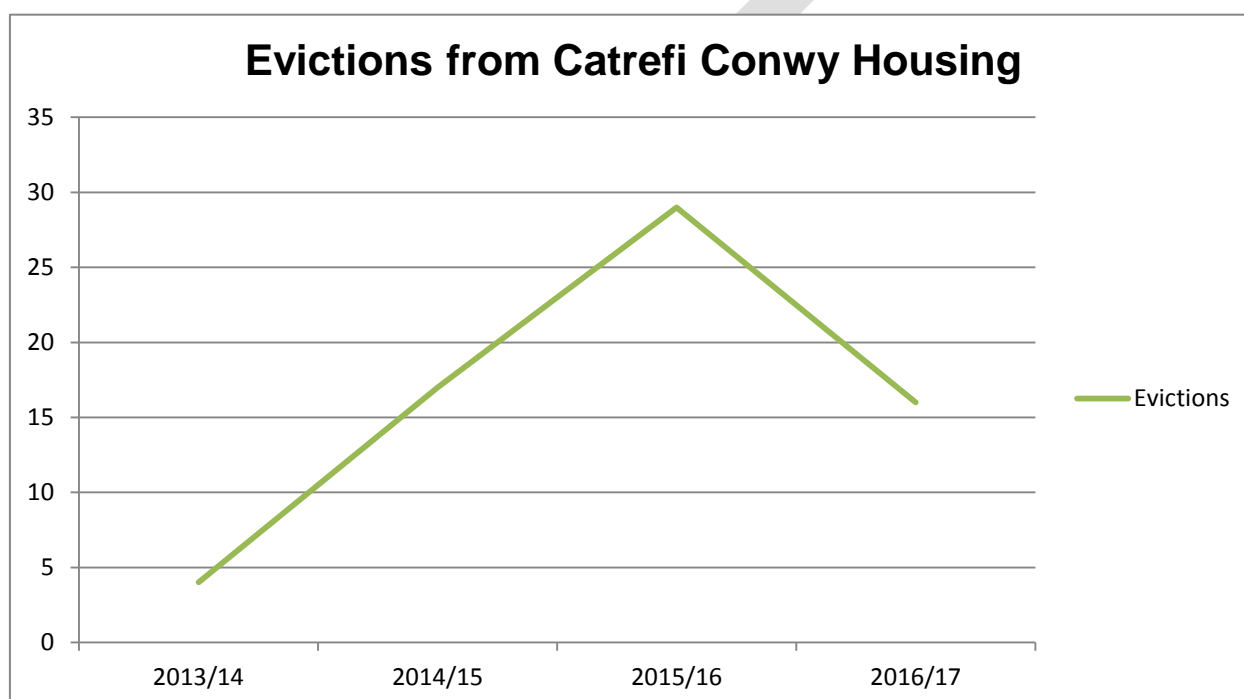
Evictions from Social Housing

- 6.124 The following table provides details of the number of evictions from Catrefi Conwy's Housing stock over the last four years. The majority of these evictions (76%) were due to rent arrears. The level of evictions from social housing has increased significantly since 2013/14; this corresponds with the welfare reform introductions, including the bedroom tax. The level of evictions peaked in 2015/16 at 29, and reduced in the subsequent year to 16, however this was still a 300% increase from the baseline figure in 2013/14.

Table 6.22 Evictions from social housing

Financial Year	No. of evictions	Reason		
		Number due to Rent arrears	Number due to ASB	Number due to other
2013/14	4	4	0	
2014/15	17	16	1	
2015/16	29	27	2	
2016/17	16	14	2	

Source : Catrefi Conwy

Chart 6.8 Evictions from Catrefi Conwy Housing

Source: Catrefi Conwy

6.125 Catrefi Conwy provide the following services to their tenants with the aim of homelessness prevention:

- Financial inclusion and welfare benefit advice;
- Tenancy support and independent living service to promote tenancy sustainment;
- Liaison with Conwy Housing Solutions to notify of any impending possession proceedings;
- Management of private sector tenancies – service offered to landlords to help them when tenancies start to fail.

6.126 Catrefi Conwy works closely with partners such as the CAB and Shelter to ensure that tenants have access to the best possible advice and support. There is a need to formalise

working arrangements with Housing Solutions and Supporting People and develop a pre-eviction protocol.

- 6.127 The table below shows the number of evictions from Housing Association accommodation (Clwyd Alyn) for the last five years. Again, evictions have increased from 2014/15.

Table 6.23 Evictions from Housing Association accommodation			
Financial Year	Clwyd Alyn		
	No of evictions	Arrears	ASB
2012/13	1	1	0
2013/14	1	1	0
2014/15	3	1	2
2015/16	5	3	2
2016/17	3	1	2

Source : Housing Association Data

- 6.128 The data illustrates an increase in evictions from social housing from 2014/15 onwards, peaking in 2015/16. The majority of the evictions were due to rent arrears. It is not clear from the data available how many of these are as a direct result of the bedroom tax and how many are due to other affordability reasons. However, it is essential that social housing tenants are able to access debt and money advice, and that referral pathways with Citizen's Advice Conwy should be fully utilised. The development and implementation of pre-eviction protocols is also essential. It is anticipated that evictions from social housing will further increase following the roll out of Universal Credit.
- 6.129 The key issues identified by Housing Association partners that are likely to lead to a risk of homelessness for their tenants include:
- The introduction of Universal Credit. Experience from the Housing Associations working in other areas is that residents are waiting on average 9 weeks before they receive any income. This wait for money has many knock-on effects, including in the use of food banks and illegal money lending becoming more prevalent.
 - People managing a tenancy for the first time- moving from Supported Housing environments.
 - Complex needs of individuals and families (mental health, hoarding and substance misuse).
 - Financial difficulties arising from welfare reforms.
 - As Conwy is a rural County, there are fewer job opportunities which results in people travelling further away to access employment, this makes the need to have and run a car essential, which places further financial strains on tenants.
 - More people are also living longer and have multiple long-term conditions. This could result in people being unable to work and / or people struggling to sustain a tenancy. This includes hoarders and undiagnosed dementia.

- Feeling pressured into taking a property that doesn't suit their needs and wanting to leave as soon as they move in.
- Understanding what holding a tenancy means and having skills to successfully do this, budgeting is increasingly more challenging for residents with a change in the benefit system and move to monthly payments. There is a need to invest time in assisting with budgeting skills to ensure residents are able to take responsibility for their tenancy.
- Support needs – witnessing an increasing number of residents with support needs either identified and receiving support or not identified or recognised by the resident, many residents are living a chaotic lifestyle and it can be difficult to engage or find the right services to assist.
- Employment opportunities – particular reference to zero hour's contracts/agency work, where residents do not have a fixed income.

6.130 It is essential that social housing tenants are able to access debt and money advice, and that referral pathways with Citizen's Advice Conwy should be fully utilised. The development and implementation of pre-eviction protocols is also essential.

Overcrowding & Under-occupation

6.131 Data take from the SARTH social housing register shows the number of households needing to move due to under occupation. This is illustrated by the table below and is broken down by the Local Housing Markets Assessment areas.

Table 6.24 Under-occupation				
Existing Social Housing Tenants needing to downsize by number of bedrooms required Source: SARTH Register	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	Total
LHMA03 Menai	1	0	0	1
LHMA10 Dyffryn Conwy	0	2	0	2
LHMA11 Llandudno	10	2	1	13
LHMA12 Bay of Colwyn	5	5	0	10
Total	16	9	1	26

Source LHMA 2017

- 6.132 Of these 26 households, 61% require one-bedroom accommodation, and as highlighted earlier within this Review there is a very limited number of one bedroom social housing units.
- 6.133 These figures only represent households who are under-occupying social housing and wish to move and have joined the Housing Register. It does not provide a full picture of the level of under-occupying across social housing in Conwy. The bedroom tax impacted 19.8% of social housing tenants across Conwy. The bedroom tax only effects working age

households, so this indicates that under-occupation within social housing is significant and while the exact number is not known it is in excess of 20% of all social housing.

- 6.134 Those social housing tenants affected by the Bedroom Tax or struggling financially as a result of under-occupation can be accepted into Band 1 of the Common Housing Register.
- 6.135 There are some RSL's who offer incentives for downsizing, but these are generally focused at those affected by Bedroom Tax to help mitigate long term financial hardship and rent loss for the RSL.
- 6.136 Customers who approach Housing Solutions and are looking to downsize and are social housing tenants are encouraged to access and sign up for Homeswapper.
- 6.137 The table below shows the number of households on the Housing Register who are currently overcrowded. The 196 households account for 22% of all Housing Register applicants, the majority of these households require 2-bedroom (30%) and 3-bedroom (27%) accommodation.

Table 6.25 Overcrowding								
All applicants who are currently overcrowded by the number of bedrooms required Source: SARTH Register	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed	5 bed	6 bed	7 bed	Total
LHMA03 Menai	1	2		1				4
LHMA10 Dyffryn Conwy	1	4	5	2		1		13
LHMA11 Llandudno	20	34	26	10	5		2	97
LHMA12 Bay of Colwyn	7	18	21	26	7	1		80
LHMA13 Rhyl			1					1
LHMA15 St Asaph		1						1
Total	29	59	53	39	12	2	2	196

Source LHMA 2017

- 6.138 The following table provides a snapshot of current waiting list the tenure of overcrowded applicants on the Housing Register at January 2018.

Table 6.26 Tenure of overcrowded Housing Register applicants

Current Tenure	Total
Living in Temporary Accommodation	1
Living with Family/Friends	63
Owner Occupier	4
Tenant in Family Owned Property	4
Tenant in House Share	1
Tenant of Other RSL	8
Tenant of Private Landlord	65
Tenant of RSL Partner	79
Grand Total	225

- 6.139 A total of 225 applicants are overcrowded, the majority of these are leaving in social housing followed by private rented accommodation and living with family and friends.
- 6.140 Overcrowding within social and private rented housing and PRS is currently addressed most regularly through a referral to the Homefinder Team to go on the Housing Register. Applicants with a local connection to Conwy living in overcrowded conditions are allocated Band 2 Status.
- 6.141 If a family in a social housing property has need for a larger property it is very rare that the landlord will extend the property unless there is scope for works on the basis of adaptations for a disabled household member. In some particular areas of the County there is a high demand for larger accommodation and a lack of supply (Llandudno has 42 households in need of 4-bed accommodation but on average one unit available per year). There is a need to explore more innovative solutions to address overcrowding, including the extension into loft spaces.

Conwy Court Desks Information

- 6.142 The table overleaf shows action within the County Court relating to possession action for the last 4 years.

Table 6.27 County Court Possessions

Year	Possession Type			Number of cases
2012	Accelerated Landlord			15
	Mortgage	Claims	4	20
		Outright Orders	4	
		Repossessions	4	
		Suspended Orders	4	
		Warrants	4	
	Private Landlord			17
Social Landlord			20	
			72	
2013	Accelerated Landlord			14
	Mortgage	Claims	4	20
		Outright Orders	4	
		Repossessions	4	
		Suspended Orders	4	
		Warrants	4	
	Private Landlord			16
Social Landlord			20	
			70	
2014	Accelerated Landlord			15
	Mortgage	Claims	4	20
		Outright Orders	4	
		Repossessions	4	
		Suspended Orders	4	
		Warrants	4	
	Private Landlord			18
Social Landlord			29	
			72	
2015	Accelerated Landlord			16
	Mortgage	Claims	4	19
		Outright Orders	4	
		Repossessions	4	
		Suspended Orders	3	
		Warrants	4	
	Private Landlord			18
Social Landlord			20	
			73	
2016	Accelerated Landlord			16
	Mortgage	Claims	4	18
		Outright Orders	4	
		Repossessions	4	
		Suspended Orders	2	
		Warrants	4	
	Private Landlord			15
Social Landlord			20	
			69	

- 6.143 Annually around 30 private rented cases are heard in the Court, there does not appear to be any significant increases over the four year time frame.
- 6.144 The number of social housing possession cases does not mirror the increase in repossessions identified earlier in the review.
- 6.145 On average 20 mortgage possession cases are heard annually, with approximately 12 resulting in an outright order, repossession or warrant. The numbers have remained static over the last 4 years.

Supporting People Data

- 6.146 A range of data is used to identify need, assess current provision and shape future development of Supporting People services across Conwy. Needs mapping forms are completed for everyone who is identified as having housing-related support needs, with the data recorded for all referrals received.
- 6.147 The needs mapping data helps to identify any trends in the demography and specific needs of those requiring housing-related support, which may require services to be remodelled.
- 6.148 There continues to be significant demand for Supporting People services within Conwy at a challenging time of national economic austerity and policy development with heavy cuts to public services impacting greatly upon communities and individuals, particularly those most vulnerable.
- 6.149 Supporting People services are funded to support over 2,037 service users at any one time (excluding Alarms).

Supporting People - Needs Mapping Data

- 6.150 During 2016/17 there was a total of 1,308 referrals to Supporting People funded services, of which 57% were female.
- 6.151 The majority of clients accessing SP funded services were aged 25-40 years (41%) and 16-24 years (28%), followed by 41-60 years (25%).
- 6.152 82% of forms completed were for single people and 64% did not have dependent children, 6% were pregnant and 4% had dependent adults making up part of the household.
- 6.153 Of the 451 households who contained children, the majority had 1 child (197), followed by 2 children (128).
- 6.154 Of those that completed a needs mapping form 18% had both accommodation and support needs, accounting for 229 need mapping forms, the majority (54%) had accommodation needs only.
- 6.155 Of the 1,308 forms, 148 clients had previously had a form completed, of which 44% had been completed 6-12 months ago. A further 29% had completed a form less than 6 months ago. This is likely to indicate unmet need.

- 6.156 The greatest support need identified through needs mapping was in relation to mental health, followed by domestic abuse and vulnerable young person.
- 6.157 In relation to the lead support need the most frequently occurring need is in relation to generic support, followed by mental health and domestic abuse.
- 6.158 The target outcomes hoped to be achieved are detailed below.

Table 6.28 Supporting People Outcomes	
Target Outcome	Number
Feeling Safe	453
Safety of self/others	288
Accommodation	928
Relationships	151
Community Inclusion	115
Managing Money	275
Education/Learning	121
Employment/Volunteering	147
Physical Health	192
Mental Health	330
Healthy and Active Lifestyle	200

Source: Conwy SP Needs Mapping Report 16/17

- 6.159 Of those that had a needs mapping form completed, 506 individuals were homeless and a further 553 were at risk of homelessness within 2 months. 88 individuals were at risk of homelessness in the longer term. As such 88% of all needs forms were for people who were either homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- 6.160 Of these 188 individuals had nowhere to stay on the night that the form was completed.
- 6.161 The table below details the accommodation issue experienced, with the main issue relating to family/relationship breakdown followed by eviction. These mirror the main causes of homelessness.

Table 6.29 Supporting People - accommodation issue	
Accommodation Issue	Number
Notice of eviction	357
Condition/suitability of the property	132
Rent/mortgage arrears	91
Family/relationship breakdown	482
Neighbour dispute/harassment	58

Source: Conwy SP Needs Mapping Report 16/17

6.162 The current accommodation that individuals were residing in is detailed in the table below.

Table 6.30 Supporting People – current accommodation	
Current Accommodation	Number
Council Housing	31
Housing Association	133
Private Rented	390
Home Owner	27
Caravan or Mobile Home	11
Other	84

Source: Conwy SP Needs Mapping Report 16/17

6.163 The vast majority of households were living in the private rented sector, followed by housing association accommodation.

6.164 The table below provides further information regarding clients who are currently of no fixed abode.

Table 6.31 Supporting People – clients of no fixed abode	
No Fixed Abode	Number
Armed Forces	2
Rough Sleeping	113
Night Shelter / Hostel	19
Hotel / B&B	29
Family/friends short term	250
Hospital	15
Prison	13
Other	17

Source: Conwy SP Needs Mapping Report 16/17

6.165 The largest proportion of these clients are living on an insecure basis with family and friends (37%), followed by a significant number of clients who stated that they had slept rough in 2016/17 (113).

6.166 In relation to individual's preferred accommodation, the majority wish to access Council or Housing Association tenancies as detailed in the table below. This information suggests that customers have unrealistic expectations in relation to their housing and are perhaps unaware of the scarcity of social housing.

Table 6.32 Supporting People – preferred accommodation

Preferred Accommodation	Number
Council Housing	575
Housing Association	662
Private Rented	227
Home Owner	5
Caravan or Mobile Home	2
Other	7

Source: Conwy SP Needs Mapping Report 16/17

6.167 In relation to supported accommodation, most individuals wanted self-contained supported housing followed by floating support.

Table 6.33 Supporting People – Supported Accommodation preference

Preferred Accommodation	Number
Self contained supported housing	136
Shared supported housing	51
Sheltered housing	6
Supported lodgings	10
Refuge or safe house	2
Short term hostel	18
Residential rehabilitation facility	2
Nursing or residential care home	1
Floating support	74
Other	7

Source: Conwy SP Needs Mapping Report 16/17

Supporting People – Referral Data

- 6.168 Conwy Supporting People operate a Single Pathway approach for accessing Supported Housing and Floating Support within Conwy, whereby all referrals for supported housing and floating support come through one single access point managed and coordinated centrally by staff employed by Conwy County Borough Council.
- 6.169 The Single Pathway allocates referrals based on need and availability of appropriate Supported Housing or Floating Support, it is designed to ensure fair and easy access to support which is based on need.
- 6.170 In 2016/17 there were a total of 834 referrals into the Pathways team compared with 661 the previous year. This resulted in 757 referrals to Supporting People providers in 16/17 compared with 590 in 15/16. This suggests an increasing demand for Supporting People services in the last year.
- 6.171 Of the 757 referrals made, 355 (47%) were accepted into SP projects or waiting lists, with the largest number accessing supported accommodation.

Table 6.34 Supporting People – referrals accepted

Referral Accepted by Provider	Number 16/17	Number 15/16
Floating Support	120	99
Floating Support Waiting List	2	0
Supported Accommodation	163	114
Supported Accommodation Waiting List	69	62
Accepted by a non Pathway SP Provider	1	0
Total	355	275

Source: Conwy Pathway Data 16/17

- 6.172 The biggest increase in referrals between 15/16 and 16/17 was for supported accommodation representing a 43% increase.
- 6.173 The majority of referrals (162) were made to Conwy County Borough Council Tenant Liaison project, followed by North Wales Housing Dispersed Scheme (103), Touchstones 12 (94) and CAHA Isallt (94).
- 6.174 The void levels for Supporting People services are detailed in the table below. There were a total of 343 voids compared with a total of 757 referrals.

Table 6.35 Supporting People void rates

Service	Number
Floating Support voids	148
Supported Accommodation voids	195
Total	343

Source: Conwy Pathway Data 16/17

- 6.175 There were a total of 497 referral outcomes for people not entering projects. A total of 13 were due to provider refusing the referral, of which 9 were because the provider considered the client's support needs or risks to be too high.

Other Data

- 6.176 Evictions from supported accommodation projects are not recorded centrally, as such there is no clear understanding of the level of evictions from Supported Housing provision and the associated reasons.
- 6.177 However, the Housing Solutions team feels that there are too many evictions from Supporting People funded projects with a lack of visibility of positive outcomes for customers.
- 6.178 There is a need to have a more detailed understanding of the level of evictions from Supported Housing, and the reasons for these evictions, alongside reasons for unsuccessful referrals. This information would help to understand if the current

provision meets existing need, including those customers with more complex needs, alongside enabling commissioners to challenge providers where a need is identified.

- 6.179 In the longer term there may be significant value in working with providers to explore the introduction of non-eviction and exclusion policies.

DRAFT

Chapter Summary and Recommendations

Homeless Levels across Conwy – Identified Gaps & Issues

- There is an increasing demand on the Housing Solutions service, with a significant increase in the number of households owed a homeless duty under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.
- An increasing number of households in Conwy are either threatened with homeless or actually homeless. Evidence throughout this review suggests that this increase will continue.
- The main causes of homelessness in Conwy are: loss of rented or tied accommodation, parents, relatives and friends no longer willing to accommodate, relationship breakdown, domestic abuse and leaving prison
- A range of prevention tools need to be developed against all main causes of homelessness is to be successfully prevented.
- There is a need to ensure the Housing Solutions team is able to more effectively prevent homelessness by helping people to remain in their existing accommodation, with a range of tools in place to enable officers to do this successfully. This is essential given the limited supply of other sustainable accommodation options.
- While the percentage of people who had their homelessness successfully prevented or relieved reduced in 2016/17 compared with the previous year, in terms of actual numbers an additional 154 household had their homelessness prevented or relieved.
- Loss of Private Rented Accommodation - there is a need to ensure that there is a much more targeted approach to preventing people losing their home in the private rented sector. Both landlords and tenants need to be able to access immediate support and advice as soon as difficulties arise in the tenancy. Landlord and tenant liaison/mediation alongside a dedicated resource to resolve any difficulties at the outset will provide an important prevention tool. The social Lettings Agency may also have a role to play for small landlord's with reservations about continuing to be a landlord.
- Family/Friends Evicting- there is also a need to ensure a much more targeted and pro-active response for households who are being asked to leave by family or friends. Effective and timely mediation, together with home visits, and planned moves into alternative accommodation should be introduced. Greater use should be made of the existing mediation provision.
- Non-violent Relationship Breakdown - access to mediation services may assist in preventing homelessness, and buying time to enable planned moves into alternative accommodation.
- Domestic Abuse – there is a need to raise awareness of the range of services available to people experiencing domestic abuse, including emergency provision and support, floating support, planned moves and target hardening.

- Prison Leavers - work will need to happen both nationally and locally to ensure that the Prisoner Pathway is working effectively, and provides opportunities to find accommodation solutions prior to release.
- There is a need to improve data recording in relation to ethnicity.
- There are high numbers of households in temporary accommodation, and a high use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation. Work will need to be undertaken to reduce these numbers, and ensure effective through put and move on.
- There is a need 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. Part of the solution may be more effective use of the private rented sector to discharge the homeless duty.
- There are a very high proportion of single people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (51% of all customers). 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.
- There is a need to understand why such a high proportion of single people are owed a S73 duty, and target prevention approaches accordingly
- 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 tackles the underlying causes of homelessness including 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.
- Many agencies contribute to tackling homelessness and to ensure early intervention and effective referral processes it will be necessary to work closely with these agencies and provide housing related training as appropriate.
- There are a very high number of complex cases, including both single people and families with multiple and challenging needs. The Housing Solution's 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 Solutions Service and other services available across Conwy 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 has been a significant increase in the number of evictions from social housing from 2014/15. 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 need to have a more informed understanding of the level of under-occupation within social housing, with a view to a targeted approach to better utilise this stock through attractive incentive schemes.
- There is a need to record the level of evictions and reasons from Supported Housing Projects to ensure a greater understanding and ensure that provision meets the needs of customers. In the longer term explore the introduction of non-eviction and exclusion policies.
- There appears to be an increasing demand for Supporting People funded services, a formal needs assessment would provide a comprehensive understanding the of the need and demand for housing related support across the County, which would then inform a robust commissioning strategy.
- There is a need to continue to review the SARTH policy to ensure that it meet the needs of Housing Solutions customers.
- There is a high demand for social housing that is not met through the existing supply, this is especially the case for one and two bedroom general needs accommodation.

7. Rough Sleeping

- 7.1 Rough sleeping is defined as “People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or "bashes").

Services

Outreach & Direct Access

- 7.2 There is no commissioned outreach service for rough sleepers or direct access provision within Conwy.

Day Services

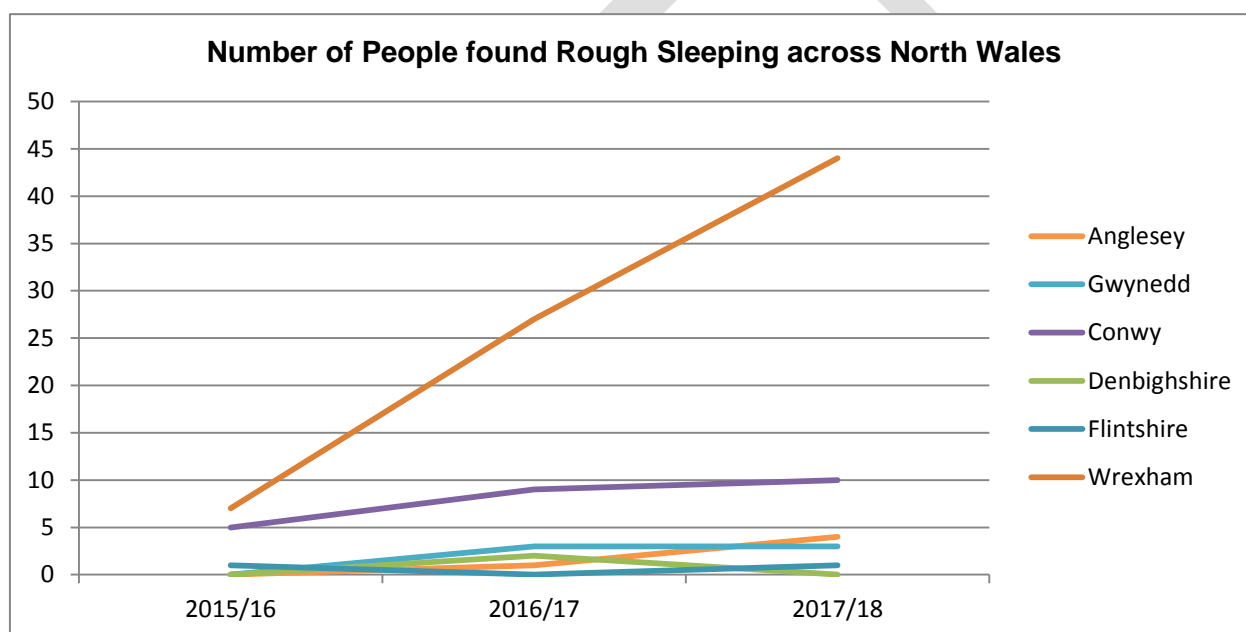
- 7.3 There are no commissioned day services within Conwy, the services that exist are delivered by charities and volunteers.
- 7.4 Arc Communities is a third sector organisation with a focus on substance misuse and homelessness support. Arc staff and volunteers run day centres in both Rhyl and Colwyn Bay. Arc Communities provide a drop in service in Colwyn Bay.
- 7.5 Arc communities’ primary objective is to bring together volunteers from all walks of life to assist and support displaced and chaotic individuals through the development of services, mobilisation of action, and creation of sustainable pathways.
- 7.6 Hope Restored is a voluntary organisation and provides a wide range of help and advice to homeless people and people in need in the Llandudno area.
- 7.7 Hope Restored provides a drop-in service and provides the following services:
- Food parcels;
 - Help gaining accommodation;
 - Help and advice with the social welfare system. From general advice, to help filling out any paperwork and forms for personal benefits and housing benefits;
 - Toiletries;
 - Donated tents and sleeping bags;
 - Donated clothes;
 - Tea, coffee and squash are available and hot cups of soup are offered during the colder winter months;
 - Snacks and hot meals.

Levels of Rough Sleeping

Official Count Data

- 7.8 Each Authority is required to submit an official figure of numbers of rough sleepers found per year to Welsh Government based on an intelligence led head count.
- 7.9 Across North Wales there are a total 23 emergency bed spaces (7 in Denbighshire and 16 in Wrexham).
- 7.10 The last count took place on 9th November 2017 and a total of 10 rough sleepers were found across Conwy County in the following areas: Llandudno (4), Colwyn Bay (3), Conwy (1), Llandudno Junction (1), Llanwrst (1).
- 7.11 The graph below shows the number of rough sleepers found across North Wales through the official Count.

Chart 7.1 Rough Sleeping by County



Source: LA Count Returns

LA	Total count of Rough Sleepers 2015	Total count of Rough Sleepers 2016	Total count of Rough Sleepers 2017
Anglesey	0	1	4
Gwynedd	0	3	3
Conwy	5	9	10
Denbighshire	0	2	0
Flintshire	1	0	1
Wrexham	2	27	44
Total	8	42	62

Source: LA Count Returns

- 7.12 Within North Wales the highest number of rough sleepers were found in Wrexham. On the night of the count 44 rough sleepers were identified, and at this time all 16 beds within the County's direct access provision were occupied. There has been a huge increase in rough sleeping in Wrexham since 2015/16. Rough sleeping is increasing in most areas across North Wales.
- 7.13 In Conwy data from the official count indicates that rough sleeping is increasing annually, although local intelligence suggests that actual levels of rough sleeping are higher than the counts indicate.
- 7.14 The last official published count was carried out in November 2016, and the results of this across North Wales are detailed in the table below.

Table 7.2 Rough Sleeping at November 2016				
LA	Total count of Rough Sleepers	No. of emergency bed spaces	No. of emergency beds available on the night	Estimated no. of rough sleepers
Anglesey	1	0	0	1
Gwynedd	3	0	0	25
Conwy	9	0	0	14
Denbighshire	2	7	3	5
Flintshire	0	1	1	3
Wrexham	27	16	0	61

Source: Stats Wales

Data from Other Sources

- 7.15 Street Link is a national reporting tool for members of the public to report people sleeping rough in order for them to be connected to local services and be able to access help and support. Members of the public can either report online or via a hotline telephone number.
- 7.16 Since January 2017 there have been 11 separate reports of people sleeping rough across Conwy, although some of these reports may refer to the same individual. At the Homelessness Forum workshop, the majority of stakeholders were unaware of Street Link, it is therefore likely that most members of the public are also unaware of this reporting tool. As such this provides limited evidence in relation to people sleeping rough in Conwy.
- 7.17 There are two direct access accommodation projects (often referred to as Night Shelters) that operate across North Wales, both are managed by Clwyd Alyn. The following table shows the number of clients from Conwy who accessed direct access provision in North Wales for the last three years.

Table 7.3 Direct access provision

Year	Ty Golau (Rhyl Night Shelter)	Ty Nos (Wrexham Night Shelter)
2015/16	6	2
2016/17	9	0
2017/18 (6 months data only)	4	0

- 7.18 The numbers of clients from Conwy accessing provision in Wrexham is low, however there is a more significant number accessing the provision in Rhyl. These figures only relate to those clients that were accommodated. Both projects operate a prioritisation criteria for those with a local connection to the Borough. It is likely that the number of clients trying to access this provision from Conwy may be higher, however this information is not collected by Clwyd Alyn.
- 7.19 Arc Communities assisted 18 individuals (16 male, 2 female) in 2016/17 at their drop-in centre in Colwyn Bay. Of these; 11 were rough sleepers, 4 were living in a hostel, 1 in a night shelter and 2 were staying with friends. In the first 6 months of 2017/18, 6 people have accessed the drop-in service of which 4 were rough sleeping, 1 was living in a hostel and 1 with friends. Of these, 1 individual was female. The table below provides the age of rough sleepers assisted.

Table 7.4 Rough Sleeping by age band

Age	2016/17	2017/18 (6 months data)
16-24 years	1	1
25-35 years	6	2
36-45 years	4	3
46- 60 years	6	0
60+	0	0

Source: Arc communities

- 7.20 Hope Restored were not able to provide any annual statistics to inform the Review process but were able to advise that on 8th December 2017 there were 7 people accessing the drop-in service (of which 5 were men and 2 women), they were all aged between 30-49 years.
- 7.21 Shelter provided advice to a total of 9 people who were identified as currently rough sleeping and a further 7 at risk of rough sleeping in 2016/17.

Supporting People Needs Mapping

- 7.22 The Supporting People needs mapping data from 2016/17 indicates that at least 113 individuals slept rough during the year.

Other Sources of Information

- 7.23 As part of the Homelessness Review process a consultation event was held with key partner agencies and stakeholders. During this event workshops were held around key emerging themes, one of which was rough sleeping.
- 7.24 During the workshop there was a strong feeling that there was not a true or accurate understanding of the level of rough sleeping within the County. This was in part due to the official count methodology, the lack of outreach service to provide an accurate evidence base, and the large and rural nature of the County whereby many rough sleepers were invisible. There was also a view amongst some professionals that often people were mistaken for rough sleepers because they accessed drop-in services or took part in street based activity (begging, drinking) but in fact these individuals had accommodation available to them. No members of the workshop group were aware of the national Street Link hotline.
- 7.25 The group also identified that there was significant seasonal variation in the level of rough sleeping, with numbers peaking during the summer months. This was in part due to an increase in opportunities for begging linked to tourism, and also due to people sleeping rough on the Great Orme during the summer months.
- 7.26 There was a strong view during the workshops that there was a need for assertive outreach provision within Conwy, linked to direct access provision, including the development of a No Second Night Out (NSNO) offer.
- 7.27 More details of the consultation event can be found in chapter 11.
- 7.28 The need for both outreach and direct access provision was also articulated in the focus group held with Housing Solutions staff. The full findings from the workshop can be found in chapter 11.

Summary

- 7.29 While there is currently a limited evidence base from which to understand levels of rough sleeping across Conwy, the information that is available indicates a growing number of people sleeping rough across the County.
- 7.30 It is felt that the figure of 10 rough sleepers identified in November 2017 through the official count is an under-representation of the actual number of people sleeping rough in Conwy.
- 7.31 There is a need for a better and more accurate understanding of levels of rough sleeping throughout Conwy, together with the need for effective and assertive outreach provision to engage with people arriving on the streets for the first time, together with a targeted and multi-agency approach to work with entrenched rough sleepers. There is also a need for an effective reconnection policy.
- 7.32 An effective outreach service is dependent upon the ability to be able to access emergency or direct access accommodation to ensure that as soon as a client chooses to engage with services and come off of the streets an offer of accommodation can be made available. It is also important to have a No Second Night Offer (NSNO) to ensure that

anyone who sleeps rough for a first night can be offered accommodation to ensure that they do not need to spend a second night on the streets.

- 7.33 No Second Night Out (NSNO) projects aim to ensure those who find themselves sleeping rough for the first time need not spend a second night on the streets.
- 7.34 The longer someone stays out, the greater the risk that they will be trapped on the streets where they are very vulnerable to crime, drugs and alcohol problems, illness, mental health issues and dying prematurely. NSNO projects aim is to ensure there is a rapid response to new rough sleepers, and that they are provided an offer that means they do not have to sleep out for a second night.
- 7.35 A NSNO approach requires the need to have the following services in place:
- New rough sleepers can be identified and helped off the streets immediately;
 - The public can alert services if they see anyone sleeping rough so they get help;
 - Rough sleepers can go to a place of safety, where their needs can be assessed and they can get help;
 - Rough sleepers are able to get emergency accommodation and other services they need;
 - Rough sleepers from outside the area can be reconnected with their community, where they can be near family and friends, and can get housing and support.
- 7.36 In the longer term, consideration can be given to preventing people from sleeping rough through developing a No First Night Out project and learning from some of the upstream prevention trailblazers operating across England.
- 7.37

Chapter Summary and Recommendations

Rough Sleeping Identified Gaps & Issues

- There is an increasing number of people sleeping rough across Conwy as indicated by the official rough sleeping counts and information from the Supporting People Needs Mapping. This is sported by stakeholder responses.
- There is a need for a more accurate understanding of the levels of rough sleeping across Conwy, including the mapping of seasonal trends to provide a more accurate evidence base in order to develop targeted services.
- In order to effectively engage with rough sleepers, and to have a better intelligence base into the extent of rough sleeping, there is a need for an effective and assertive outreach service. An effective outreach service should help to reduce rough sleeping by providing a rapid response to new rough sleepers and a multi-agency targeted approach to working with entrenched rough sleepers. This needs to be linked to an effective reconnection policy.
- There is a need for direct access provision to ensure that accommodation is available for those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. There are a range of innovative approaches to the provision of direct access and emergency provision nationally including night shelter buses and sleeping pods.
- Alongside the provision of direct access provision there is a need to develop a full No Second Night Out (NSNO) offer needs to be developed, which may include the provision of Safe Seats to ensure that no body has to spend a second night sleeping on the streets.
- In the longer term consideration could be given to developing a No First Night Out project learning from some of the pilots across England.
- There is a need to ensure that the Day Services and drop in services provide a real opportunity for Rough Sleepers to engage with services. It is essential that day centre services do not sustain rough sleeping life styles but provide opportunities to change lifestyles, with a requirement that in order to access services such as food, and shower facilities, clients must engage in accessing accommodation and support services.
- There is a need to improve access to health services for this client group to address both immediate and longer term needs.
- There is a need to promote the Streetlink Cymru number to ensure that both agencies and the public know how to report rough sleepers to ensure that targeted help can be offered.
- It is important to continue to harness the goodwill of volunteers and the Faith community, and the delivery of actions within the Homelessness Strategy may provide a vehicle for doing this.

8. Services Available for the Prevention of Homelessness

Housing Solutions Team

Overview

- 8.1 The Housing Solutions team is delivered by the Council and is located in Colwyn Bay. The service is delivered from a dedicated Housing Solutions office, providing a dedicated space for customers to have all of their housing needs met under one roof.
- 8.2 Conwy Housing Solutions is a new partnership between Conwy County Borough Council and Cartrefi Conwy and offers a one stop shop for customers in housing need and is comprised of the following elements:
- Homefinder - offering housing options advice and helping customers to access sustainable housing, (including managing Housing Register);
 - Lettings & Property Management – working with landlords and tenants within the private rented sector in Conwy;
 - Supporting and empowering tenants to help them live comfortably in their own home;
 - Homeless Prevention – providing a wide range of help and support to people at risk of losing their home.
- 8.3 The Housing Solutions service delivers the Council's statutory duties in relation to homelessness and allocations.
- 8.4 The Service currently consists of the following team members.

Table 8.1 Housing Solutions Team Members	
Housing Solutions Manager	x1
Homeless Prevention	
Homeless Prevention Team Leader	x1
Senior Caseworker	x1
Housing Solutions Officer	x4.5
Housing Solutions Duty Officer	x1
Emergency Accommodation Officer	x1
Housing Solutions Assistant	x2
CAB Specialist Caseworker	x0.6
Homefinder	
Homefinder Manager	x1
Assistant Homefinder	x1
Lead Customer Adviser	x0.6
Customer Adviser	x2.6
Lettings & Property Management	
Lettings & Property Manager	x1
Accommodation Officer	x2
Private Sector Housing Officer	x1
Private Sector Negotiator	x0.6
Housing Solutions Assistant	x1
Tenant Liaison	
Tenancy Liaison Team Leader	x1
Tenancy Liaison Officers	X3

8.5 The vision of the Conwy Housing Solutions service is 'Helping you to find the solution.'

8.6 The team values are:

- We will take responsibility
- We will be professional with everyone we deal with
- We will be reliable and supportive
- We will act with integrity
- We will be enterprising

8.7 The service has a clear customer pledge, although this is not visible at the office location. There are no adopted service standards in place.

8.8 The Housing Solutions service undertakes detailed housing assessments under s62 Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and develops a personalised housing plan. The focus of the team is on homelessness prevention. The service aims to reduce the risk of homelessness and to help people make planned moves rather than becoming homeless.

8.9 Housing Options offered by the team include:

- General housing advice

- Advice on homeless prevention
 - Advice on tenancy law and security of tenure
 - Bond Scheme
 - Homeless prevention fund
 - Tenancy sustainment support
 - Referrals to supported accommodation
 - Referrals for floating support
 - Assistance with accessing permanent accommodation
 - Referrals and signposting to other services.
- 8.10 The team currently operates on a drop-in basis. The service has a dedicated housing reception, with effective triage arrangements delivered by a dedicated Housing Solutions Officer. Emergency accommodation is arranged at the point of triage for anyone homeless on the day. Cases are then allocated to Housing Solutions officers for full housing assessments and the development of personal housing plans. The majority of this work is completed over the phone.
- 8.11 The team provides a high quality service and has effective systems and procedures in place, with a clear customer journey, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the team.
- 8.12 In 2017 Conwy Housing Solutions was shortlisted for the CIPFA Public Finance Innovation Awards. The service was commended for its approach for partnership working.
- 8.13 Conwy Housing Solutions provides a welcoming environment for clients, with a dedicated reception area and private interview rooms. However, the main interview room used for triage has a glass partition between the member of staff and customers. This creates a barrier to being able to build a good rapport with the customer. Some staff members mentioned that they found it difficult to provide a good service to customers with the barrier in place. From a customer perspective the glass barrier can make it very difficult to divulge personal information and develop a rapport based on trust with the Housing Solutions Adviser.
- 8.14 To deliver a best practice service Conwy Housing Solutions may wish to consider adopting a Psychologically Informed Environment (PIE) into all elements of service delivery from the physical space to reflective practice.

Partnership Working

- 8.15 There are many very positive examples of effective joint working initiatives between the Housing Solutions team and other key partners. This includes a Citizen's Advice Bureau adviser based within the officer, and a fast track system for Housing Solutions customers to access timely money and debt advice.
- 8.16 Shelter also are located within the office one day a week, which provides opportunities for joined up working and the ability for customers to access a range of advice under one roof. A member of staff from the Mental Health Team within adult social care also spends

one day a week in the office, the aim of which is to improve joint working between the teams and provide improved outcomes for customers. In addition to this a member of the team has been embedded with the Step-Down Discharge Team based at the local hospital to improve hospital discharge arrangements for those in housing difficulty.

- 8.17 The Council is in the process of developing a protocol with RSLs around referrals and joint working where tenants are threatened with homelessness.
- 8.18 The service is also currently reviewing the joint 16/17-year old protocol with Children's Services.
- 8.19 However, there is still a need to improve partnership working with a wide range of agencies and encourage them to become involved in the work of the Housing Solutions service, including its preventative agenda. Many partner agencies often don't understand the pressures within the housing sector and the limitations.
- 8.20 There is a need for a more effective and joined up approach with colleagues from adult social care, with the need to improve and foster better joint working and focus on prevention and early intervention.

Caseload/Demand Issues

- 8.21 Whilst the service operates well and aims to provide a high quality of service to customers, the impact of the new Homelessness legislation, which came into effect in 2015 is having a significant impact upon caseloads. The new legislation has resulted in the Council owing statutory duties to a much larger group of customers (evidenced by demand).
- 8.22 Under the new legislation, cases can be open for a much longer period because the duty to prevent homelessness starts within 56 days of becoming homeless, and after that, if homelessness cannot be prevented, the duty to find another property is open for a further 56 days. The burden of cases is heavier on officers because of this change.
- 8.23 In addition to this, the impact of the new legislation requires additional work and notification letters for each case. Conwy Housing Solutions undertook a detailed study in order to be able to quantify this additional work. The study identified that for a general non-priority need case under the new legislation, officers would spend 9 hours, 15 minutes per average case compared with 3 hours under the previous legislation.
- 8.24 Prior to the new legislation the service saw an average of 572 non-priority need cases annually, the impact of this on time was 571.5 hours per year, under the new legislation this increased to 5,286.4 hours annually. This clearly demonstrates the impact of the new legislation in terms of staff time and resources, not taking into account the additional demand.
- 8.25 The total case load for the Housing Solutions Officers at the point the new legislation came into effect was approximately 290; as of 3/10/17 this was 420, which equates to a 45% increase.
- 8.26 As a result of this, Housing Solutions Officers are routinely carrying a caseload of around 80 cases at any one time. These caseloads are unmanageable, and impact upon the quality of service that can be provided to customers.

- 8.27 With such high caseloads there is a risk that opportunities for effective prevention work will be missed as staff will not have the ability to spend the necessary time on each case or will not have the ability to respond in a timely fashion where the risk of homelessness is imminent.
- 8.28 Not only does this have a huge impact upon customers, but also has a financial cost to the Council, whereby missed opportunities for prevention are likely to result in increased number of placements into temporary accommodation including emergency B&B, and the associated high cost of this form of unsuitable accommodation. In addition to this, such heavy caseloads and the pressure of working with customers facing crisis, with often complex or multiple needs, impacts upon the well-being of staff. Stress risk assessments have been carried out for all Housing Solutions Officers.
- 8.29 While there may be some merit in reviewing systems and processes to identify any wasted resource, there is a need to review the staffing structure and budgets to identify if there is the potential for further resources to be invested into the Housing Solutions service to ensure that caseloads are more manageable and increase the chances of successful prevention, which would ultimately result in reduced use and spend against temporary and emergency accommodation.
- 8.30 The pressure on Housing Solutions Officers, and their ability to prevent homelessness, is compounded by the limited range of affordable housing options that they are able to access for their clients.

Customer Expectation

- 8.31 Throughout the Review, unrealistic customer expectation has emerged as a key issue. The housing pressures across Conwy means that it is very difficult for households on a low income to find suitable and affordable housing within the County. Social housing is very limited with a high demand for the relatively small number of voids that become available. Affordability issues mean that many households are unable to become homeowners, and both increasing demand and increasing rental levels in the private rented sector are limiting both the choice and affordability of this sector. For many young people, shared housing is likely to be the first affordable step towards independence rather than a key to their own front door.
- 8.32 Many customers approach the Housing Solutions team with expectations that the team is unable to meet, namely fast access to social housing. The consultation event held with stakeholders at the Homelessness Forum identified unrealistic customer expectation as a key theme, with a number of customers feeling that access to social housing was an entitlement, it was also identified that some partner agencies may help to feed client's unrealistic expectations in both conversations with clients and correspondence with the Housing Solutions team.
- 8.33 The Housing Solutions team has a very high number of lost contacts, which accounted for 9% of all outcomes in 2016/17. While the reason for this is not clear, and it has not been possible to identify this within the Review, there is a strong likelihood that customers are approaching the Housing Solutions service as they would like to access social housing. Through the assessment and personal housing planning process

- customers realise that this is an unlikely outcome, and no longer maintain contact with the Housing Solutions team.
- 8.34 There is a need to ensure that customer expectation is realistic, and as such there is a need to ensure that they are provided with accurate information regarding their prospects for being able to successfully access different forms of housing. Information is not currently easily available or accessible on the Conwy Housing Solutions website regarding the limited supply of social housing. Accurate information on the number of voids that become available annually, by property type and location can help both partners and customers understand that other housing options may be a more realistic choice.
- 8.35 Choice Based Lettings (CBL) systems are a very useful way of providing this information to customers. As CBL places the onus on customers to bid for available properties they very quickly become aware of their likelihood for accessing social housing and are then able to adjust their expectations and behaviours accordingly i.e. bidding for properties outside of their initial preference areas.
- 8.36 Consideration may also need to be given to increasing the number of homeless cases discharged into the private rented sector. In 2016/17 17 cases were discharged in this way. This is in part due to challenges in being able to access private rented accommodation (see Chapter 9 for more details) and also a view amongst staff within the Housing Solutions team that once a household is placed into temporary accommodation the customer is holding out for social housing, as such there is no real focus on ongoing casework for these customers. This approach reinforces the view amongst customers that homelessness is a route to access social housing.
- 8.37 In order to change this expectation there may be a need to formally adopt a policy to discharge the homeless duty into the private rented sector, setting out in which circumstances this will happen. If improved access to private rented accommodation can be secured households accepted as homeless may be accommodated in both private and social housing. Alongside this there is a need for ongoing casework with households in temporary accommodation to continue to discuss all of the housing options available on a regular basis.

Customer Engagement

- 8.38 Following the implementation of the new Housing Act there is a drive to create a more person-centred service culture, so that people are more closely involved in identifying and putting into action the solutions to their housing problems.
- 8.39 In order to effectively do this, reduce cases of non-cooperation, and to more effectively enable and empower clients to engage in the delivery of their Personal Housing Plans, the Housing Solutions service may wish to consider implementing a Strength/Asset based approach to working with clients.
- 8.40 A strength based approach allows for a more holistic focus that includes an emphasis on a person's strengths and resources in the process of change, viewing the current assessment approach as 'deficit-based' – focusing on what has gone wrong and the individual's failings.

- 8.41 Proponents of asset based approaches point to research that suggests that people are more likely to take responsibility for their own lives and make the change that matters to them, if they have access to opportunities that build on their strengths. Likewise, individuals who feel their strengths and abilities are recognised by others are able to develop the necessary skills to bounce back from tough life experiences, creating greater resilience to sustain positive change in long term.

Gaps

- 8.42 There is an effective range of prevention tools in place to support the team to prevent homelessness including a rent bond scheme, homelessness prevention fund, access to money and debt advice and a mortgage rescue scheme. There are however a number of gaps including a specialist mediation service for young people, a target hardening scheme, and there is also a need to improve links to employment and training services in the longer term. However, while many customers acknowledge that employment and training development is the key to their long term prosperity, many customers are either “not in the right place personally” when accessing the services to focus on employment and training opportunities or lack the motivation to address these issues and much of the team’s focus is on the basics of resolving their homelessness in the short term. Moreover, pressure on staff caused by unmanageable caseloads means that they do not have the capacity to focus on this area with clients.

Service Reviews

Shelter Report

- 8.43 Following the implementation of the new legislation in late 2016 Shelter undertook research into the customer experience to understand the impact of the new legislation in relation to the customer outcomes and satisfaction. The research focused on six Local Authority areas including Conwy.
- 8.44 The researchers spoke to a sample of five service users in Conwy. In general terms the service users were happy with the environment in which they were seen and positive about how they were spoken to.
- 8.45 The report suggests that once the urgent threat to these PRS tenancies had been dealt with, the local authority had not been proactive in offering further assistance with accessing the PRS and dealing with potential financial barriers. Clearer advice and information around the PRS and financial assistance available to access could minimise barriers for applicants and make it easier for people to solve their homelessness situation.
- 8.46 It also identified the need to ensure that adequate support for the individual is in place to ensure that the steps within the Personal Housing Plan identified can be taken otherwise they can find it difficult to make progress.
- 8.47 In general terms Conwy compared very well against the other authorities across Wales; 60% felt that the local authority kept them up to date about their situation and the progress of their application.

8.48 A total of 60% of the service users interviewed indicated that they were either mostly or totally satisfied with the service they had received from the local authority. This is greater than the average across Wales (42.9%). The other 40% stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. (Although please note that the sample refers to 5 clients).

8.49 Following this research across all six Local Authority areas, Shelter made the following recommendations in their final report.

- Local authority Supporting People commissioners should prioritise the commissioning of services that are aligned with the prevention and relief of homelessness. This should include expanding availability of short-term, flexible tenancy support. These support services need to be designed with full involvement of local Housing Solutions and be provided both to people at risk of homelessness and people already homeless.
- Local authority Housing Solutions teams should continue to develop the range of reasonable steps they offer, avoiding generic PRS access for the least vulnerable people. Interventions such as money, advice and mediation services need to be offered more often.
- Local authority Housing Solutions teams should continue to develop a case management approach to homelessness prevention: communicating with other providers and with the service user to ensure that all reasonable steps are centrally coordinated and monitored, including those provided by other agencies.
- Welsh Government should find ways of boosting resources to Housing Solutions following the end of transitional funding in 2018/19.
- Welsh Government should explore further ways of securing continuous improvement in adherence to the Act and the Code of Guidance: this might include for example establishing a homelessness regulator body; establishing better information-sharing on the outcomes of legal reviews; or bringing key parts of the Code of Guidance within secondary legislation.
- Welsh Government should provide more detailed guidance on how to use Personal Housing Plans as a tool for collaboration with service users.
- Welsh Government should coordinate the development of an accredited training package for Housing Solutions staff. This could potentially build on the Housing Options Toolkit currently in development by the Scottish Government. As a long term goal the Welsh Government should consider creating a minimum training requirement for Housing Solutions staff.
- In the meantime, local authorities should prioritise staff training, particularly in the Code of Guidance and the person-centred approach.
- Local authorities should review pay levels for Housing Solutions staff to ensure they accurately reflect the role's new responsibilities.
- Housing Solutions teams that use PRS lists should ensure that lists are regularly updated.
- Housing Solutions should continue to implement the Equal Ground Standard – assessing services and creating an action plan to record and guide progress.

Welsh Audit Office Report – How Local Government Manages Demand – Homelessness

- 8.50 The Welsh Audit Office review of homelessness services across Wales assessed if local authorities and their partners are addressing demand through the development of appropriate and effective prevention approaches.
- 8.51 The review methodology included audit fieldwork at five local authorities; a commissioned survey of citizens about local authority services; a detailed analysis of data and expenditure on homelessness services; website and document reviews; and interviews with national organisations. Based on the findings of this audit, the report has concluded that local authorities are reacting to the problems caused by homelessness with varying degrees of success, but there is limited focus on preventing the fundamental causes of homelessness. The WAO makes the following recommendations.

Recommendation 1

Implementing the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to develop services which are focussed on preventing homelessness and reducing demand. These are very different to traditional casework led homelessness services, and prevention work requires new skills and early interaction with users and potential users. We found local authorities' progress in revising and strengthening services is variable.

We recommend that local authorities:

- ensure their staff are sufficiently skilled to deal with the new demands of mediating, problem solving, negotiating and influencing with homeless people; and
- review and reconfigure their services to engage more effectively with homeless and potentially homeless people to prevent homelessness.

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Government provided funding to support local authorities to implement the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and this funding has been critical in enabling new preventative services to be developed. The funding is in place until 2019-20 but authorities need to ensure they use to headspace provided by these resources to revise their services to deliver their responsibilities in the future.

We recommend that local authorities review their funding of homelessness services to ensure that they can continue to provide the widest possible preventative approach needed. Reviews should consider use of Supporting People as well as General Council fund monies to support delivery of the authority's homelessness duties.

Recommendation 3

How services are configured and managed at first point of contact can significantly influence how effective local authorities are in managing and reducing demand. Easy to access services which maximise usage, avoid gate keeping and focus on early solutions can significantly improve the prospects for successful homelessness

prevention. We found that some authority point of entry systems are poorly designed which reduces the authority's prospects for early intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring.

We recommend that local authorities:

- design services to ensure there is early contact with service users;
- use 'triage' approaches to identify and filter individuals seeking help to determine the most appropriate response to address their needs; and
- test the effectiveness of first point of contact services to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Recommendation 4

Establishing clear standards of service that set out what the authority provides and is responsible for is critical to ensuring people know what they are entitled to receive and what they need to resolve themselves. We found that authorities are not always providing clear, concise and good quality information to help guide people to find the right advice quickly and efficiently.

We recommend that local authorities publish service standards that clearly set out what their responsibilities are and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive and what they must do for themselves. Service standards should:

- be written in plain accessible language;
- be precise about what applicants can and cannot expect, and when they can expect resolution;
- clearly set out the applicant's role in the process and how they can help the process go more smoothly and quickly;
- be produced collaboratively with subject experts and include the involvement of people who use the service(s);
- effectively integrate with the single assessment process;
- offer viable alternatives to the authority's services; and
- set out the appeals and complaints processes. These should be based on fairness and equity for all involved and available to all.

Recommendation 5

Local authorities need to design services to engage with service users effectively and efficiently, but current standards are too variable to ensure service users are getting access to the advice they need. To improve current performance we recommend that local authorities make better use of their websites to help manage demand by:

- testing the usability and effectiveness of current website information using our lines of enquiry set out

- increasing and improving the range, quality and coverage of web based information; making better use of online applications; and
- linking more effectively to information from specialist providers' and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice.

Recommendation 6

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduces a new duty on social services and housing associations to collaborate with local authority homelessness services in preventing homelessness. We found that these arrangements are not operating effectively and service responses to prevent homelessness and assist homeless people are not always being provided, nor are they consistently effective.

We recommend that local authorities set out and agree their expectations of partners identifying how they will work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly and all partners' performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

Recommendation 7

Local authorities monitoring systems and evaluation approaches to ensure compliance with their responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty are not working as well as they should.

We recommend that local authorities address weaknesses in their equalities monitoring, and ensure that their homelessness service accurately records and evaluates appropriate data to demonstrate equality of access for all service users that the local authority has a duty towards.

Recommendation 8

Managing demand can be challenging for local authorities. There are some clear lessons to be learnt with regard to the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and homelessness prevention duties that can be applied to managing demand in other services

We recommend that local authorities use the checklist set out in Appendix 10 (of the report) to undertake a self-assessment on services, to help identify options to improve how they can help manage demand.

- 8.52 Following this Audit report Conwy has produced a report detailing how the recommendations of the Welsh Audit Report apply to Conwy. This report also identifies what actions are needed locally in response to the Welsh Audit's recommendations, this can be found in appendix 1.

Citizens Advice Bureau Conwy

- 8.53 Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) provides information on a range of issues including debt, benefits, employment, housing and immigration. Advice can be accessed face-to-face, over the phone and through email services, Skype and online.

- 8.54 CAB provide specialist welfare benefit and debt advice and are Advice Quality Standard accredited to provide advice at casework level on housing issues.
- 8.55 The service provides preventative advice services, which help and support clients to prevent homelessness. Advice is provided to clients who have rent/mortgage arrears and the service is able to either increase income/apply for grants to help reduce arrears or assist the client to re-prioritise and structure repayments for rent and mortgages. Citizens Advice Conwy is able to provide a successful advice service by tackling the problem as a whole solution rather than a simple focus on the presenting issue, this enables the service to provide a sustainable outcome.
- 8.56 A Citizens Advice Worker is based within Conwy Housing Solutions, and Housing Solutions Customers can be fast tracked for money and debt advice.
- 8.57 Between April and December 2017, the advice worker received 82 referrals of which 23 were in relation to debt, this related to 146 individual debts, amounting to a total of £233,373.
- 8.58 The advice worker received 48 benefit enquiries and as a result of the advice given 16 clients received income gains totalling £70,171.

Shelter Cymru

Advice Services

- 8.59 Shelter Cymru provides confidential, specialist housing advice and advocacy and legal representation to people with housing related problems. Shelter provide advice from the Housing Solutions office in Colwyn Bay.
- 8.60 The main strands of Shelter's advice work are detailed below:
- **Representation at Court**– representing local authority or other registered social landlord tenants in court who may have rent arrears or other issues; representing clients with mortgages who may be in arrears or facing possession action from their lender. Negotiations with the other side (landlord or lender) to ensure affordable agreements are entered into.
 - **Local Authority possession action** – representing tenants who are facing local authority possession action from a secure tenancy or an introductory tenancy review, this could be at court, or negotiating directly with the housing department.
 - **Mortgage possession action** – representing clients who are facing possession action by their lender, from a mortgage or secured loan on the property. This can include court representation or negotiating directly with the lender and agreeing affordable and realistic repayment arrangements.
 - **Advising on homelessness** - advising clients of their rights and responsibilities within homelessness legislation, ensuring that if necessary a homeless application is made to the local authority; to challenge any issues around alleged 'gate-keeping' by the local authority.
 - **Homelessness Decisions reviews / appeals** – to request section 202 reviews of homeless decisions (around homelessness, priority need, intentionality, local

connection etc.); to instigate judicial review proceedings to ensure a homeless application is taken or interim accommodation or accommodation pending review is provided.

- **Suitability of Accommodation** – to request reviews of the suitability of accommodation offered as part of the local authorities' duty to homeless applicants.
- **Allocations and succession issues** – to advise clients on allocations policies and procedures, including how points are allocated; to challenge the local authority regarding its allocation decisions if necessary; to advise clients on the issues surrounding succession to a tenancy.
- **Private rented sector issues** – advising clients on landlord and tenant problems they may be experiencing; to advise clients when the landlord is not following the correct procedure when terminating a tenancy; ensuring correct notices are served; dealing with illegal eviction and / or harassment from landlords.
- **Tenancy Deposit advice** - advice to clients on the statutory tenancy deposit protection scheme and assistance with challenging the landlord when this is not protected and submitting a claim if necessary.
- **Housing Benefit** – advising clients about Housing Benefit (HB), eligibility for it, the calculations used when deciding eligibility including income levels and capital levels etc. Advising around implications of the 'Bedroom Tax' and wider HB reform and how that impacts on an individual and what courses of action are open to them. Requesting backdated housing benefit and requesting reviews of HB decisions where appropriate; ensuring HB claims are dealt with promptly and liaising with the local authority HB department about this.
- **Disrepair** – advising and representing clients who are in rented accommodation (social or private rented) that are facing serious disrepair issues; taking appropriate legal action, which in some cases would require a fully funded legal aid certificate if the client was eligible.
- **Anti-social behaviour** – advising and representing clients who may be the victims or perpetrators of anti-social behaviour within social rented accommodation.

8.61 Shelter currently employ 1 FTE specialist Housing Law Caseworker to work in Conwy, which reduced from 1.3 FTE in April 2017. Shelter provide two housing advice surgeries per week, one in Conwy Housing Solutions, and one in Llandudno CAB. These are appointment-only with 6 appointments available per week. Clients who live further towards Rhyl (e.g. Abergele, Pensarn, Tywyn etc) are often seen at appointments in the Rhyl office.

8.62 Where people cannot get to a surgery Shelter provide advice over the phone and undertake home visits in exceptional circumstances.

8.63 Shelter provide a court desk at Prestatyn and Caernarfon Justice Centres where currently Conwy possession cases are listed. Shelter are able to advise and provide advocacy to anyone listed regardless of tenure and can assist with mortgage cases as well as rents.

Data

8.64 Shelter Cymru assisted 331 clients in Conwy in 2016/17, this was a slight reduction on the previous year when 350 clients were given advice.

8.65 The household composition of these clients is detailed in the table below. 37% of clients were single people.

Table 8.2 Shelter Cymru clients	
Household Composition	Number
Adult household	20
Couple	27
Couple & children	44
Extended household	3
Not applicable	2
Not known	5
Other	2
Single man	74
Single parent man	5
Single parent woman	84
Single woman	49
Split household	3
SCTC	13

Source: Shelter Cymru

8.66 The following table shows the Housing Status of clients seeking advice in 2016/17.

Table 8.3 Housing status of Shelter Cymru clients

Housing Status	Number
Imminently homeless	55
Medium term risk	85
Not homeless	77
Roofless/Street Homeless: up to 1 week	4
Roofless/Street Homeless: 1wk-3mths	3
Roofless/Street Homeless: 3-6mths	1
Roofless/Street Homeless: 6 mths plus	1
Roofless: potential rough sleeper	7
SCTC	16
Statutory Homeless	82

Source: Shelter Cymru

- 8.67 17% of these households were homeless imminently, and a further 26% faced a medium term risk of homelessness. 25% were statutorily homeless. A total of 9 people were identified as currently rough sleeping and a further 7 at risk of rough sleeping.

Chapter Summary and Recommendations

Services Available for the Prevention of Homelessness - Identified Gaps & Issues

- There is need to review caseloads, structure and resources to ensure that caseloads remain at a manageable level and opportunities for effective homeless prevention are maximised. Within this there may be a need to invest more resources into frontline prevention and relief work.
- There is a need to ensure that customer's expectations in relation to housing are realistic through ensuring that information in relation to housing options is available and easily accessible
- There is a need to work with partners and stakeholders to ensure that they better manage customer expectations, and ensure that a consistent message is given to all clients
- In order to effectively manage customer expectation there is a need to consider adopting different approaches including Choice Based Lettings, an online housing options wizard and discharge of duty into the private rented sector.
- The service may wish to give consideration to adopting a Psychologically Informed Environment Approach (PIE) into all aspects of service delivery.
- The service may wish to give consideration to implementing a strengths based approach to working with customers.
- There is a need for more effective partnership working with colleagues from Adult social care, with an emphasis on a joined up approach to early intervention and homelessness prevention.
- The Housing Solutions work effectively in partnership with a range of key agencies, with many examples of positive joint working practices and protocols. There is a need to continue to develop and implement a range of protocols with a number of internal and external partnerships.
- Many agencies work to tackle homelessness, and to ensure effective early intervention there is a need for close working with these agencies, effective information sharing and the provision of joint training, with the potential to pilot multi-agency personal plans.
- There is a need to raise awareness of the Housing Solutions Service and other homeless related services within Conwy to ensure that partners and customers are aware of advice and assistance is available and how to access it.
- There is a need for ongoing casework for households in temporary accommodation, to ensure effective and timely move on.
- The recommendations from the Shelter Report and the Welsh Audit Office's report will need to be implemented at a local level.

9. Accommodation and Support Available for People who are Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness

Temporary Accommodation

- 9.1 The management of temporary accommodation is undertaken by Cartrefi Conwy.
- 9.2 There are a total of 85 units of temporary accommodation, which are leased from the private rented sector. The table below shows the size of these units.

Table 9.1 Units of Temporary Accommodation	
Property Size	Number of Units
One bedroom	22
Two bedroom	33
Three bedroom	19
Four bedroom	4
Five bedroom	4
Six bedroom	1
Seven bedroom	1
Eight bedroom	1
Total	85

Emergency Accommodation

- 9.3 Emergency accommodation is largely provided in holiday, Bed & Breakfast and hotel accommodation. Whilst the team seeks to source emergency accommodation within Conwy, there is sometimes a need to place households in accommodation outside of the Borough in instances when no local accommodation can be found.
- 9.4 The Council recognises that there are a number of risks in the use of the current accommodation, including that the Council does not control who is accommodated at a particular establishment and do not know who else might be in residence or using the premises, and potentially pose a risk to vulnerable customers.
- 9.5 Nightstop has been operating in Conwy for the last 12 months and provides emergency provision in host homes for young people.

Supported Accommodation

Single Pathway

- 9.6 Conwy Supporting People have been operating a Single Pathway approach for accessing Supported Housing and Floating Support. The Pathway team is based within Supporting People and allocates referrals based on need and availability of appropriate Supported Housing or Floating Support, it is designed to ensure fair and easy access to support which

is based on need. In order to make services more joined up for the customer there may be some value in relocating the Pathway team within Conwy Housing Solutions.

9.7 The Supporting People Single Pathway received 834 referrals in 2016/17.

Supported Accommodation & Floating Support

9.8 Supporting People currently funds 2,037 units of support; 1,175 are Floating Support; 862 are supported housing.

9.9 The following tables detail both Supported Accommodation projects and Floating Support services across Conwy funded through Supporting People.

Table 9.2 Supporting People Domestic Abuse units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
Aberconwy Domestic Abuse Service	5 (Refuge)	Provides refuge to women and their children who are experiencing physical, mental, emotional, financial or sexual abuse.
Aberconwy Domestic Abuse Service	4 (Floating Support)	Floating Support available for women, men & children in the local community.
Hafan Cymru	5	Provides temporary supported housing for women and their children who have experienced physical, emotional, financial or sexual abuse.
Welsh Women's Aid Colwyn Bay	5 (Refuge)	Provides refuge to women and their children who are experiencing physical, mental, emotional, financial or sexual abuse.

Table 9.3 Supporting People – Homelessness/threatened with Homelessness units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
Conwy County Borough Council- Homeless Prevention Team	Floating Support	Client who are homeless or potentially homeless and require support.
Sanctuary Trust	7	Provides accommodation and housing related support to help vulnerable men address the issues that cause them to become homeless.
North Wales Housing - Noddfa	18	Housing related support in Hostel & Move on accommodation for single people and families aged 16 and over who have become homeless or threatened with homelessness and have a support need.

Table 9.4 Supporting People – Learning Disabilities units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
Conwy County Borough Council – Integrated Disabilities Team (Learning Disability and Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment)		Conwy hosts an integrated disability team. This additional support is crucial for people to maintain and reinforce the independent living skills they have acquired to live as equal citizens in the community and prevent a crisis of homelessness.

Table 9.5 Supporting People – Mental Health units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
North Wales Housing – Mental Health Provision	16	Provides support for clients who are recovering from or have an enduring mental health problem.
Wales & West (Castell Care) - Kickstart	10	Supported housing project for service users aged 18+ with a Mental Health. It provides intensive support to move people on to living independently in a 4-bed shared house and 6 units of self-contained accommodation.
Seashells	4	Seashells provides support to 4 males aged 25 (males between the ages of 21 and 29 will also be considered) in a 4-bed shared property. The provision is for people with enduring or undiagnosed mental health issues.

Table 9.6 Supporting People – Offending Issues units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
NACRO – Llandudno Housing Project	8 (4 supported accommodation and 4 floating support)	Primary client group are offenders or those at risk of offending, service users who are vulnerable are supported in accommodation as well as appropriate further housing once ready to move on.

Table 9.7 Supporting People – Physical Disabilities/Sensory Impairment units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
CCBC – Integrated Disabilities Team (Learning Disability and Physical Disability/Sensory Impairment)	Supported Living Projects Floating Support	Floating support is provided to vulnerable physically disabled people in their own homes by a range of providers. This support is focused on developing and maintaining the skills they require to live as independently as possible in the community, assists individuals to maintain their tenancies and prevents admission to residential care.

Table 9.8 Supporting People – Substance misuse units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
CAIS – Floating Support	11	Holistic floating support package including housing related support. The aim of the project is to offer support to individuals who present as homeless or potentially homeless and have a history of substance misuse.
The Wallich – Doorstop	7 (6 supported accommodation & 1 floating support)	Provides temporary housing related support to people with substance misuse problems, who are committed to addressing their dependency and require support to maintain their tenancy and live independently.
Touchstones 12	22	Abstinence based supported housing project. Single bedrooms with en-suite facilities & disabled facilities.

Table 9.9 Supporting People – Vulnerable Young People units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
Hafan Cymru -Supported Housing	11 (3 accommodation & 8 floating support)	Supported accommodation and floating support for young women aged 16 upwards.
Clwyd Alyn Housing - Isallt	25	12 units of supported accommodation and 13 units of floating support (move-on), Provides support to single people who are between 16 to 25 years old, homeless, who are vulnerable, require support & young people leaving care.

Table 9.10 Supporting People – Vulnerable Older People units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
Abbeyfield Colwyn Bay	27	Applicants must be 55 yrs and over. Provides a safe environment for independent living whilst providing 2 home cooked meals.
Abbeyfield Llanrwst	9	Applicants must be 55 yrs and over. Provides a safe environment for independent living whilst providing 2 home cooked meals daily.
Abbeyfield Wales Llandudno House	28	Applicants must be 55 yrs and over. Provides a safe environment for independent living whilst providing 2 home cooked meals daily.
Cartrefi Conwy		Accommodation is allocated only to persons of pensionable age or in poor health that require the benefit of the Independent Living Service
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association		Self-contained 1 bedroom for 1-2 persons over the age of 55 years/ Telecare with warden, low level support within sheltered housing.
CCBC – Older People Team	Reablement – demand led	This service is for people who would benefit from a short term re-ablement focused service to regain their independence. i.e. adults leaving hospital; adults requiring emergency interventions to prevent admission to hospital and existing service users with an established package of care.
North Wales Housing - Taverners Court	31	Sheltered housing complex for tenants aged 55 and over, providing self-contained accommodation with warden service and warden call.

Table 9.11 Supporting People – Generic units

Support Project and Service Provider	Maximum number of clients	Service Description
Cartrefi Conwy – Tenancy Support	35	Provides floating support service to tenants who are vulnerable with a wide range of needs.
CCBC – Approved Landlord Project	31	Units of supported accommodation including shared accommodation, flats and houses where the landlord/staff provide support. For 16 yrs +
CCBC – Family Support Project	Floating Support	Floating support to parents of “Children in Need” or “Children in Need of Protection”. Preventative support to help keep families together and reduce the likelihood of children coming into care.
CCBC – Tenant Liaison	70	Provides floating support service to vulnerable people with a wide range of needs. Referrals for this service come from CCBC Housing Solutions Project.
North Wales Housing - Dispersed Scheme	40	Provides support across North Wales Housing properties within Conwy for both supported housing service users and general needs tenants.

NACRO - Conwy Resettlement Service	25	Floating Support for up to 25 service users that are vulnerable and in housing difficulty to access appropriate accommodation.
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Move On

- 9.10 Move-on from supported housing is difficult. This is in part due to the lack of single person accommodation that falls within the LHA rates for under 35 year olds, a lack of one-bed flats within the social sector, a lack of shared housing, landlords not accepting deposit bonds, and not having a guarantor.
- 9.11 During the consultation event with Housing Solutions staff there was some concern that the current move on arrangements from supported housing are not working effectively. Some concern was raised that clients leaving supported housing were unprepared and practical arrangements were not in place i.e. no furniture etc. In some cases this is leading to tenancy failure. There is a need for an improved transition period and a review of the current approach.
- 9.12 To fully understand the scale and issues surrounding move on there may be value in using Homeless Link's Move On Plans Protocol.

Social Housing

- 9.13 In 2008 Conwy County Borough Council transferred its housing to stock to the newly created Cartrefi Conwy Housing Association. Although the authority no longer has any housing stock it still retains the statutory duty for the allocation of social housing.
- 9.14 Within Conwy, social housing accounts for 12% of the total housing stock, which is the second lowest in Wales. Of the stock, 23 % is sheltered housing.
- 9.15 A total of 15% of social housing stock has one bedroom, in contrast with 30% of applicants on the Housing Register who have a one-bed need.
- 9.16 There are 891 households in housing need registered for social housing. 1 in 10 have been waiting 3 years.
- 9.17 In 2016/17 a total of 410 social housing lets were made, with an average waiting time of 542 days. Currently 1 in 3 lets go to Housing Solutions clients.
- 9.18 The demand for social housing clearly outweighs the supply, and for most households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness social housing is unlikely to be a realistic or immediate solution. There is however a need to continue to review the Allocations policy to ensure that it provides for the households in the greatest need, and for those for whom the private rented sector is unaffordable. While social housing is very much a limited resource within Conwy there is a need to ensure that it is appropriately used to meet the priorities of the local authority and its residents in the greatest housing need.

Affordable housing

- 9.19 In 2016/17 89 affordable homes were developed. The Local Housing Market assessment identifies that 248 additional affordable homes are needed each year (389 including committed supply).
- 9.20 There are currently 526 registered applications on the affordable housing register with demand increasing.
- 9.21 While home ownership is beyond the reach of most households who approach the Housing Solutions team there is a need to continue to develop affordable housing. In doing so households who aspire to home ownership and who are currently in the private rented sector would be able to access the affordable housing projects and in turn this would reduce some of the demand on the private rented sector.

Private Rented Sector

- 9.22 The private rented sector (PRS) provides a significant and growing proportion of the total rented stock in Wales. Nationally the PRS represents 14% of the total housing market and 48% of the rented market, in Conwy the PRS accounts for 18% of the total housing stock. Given the limitations on the size and investment in the social rented stock, it constitutes an essential element in the provision of housing for people who may otherwise be homeless.
- 9.23 Most private landlords in Conwy have one or two properties. There are very few portfolio landlords. The Private rented sector in Conwy is not a particularly affordable market, low proportions of properties are within Local Housing Allowance levels (an average of 10.9% between 2014-2016), although there are likely to be more at rent levels just above Local Housing Allowance levels, as landlords charge between 10-20% above LHA levels knowing that households will find the additional rent. The average top up required by tenants in receipt of Local Housing Allowance is £30.70 per week.
- 9.24 Homeownership is reducing nationally due to 'would be' first time buyers being unable to access mortgages due to high house prices and high deposit requirements. This is having an impact upon the private rented market, with these 'would be' first time buyers accessing private rented accommodation, placing increased pressure on the private rented market with demand exceeding supply.
- 9.25 As a result of this the private rents are inflated, resulting in a gap between actual rent levels and the Local Housing Allowance. The increased demand on the private rented sector means that private landlords have a greater choice in relation to prospective tenants, which results in landlords choosing working professional households over those that are reliant on welfare benefits. In Conwy many households on low incomes and those in receipt of Local Housing Allowance struggle to find affordable accommodation in the private rented sector or landlords willing to accept housing benefit. For some, the need for upfront deposits, agent's fees and lender requirements to avoid the benefit dependent make the sector inaccessible. This problem is likely to be further exacerbated with the introduction of universal credit.

- 9.26 While this affects all household types, the impact is the greatest on both single people under the age of 35 and large families due to benefit caps, and a lack of suitable affordable accommodation.
- 9.27 These challenges have further been impacted upon by Rent Smart Wales and the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 1016, which places an increased responsibility on landlords. In Conwy a number of local private rented landlords are choosing to sell their properties, this not only impacts upon homeless levels, but also reduces the availability of private rented accommodation available to Housing Solutions customers.
- 9.28 The Council has established a “Landlord Offer” which includes both financial incentives together with ongoing support in order to encourage private sector landlords to accommodate Housing Solutions’ Customers.
- 9.29 The Council, in partnership with Cartrefi Conwy, has developed a Social Lettings Agency. The service has recently been rebranded and moved to a new location in order to compete more effectively with high street letting agencies.
- 9.30 The Social Letting Agency known as HAWS provides a range of services to landlords across North Wales. It offers an all-inclusive tenancy start up package, alongside providing a property management service. It aims to provide a tailored service to meet individual landlord’s requirements. The offer also includes a fully qualified and insured maintenance team who can carry out repairs to property.
- 9.31 The table below shows the number of properties secured through the Social Lettings Agency over the last three years. This is a much lower number than anticipated at the set up over the Agency.

Table 9.12 Social Lettings Agency units	
Arrangement	Number
Fully managed	29
Let only	5

- 9.32 The tenants occupying these properties accessed the accommodation through the following routes:

Table 9.13 Origin of Social Lettings Agency tenants	
Route to Social Lettings Agency	Number
SARTH	3
Homeless Applicant	10
Temporary Acc	5
Rightmove	4
B&B	1
SLA Transfer	2
Rightmove	4
Landlord Recommendation	5
Living with family	2
Tenant Recommendation	1
Existing tenant of property	4
Supported housing	1

Rent Bond Schemes

- 9.33 Conwy Housing Solutions Homeless Prevention Fund issued 89 bonds in 2016/2017 through its rent bond scheme.
- 9.34 NACRO also operate a rent bond scheme for clients, funded through Welsh Government. In 2016/17 the scheme received 64 referrals, and issued 34 bonds, of these 19 were for single people, 5 for couples and 4 for families. The information below identifies the location of the accommodation accessed.

Table 9.14 Location of accommodation sourced through Rent Bond scheme	
Area	Number
Colwyn Bay	5
Abergele	2
Rhos-On-Sea	1
Pensarn	9
Mochdra	1
Prestatyn	3
Rhyl	7
Corwen	1
Denbigh	1

- 9.35 While the above data demonstrates success in accessing the private rented market for clients who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, further work is needed to increase this access.
- 9.36 Alongside increasing access, emphasis needs to be placed on sustainment. Loss of private rented accommodation is the biggest cause of homelessness in Conwy, it is therefore essential that any offer to enable clients to access the private rented sector needs to be coupled with support for both landlords and tenants, with the ability for early intervention should any issues arise during the course of the tenancy.
- 9.37 This, alongside the implications of Rent Smart Wales and the Renting Homes (Wales) Act, means that there is a need to develop a comprehensive landlord offer, that enables clients to not only access the private rented sector but to also successfully sustain this accommodation.
- 9.38 There is a need to review the current Social Letting Agency model to identify how it can compete for available private rented properties, incentive schemes together with options for full management and guaranteed rent should be explored.

Wylfa Newydd

- 9.39 The construction of a nuclear power station on the Isle of Anglesey is likely to significantly impact upon the private rented sector within Conwy. Wylfa Newydd is a nationally significant project that will generate additional housing demand for up to 11,700 construction workers at its peak in the mid-2020s. There will be a significant requirement for additional housing over the build period and beyond which is likely to impact on the most vulnerable and cause potential displacement in the private rented sector. As neighbouring counties, both Gwynedd and Conwy's housing markets are likely to be affected.
- 9.40 It is anticipated that this is most likely to impact on 2 and 3-bedroom properties where workers may share, however, it will have an impact upon the whole market from one-bedroom properties and rooms to let up to family accommodation for long term project managers and senior staff who may re-locate their families. There will be a demand for all property sizes.

Shared Accommodation

- 9.41 Shared accommodation is increasingly becoming the only affordable housing option for young single people but there is not a culture of sharing in the county and Council policies have discouraged the creation of Houses in Multiple Occupation.
- 9.42 The lack of shared housing significantly restricts the affordable housing options available for single people particularly those who are under 35 years and in receipt of local housing allowance.
- 9.43 There is a need to consider options to increase the provision of shared accommodation, including the development of shared houses with floating support for under 35's.

- 9.44 Alongside this there is also a need to encourage households with spare bedrooms to rent a room. A lodgings scheme with support from the Council would provide additional affordable housing options for single people, whilst ensuring a better use of the many under-occupied houses in the County.

Other Services

- 9.45 There is a range of other services across the County who provide advice, support and practical assistance to households who are in housing difficulty or struggling to cope financially.

Age Connects North Wales Central

- 9.46 Age Connects North Wales Central offer support and advocacy for older people.

Antioch Money Advice Centre

- 9.47 Antioch offer free, confidential advice and support to people who are struggling with their finances or in debt.

Arc Communities Ltd

- 9.48 Arc Communities offer a number of services to vulnerable individuals such as work clubs, outreach services and advice and support to those who are homeless or have drug and alcohol problems.

ARCH Initiatives

- 9.49 ARCH Initiatives is a registered charity that provides a range of services across North Wales for people affected by substance misuse.

Welfare Benefit Advice Line

- 9.50 Conwy County Borough Council provides a welfare benefit advice line for young people and families in Conwy. The line offers free, confidential advice on welfare benefits.

CAIS

- 9.51 CAIS help people who are having problems with addictions, mental health, personal development and employment – as well as offering assistance and information to their families and friends. Their services include: residential treatment and rehabilitation, counselling, peer mentoring, supporting people in their homes, assisting people back into work or education, group work and other motivational interventions.

Conwy Food Bank

- 9.52 Conwy Food Bank is run by Arc Communities and provides food parcels to those in need in Conwy. Referrals are made for food parcels by professional organisations who are working with families or individuals in need.

Nant y Glyn Mental Health Resource Centre

- 9.53 Nant y Glyn provides services to adults with a functional mental illness within the Bay of Colwyn area.

Roslin Mental Health Resource Centre

- 9.54 Roslin provides services to adults of all ages with a functional mental illness, in Llandudno and also rural Conwy. This includes graduates and new referrals over the age of 65.

The Bay Learning Centre

- 9.55 The Bay Learning Centre offers a range of courses to support those who wish to find employment, to improve their basic reading, writing or number skills, or to get back into learning. It also runs computer courses, Classroom Assistant and other courses for people interested in working within education, plus British Sign Language and Deaf Studies courses.

North Wales Women's Centre

- 9.56 North Wales Women's Centre provides a safe place for the multi -service provision of information, support, advocacy, training and referral on issues relating to work, health and well-being. Also provided is confidential crisis support around issues such as homelessness.

Hafal Adult Mental Health Community Support

- 9.57 Hafal Conwy helps people with serious mental illness and their families to work towards recovery.

Coleg Llandrillo

- 9.58 The College offers a range of full and part time courses and work-based learning.

Crest Co-operative

- 9.59 Crest collect and recycle unwanted furniture and white goods for them to be reused. Crest can help families create homes by providing furnishings and electrical goods at a low cost. As well as this they offer training courses and volunteering opportunities.

Colwyn Women's Aid

- 9.60 Women's Aid offers emotional and practical support to women and their children who are victims of domestic abuse.

Conwy and Denbighshire Bond Bureau

- 9.61 Nacro provide a deposit guarantee scheme for people aged 16+ who are in receipt of benefits or on a low income, who are homeless, threatened with homelessness or in housing need. The scheme will guarantee a deposit of the equivalent of 4 weeks rent, to enable people to access private rented sector accommodation

Aberconwy Domestic Abuse Service

- 9.62 Aberconwy Domestic Abuse Service offer support to women, men and children who are fleeing domestic abuse.

Hafan Cymru

- 9.63 Hafan Cymru provides housing and support services to women, men and their children, particularly those escaping domestic abuse.

Home-start

- 9.64 Home-Start provides a network of trained parent volunteers to support parents who are struggling to cope.

NACRO

- 9.65 Nacro provide housing support to people with substance abuse problems.

Dyn Project

- 9.66 Dyn Project gives support to men who are experiencing domestic abuse from a partner.

The Sanctuary Trust

- 9.67 The Sanctuary Trust aims to provide programmes and services as an answer to homelessness and homeless related issues.

Touchstones12

- 9.68 Touchstones12 offers abstinence based supported housing and assistance for people with drug and alcohol addiction.

North Wales Credit Union

- 9.69 North Wales Credit Union provides low cost, high quality and ethical financial services for its members.

Jobcentre

- 9.70 The Jobcentre helps those who are unemployed and/ or claiming benefits. They provide resources to enable job-searchers to find work, provide information on training opportunities and administer claims for Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, and Jobseeker's Allowance.

Chapter Summary and Recommendations

Accommodation and Support Available for People who are Homeless or Threatened with Homelessness – Identified Gaps & Issues

- The Council will need to review the temporary accommodation charges under Universal Credit to ensure that the accommodation remains affordable, and that households do not fall into rent arrears on the basis of affordability.
- Where households are placed into temporary accommodation there is a need to move them into the private sector, ensuring that adequate support is in place. A private sector offer policy should be adopted, with accompanying procedures.
- There is a need to review the move on arrangements from supported housing to ensure that clients are ready to move on and measures are put in place to avoid tenancy failure.
- To fully understand the scale and issues surrounding move on it is recommended that Homeless Link's Move On Plans Protocol is used.
- There is a need to develop a comprehensive landlord offer, that enables clients to not only access the private rented sector but to also successfully sustain this accommodation.
- There is a need to review the Social Letting Agency model to ensure it attracts landlords and enables the Council to discharge its homeless duty into the private rented sector.
- 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.
- There is a range of organisations, including voluntary organisations, providing services for people who are homeless and in need. There is a need to work with these organisations to ensure a consistent offer to homeless people that supports and sustains independence, and better manages customer expectation.
- In provide a more streamlined customer journey there may be some value in relocating the Pathway team within Conwy Housing Solutions.

10. The Needs of Identified Groups

10.1 This chapter considers the needs of identified client groups, alongside specific themes.

Health Needs

10.2 A Homeless Health needs assessment was completed across North Wales to support the development of a local baseline of health care needs and to assess access to health provision for the homeless population of North Wales.

10.3 The assessment was based on a combination of interviews with service users and questionnaires across the six Local Authority areas.

10.4 The assessment focused on a range of health issues and found the following:

- 96% (48 respondents) were registered with a GP (94% permanently; 2% temporarily), compared with just 26% (11) registered with a dentist.
- 19 respondents had used A&E in the past six months; 18, an ambulance; 15, admitted to hospital. Incidents relating to alcohol use formed the predominant reason for use overall.
- 2 respondents who had accessed these services (2 ambulance and A&E; 1 hospital admission) had done so for suicide attempts.
- Of the 16 respondents who had been admitted to hospital, 3 stated that they had been discharged without hospital staff having made sure they had somewhere to go when discharged.
- 73.5% (35) had received information from their housing/homelessness project about local health services, and most of these respondents (33 respondents) had in turn found this useful.

Physical Health

- A significant proportion of respondents, (89.4% - 42), smoked cigarettes; and 45.2% (22) stated that they did not want to stop. 42.9% (18) stated that they had not been offered advice or help to stop (this did include those who did not want to either).
- 46.8% (22) stated that they did not, on average, eat two meals a day.
- 57.44% (27) indicated that they exercised at least twice a week (it is worth noting that there was a frequent suggestion that this was walking). 12 of the twenty who did not exercise regularly stated that they would like to.
- 25.5% (12) stated that the support/treatment they received for their physical health met their needs; the same number said that they would like more help, and the same number again stated that they received no support, but that it would help them.

Mental Health

- 91.5% (43 respondents) identified with at least one mental health issue. Feelings of stress (87.2% - 41), anxiety (85.1% - 40), depression, and difficulty sleeping (76.6% - 36 both) were highest, while hearing voices (23.4% - 11) and self-harm (19.1% - 9) had the lowest identification rates.
- 55.3% (26) stated that they had a mental health need or condition which has been diagnosed by a doctor or other health professional (one respondent was unsure). Interestingly, given the high levels of anxiety identified, just three people stated that they had a diagnosis of anxiety (though it should be noted that this came under 'other').
- There was a noteworthy disparity in feelings of needs being met between mental health and physical health, with just six feeling that the care/support they receive for their mental health needs is sufficient. 30.2% (13) also felt that they would benefit from help but at the moment, reported that they received none.

Drugs and Alcohol

- 54.5% (24) stated that they took drugs or were recovering from a drug problem.
- 15 reported using more than one drug, of the 3 who reported using NPS this was used exclusively.
- 6 respondents used methadone, although none reported using methadone which was not prescribed. 6 currently injected, only one of whom occasionally shared injecting equipment. All who injected knew about a needle exchange scheme. The respondent who said they sometimes shared equipment stated that they did not need any advice on safer injecting.
- Responses to questions on frequency of alcohol use, showed the highest proportions belonged to 'never' and 'every day' categorisations.
- Almost half – 13 out of the 27 who used alcohol - drank every day. Those who used alcohol were more likely to also use drugs, and 22.7% (10) stated that they never used drugs or alcohol.
- Analysis of unit consumption showed 53.8% (14 of the 26 whom responded) stated that they drank 10+ units of alcohol on a typical day when drinking.
- Overall, 40.9% of respondents identified as having an alcohol problem however the definition of 'problem' cannot be determined by this survey. Of those respondents (18) who did identify with an alcohol problem, 8 felt they were receiving sufficient support; 6 were getting support, but felt that they would still like more help, and 4 were not getting support, but felt that it would help them.

Vaccinations and Screening

- Of the 4 who tested positive for Hepatitis C, only one had taken up the treatment they had been offered. For one case however, the respondent had explained that they had nowhere to incubate the medication as they were street homeless.
- All who were tested for TB had been skin tested (3 respondents were unsure).

Sexual Health

- 72.7% (32 respondents) had not had a sexual health check in the last twelve months, with a further 2 being unsure.

Recommendations

- Health services need to respond to the identification and management of infectious diseases, mental illness, and diseases associated with old age. A potential review of eligibility criteria for and access to screening and immunisation programmes, including eye care, is advocated based on the available evidence.
- Improved data collection is required, in particular within secondary care settings, to improve local intelligence and to enable services to be more responsive to the health needs of homeless people.
- As there is a general paucity of information and data regarding the homeless population in North Wales, it would be beneficial if an appropriate database is developed for use among a range of agencies for the effective collection of data about this population and their health and social needs.
- Health and social care organisations need to maintain/enhance the delivery of preventative and early intervention services. This population should also be targeted, where possible, to enable appropriate and relevant public health screening and immunisation to happen in homelessness environments such as hostels and day centres. Support is also required to enable clients to deal with routine activities of daily living, i.e. to keep appointments.
- All staff working with in this sector should be supported through appropriate training to deliver effective proactive models of good practice in the following areas:
 - Brief interventions and onward referral for health and social care related issues, including lifestyle advice
 - Infectious diseases and conditions prevalent in this population or where there is a high risk of infection such as Tuberculosis and Hepatitis
 - Dual diagnosis; increased awareness of mental health conditions and substance misuse and multi-component screening and assessment and interventions that can help to address this.
- There is a need to ensure appropriate and effective hospital admission and discharge policies and procedures are used for Homeless people based on the one developed by the Health of Homeless People Advisory Group who have produced a 3 tier

Homeless Hospital Discharge Protocol (Bradley 2014) to act as guidance for all inpatient wards in Wales.

- Consideration should be given to introducing a MOT Health check and screening tool that would identify underlying (and potentially untreated) chronic conditions and would review eligibility and access to screening and immunisation programmes. Screening and assessment tools currently used for reception screening for prisoners could be adapted for this population group. It would be beneficial if this tool was designed for use by a range of professionals in contact with homeless populations.
- Difficulties in accessing services due to the attitude of some service providers supports previous findings and related evidence found in the literature reviewed. As current health services are not necessarily routinely accessed by some homeless individuals, in part because of the nature and set up of the services but also because of the discrimination they face (Welsh Government, 2003), this will need to be addressed.

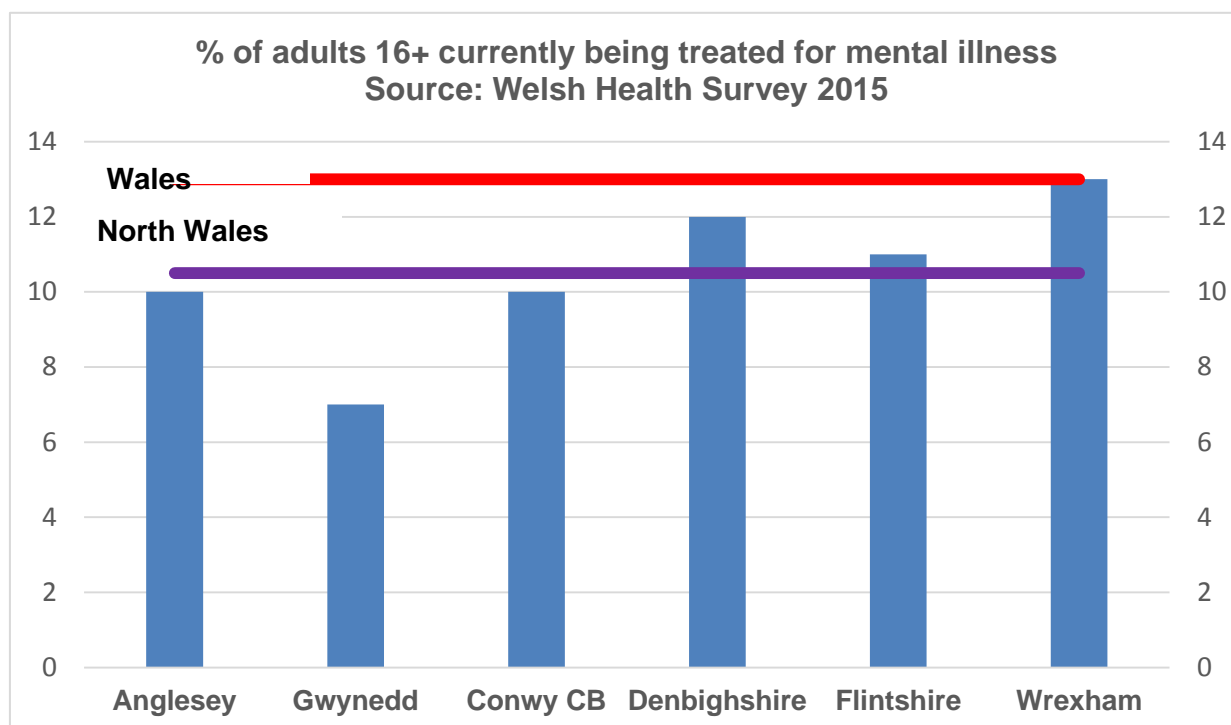
Mental Health

- 10.5 Individuals with mental health issues are especially vulnerable and exposed to homelessness and securing safe secure and affordable housing solutions can be critical in supporting recovery. Good quality accommodation options can reduce overall demand for health and social care services.
- 10.6 The table below illustrates the number of accepted homeless cases for the last two financial years who are vulnerable as a result of their mental health.

Table 10.1 Homeless applicants with mental health issues		
Financial Year	Number of acceptances where vulnerable due to Mental Health	Percentage of all accepted cases
2015/16	1	5.9%
2016/17	6	8.6%

Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 10.7 The number of individuals vulnerable due to mental health as a percentage of all acceptances has ranged from 6 – 9% over for the last two years. However, in actual terms the numbers are quite small, but this only represents clients to whom a S75 duty was owed. The actual number of clients approaching the Housing Solutions service is much higher than this.
- 10.8 The Homeless Health Needs Audit identified a high prevalence of mental health issues for those that were homeless (91%) and the majority of these did not feel that their mental health needs were being met by services.
- 10.9 The chart below details the percentage of adults (16+) who are currently being treated for mental illness across North Wales according to the Welsh Government's Health Survey 2015.

Chart 10.1 Percentage of adults being treated for mental health issues

Source LHMA 2017

10.10 The table below details the number of persons aged 16+ living with a mental health condition within Conwy, and how this is predicted to increase over the next twenty years.

Table 10.2 Number of adults living with a mental health condition					
Number of people 16+ with a mental illness Source: Daffodil Cymru	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035
People aged 16 and over predicted to have a common mental disorder	15,723	15,721	15,794	15,881	15,909
People aged 16 and over predicted to have a borderline personality disorder	441	441	443	445	445
People aged 16 and over predicted to have an antisocial personality disorder	330	333	336	340	342
People aged 16 and over predicted to have psychotic disorder	391	391	393	395	395
People aged 16 and over predicted to have two or more psychiatric disorders	6,984	6,993	7,035	7,081	7,100

Source LHMA 2017

10.11 This data shows that there is going to be a small increase in the number of adults living in Conwy with one or more mental health problems. The majority of these cases can be treated within the person's own home, however a small number of cases will require accommodation based support services. The social services commissioning strategy

highlights that the number of referrals to their mental health team has doubled over the past twelve months and has identified a need for specialist accommodation based support within Conwy, particularly for those leaving hospital.

- 10.12 The Vulnerable People's Service is a new and innovative service, working with those adults with a range of needs who do not meet the various thresholds for different Social Care and Health services but have a range of multiple and complex needs. Young people can access this service, which already plays a key role in primary, secondary and tertiary prevention work with vulnerable young people making their transition to adulthood. As part of the Service an Accommodation Panel meets to discuss options for clients.

Physical Health

- 10.13 It is commonly known 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.
- 10.14 Despite this increased morbidity, homeless people consistently are not able to access the health care that they need. As a result of this, health problems are left untreated and health deteriorates. When homeless people do access health services, they are likely to do so in an unplanned way (for example through accident and emergency) and to be in a state of chronic ill health. This results in longer stays in hospital and multiple re-admissions and has clear cost implications for the NHS.
- 10.15 The health needs audit identified that 25% of respondents with a physical health were not having their health needs met.
- 10.16 There is a need to ensure that the medical needs of single homeless people in Conwy are met. They should be given the same choices in relation to accessing health care service as the general population, while recognizing that homeless people, may not find it easy to access mainstream service provision.

Rural Homelessness

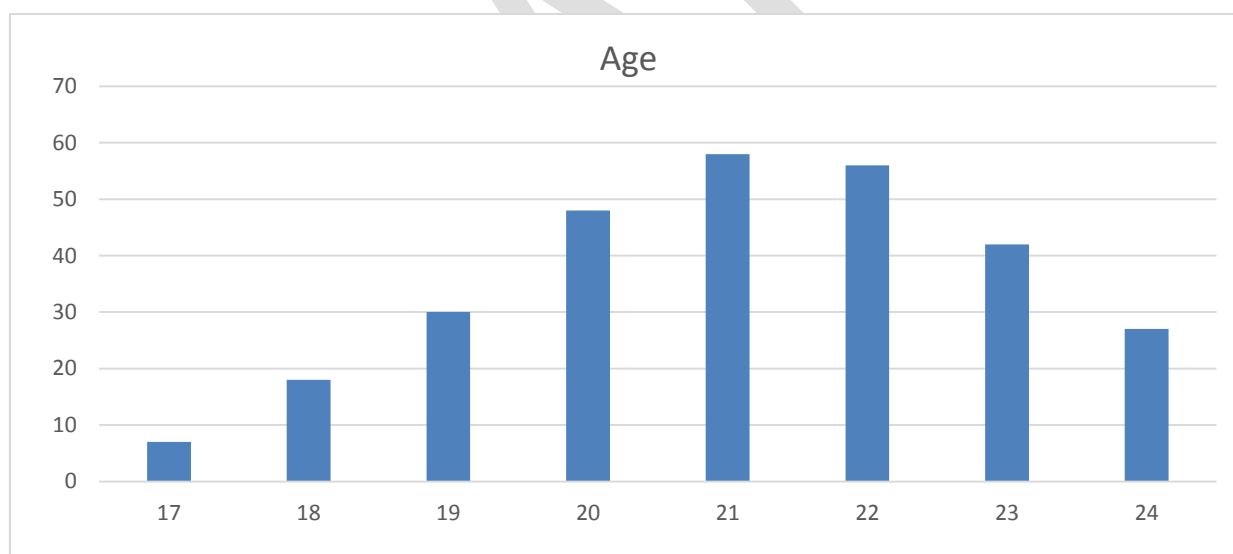
- 10.17 The nature and level of homelessness in rural areas is not fully known in Conwy. Rural homelessness is often hidden because of the stigma that can be attached to homelessness and its underlying causes.
- 10.18 People are likely to live in locations which are more remote from services and have greater difficulty accessing them. The housing options available to people within rural areas are likely to be reduced, with limited access to social and privately rented accommodation in the community. Affordability ratios for home ownership are particularly difficult as house prices are disproportionate to incomes.
- 10.19 Moving forward, work needs to be undertaken to better understand levels of homelessness in rural areas across Conwy. There is also a need to raise awareness within rural communities of the risks of homelessness and how they may be helped to prevent it. In developing the Housing Solutions service it is essential that it can meet the needs of rural and remote communities.

- 10.20 Conwy County Council needs to work in partnership and where appropriate across boundaries to measure the extent and nature of homelessness and to share experiences and resources to deliver services and housing options, which are accessible to people in rural areas.
- 10.21 Pressures in Rural Communities are predominantly in relation to access to affordable home ownership or private rentals. There is not a significant demand for social housing, and often hard to let properties are located in rural areas, particularly Sheltered Bungalows. These often have to be advertised on Rightmove, and tension can be caused when people with no connection to the area move in and occupy these properties.

Young people

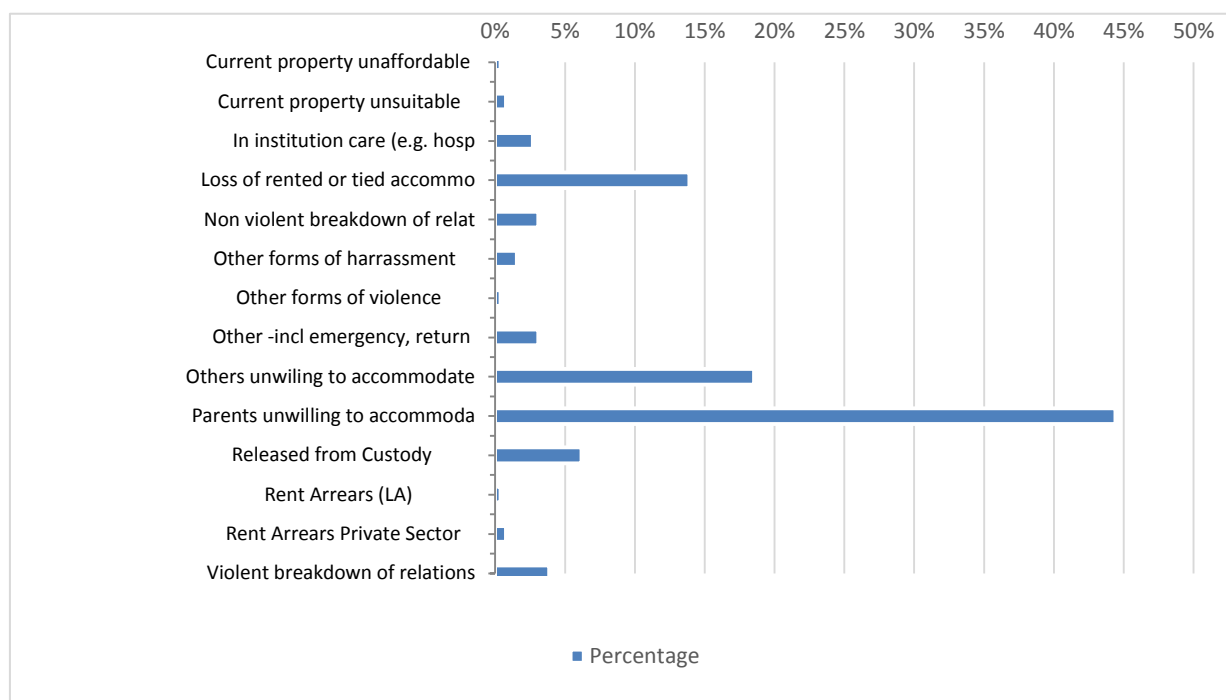
- 10.22 Young people are over represented in the homeless statistics when compared with population data.
- 10.23 Between April 2013 and September 2016, 286 single young people (aged 16-24 years) presented as homeless, with 8% being 17 & 18 year olds and 40% being 21 & 22 year olds.

Chart 10.2 Number of young people presenting as homeless



Source: Young People's Positive Accommodation and Support Pathway Needs Analysis

- 10.24 The graph below illustrates the main reason for homelessness was parents or other family members unwilling to accommodate the young person any further (63%) or the loss of rented accommodation (14%).

Chart 10.3 Reasons for young people presenting as homeless

Source: Young People's Positive Accommodation and Support Pathway Needs Analysis

- 10.25 Supporting People Needs Mapping data for 2015/16 shows that 28% individuals presenting to SP services were aged 16-24. The proportion of funding designated for services specifically for this age group is 3.57%, although some of this age group will receive services from other Supporting People services.
- 10.26 A piece of work was undertaken in 2015 to identify the number of 13-15 year olds at high risk of homelessness later on, based on current risk factors in their lives; the work identified 158 individuals. This gives Conwy a basis to plan more proactively and focus on a targeted preventative approach.
- 10.27 There are a range of specialist services for young people within the County these include:
- 10.28 The S180 funded Youth Homelessness Outreach worker, employed by Grwp Cynefin, is delivering a range of education and support programmes in schools and other youth provision, including the educational 'Going It Alone' game, developed for use in Conwy and Denbighshire. This has had very positive feedback from young people and there is a high regard for this work from other professionals.
- 10.29 The Clwyd Alyn Isallt scheme in Llandudno provides both supported accommodation and some supported 'move on' options across the County for young people. This model is one which potentially stops young people being stuck in high cost supported accommodation, unable to work due to the housing benefit taper and can reduce the risk of 'silt up' in the accommodation.
- 10.30 Nightstop has been operating in Conwy for the last 12 months and provides a bed for the night for young people who need it. It provides a safety net to those forced to leave their home by placing young people in a safe and warm home for the night, provided by a vetted and approved volunteer.

- 10.31 Y Bont provides a mediation service, which offers children, young people and their families the opportunity of getting together in order to address any issues which puts a young person's place at home or tenancy at risk. The project will offer to listen to both sides, help communication and come up with an agreement to try and make things better. The project can also help young people who have left home to get back in touch with family.
- 10.32 In Conwy the housing options available to young people on low incomes are particularly limited due to the relatively low levels of social housing, in particular one-bed social housing and under-developed access into the private rented sector for this group. The available housing options are further reduced by the limited accommodation available that is covered by the shared room rate allowance available to under 35s.
- 10.33 Nationally, 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.
- 10.34 The Welsh Government have commissioned a piece of work which aims to improve housing and support options for young people aged 16 – 25 who may be at risk of homelessness. As part of this work, six local authorities, including Conwy County Council, were chosen for some additional input on youth housing options and homelessness prevention. Anna Whalen reviewed the service offer for young people in Conwy and made a number of recommendations for service improvements.
- 10.35 Based on 2 national 'snapshots' in November 2015 and January 2016, Conwy was the joint highest user of Bed & Breakfast for young people in Wales.
- 10.36 The recommendations from Anna Whalen's report identified the need for a high level corporate approach response to preventing youth homelessness and provision, focusing on driving change on 3 fronts. The 3 areas are:
- Reduction and then elimination of the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation. This will require re-designation of current supported accommodation and/or new commissioning.
 - A focus on joint commissioning in order to support the transition to adulthood of vulnerable young people, including care leavers and those at risk of homelessness, some of whom are not just young and without the support of any family, but have a combination of:
 - mental health problems
 - behavioural difficulties
 - learning disability
 - substance misuse
 - offending behaviours
 - a high risk of long term unemployment.

- Opening up of supply of shared accommodation for young people in particular in social housing but also in private rented accommodation.
- 10.37 In response to these recommendations Housing Solutions and Supporting People in partnership with Children's Services and providers have developed a Young Person's Positive Accommodation and Support Pathway.
- 10.38 The aim of the pathway is to work more effectively across the Council, and with partners, to provide an integrated approach focused on:
- Making sure young people, their families and those who work with them have information and guidance to understand housing options and plan when and how young people will leave the family home or leave care.
 - Pro-actively preventing housing crisis and supporting young people to live with their family if it's safe to do so, including returning home from care.
 - Ensuring processes, including assessment and allocation of housing, are clear to young people and help them to access the most appropriate service to meet their needs.
 - Having a suitable range of value for money accommodation and support options to meet the varying needs of Conwy young people.
 - Helping young people to access and sustain settled accommodation, which will usually need to be shared.
- 10.39 The framework provides public commissioners and providers of services to work together in planning and delivering services for young people, underpinned by safe, decent and affordable housing, promoting positive outcomes, training, education, health.
- 10.40 The pathway will focus on successful outcomes for young people - many of whom have multiple and complex needs across a range of areas of their lives.
- 10.41 The outcomes of the project will be:
- Reduce impact on statutory services, particularly measured by the decreased use of unsuitable temporary accommodation for young people
 - An improved joined up service response from statutory and non-statutory services
 - Young people supported will be better able to access and engage with the services they need
 - Young people supported will be better able to access suitable accommodation
 - Young people supported will develop and increase their confidence and independent living skills
 - Young people will be supported to achieve those elements of the Welsh Government's mandatory Supporting People outcomes framework which are relevant to their needs, circumstance and choices.

Teenage Parents

- 10.42 Evidence has shown that teenage pregnancy is related to poor maternal and child health outcomes. There is an increased risk of teenage mothers failing to complete their education, suffering from post-natal depression and other mental health issues and of living in poverty. The risk of homelessness is also increased, with teenage parents often asked to leave the parental home either due to a breakdown in family relationships, or practical issues associated with overcrowding.
- 10.43 Young maternal age is also known to contribute to the risk of having a low birth weight baby, with rates higher among teenage mothers. Children of teenage mothers are at risk of poor health, poor housing, low educational attainment, and lower rates of economic activity in adult life.
- 10.44 The under 18 conception rate in Conwy in 2015 was 24.7 per 1,000 women aged 15-17 years, this is comparable with the Welsh average of 24.3. The under 16 conception rate for Conwy was 5.1 per 1,000 girls aged 13-15 compared with the Welsh average of 4.2.

Care Leavers

- 10.45 The table below illustrates the number of accepted homeless cases for the last two financial years who are vulnerable as a result of being a care leaver or at risk of sexual exploitation.

Table 10.3 Care leavers accepted as homeless		
Financial Year	Number of acceptances where vulnerable due care leaver	Percentage of all accepted cases
2015/16	1	5.9%
2016/17	3	4.3%

Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 10.46 The number of individuals vulnerable due to being a care leaver is quite small, but this only represents clients to whom a S75 duty was owed. The actual number of clients approaching the Housing Solutions service who are care leavers is much higher than this.
- 10.47 At the start of May 2017 there were 33 Category 1 ('Eligible' 16/17 year olds still Looked After) children in Conwy's care. On the 4.5.17 information was gathered from social work practitioners about the move-on plans for these young people. The purpose of collecting this data was to predict future supply needs and to ensure sufficient quantities of appropriate accommodation and support is available to enable transition to independence.
- 10.48 All of the 33 Category 1 young people were attributed a level of need by workers. 6 were considered to have high needs, 8 medium needs and 19 low needs.

- 10.49 The Council has developed a shared house for care leavers, who can move on into their own flats when they are ready. The Kick Start scheme is for 4 vulnerable people and is linked to the Vulnerable People's Service.
- 10.50 The Housing Solutions service also provide weekly housing advice sessions with the leaving care team.

Domestic Abuse

- 10.51 Domestic abuse statistics (for the general population) are difficult to source because of an under reporting of incidents leading to an under estimation of prevalence in police statistics.
- 10.52 However, an analysis of 10 separate domestic violence prevalence studies by the Council of Europe showed consistent findings: 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence over their lifetimes, and between 6-10% of women suffer domestic violence in a given year.
- 10.53 This level of prevalence is supported in the more recent study by Smith et al who found that in the UK 7% of women and 5% of men reported Domestic Abuse in 2010/2011.
- 10.54 For 2015/16 data from North Wales Police shows that there were 1,700 recorded domestic crimes with violence. In Conwy there were around 270 domestic crimes with violence recorded, just under 50% of cases involved in some way people aged under 16. Around 30% involved children under 5.
- 10.55 There were 220 sexual offences recorded in the same period. Women are more likely to experience domestic violence or be victims of sexual offences than men. About 80% of victims of both crimes were women.
- 10.56 Tackling Domestic Abuse is a priority for Safer Conwy, the partnership aims to have fewer repeat victims of Domestic Abuse and more victims reporting domestic abuse for the first time.
- 10.57 Regional research work is taking place to understand issues associated with alcohol and its impact, mental health and hidden crimes.
- 10.58 Domestic abuse is one of the main causes of homelessness in Conwy. The housing options available to people experiencing domestic abuse can often be limited and often consist of offers of refuge or emergency accommodation, often out of the area. For many people experiencing domestic abuse the offer of moving to refuge accommodation, away from family and support networks can be a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship.
- 10.59 There is a need to ensure a more effective joined up approach between commissioners of domestic abuse services and those with the strategic responsibility, to deliver the best outcomes for those experiencing domestic abuse, including target hardening and action against perpetrators.
- 10.60 There are a large number of households who are living in refuge accommodation as a form of temporary accommodation, and this accounted for 27% of all households in temporary accommodation at the end of 2016/17 in Conwy.

Older People

- 10.61 Conwy County has the largest proportion of older people in Wales, this is in part due to many people choosing to move to Conwy upon retirement, leaving the support network of family and friends behind.
- 10.62 The vast majority of older households are owner occupiers and will aspire to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible, however as people age they may become isolated and be at risk of injuries from falls and excess cold. The number living with dementia in older age is also growing.
- 10.63 Conwy's draft Housing Strategy 2018-23 recognises that earlier decisions about downsizing could help the next generation to remain independent for longer whilst releasing family accommodation into the market, but this is dependent upon the development of sufficient smaller accommodation options, both with and without support.
- 10.64 The main housing issues experienced by older people tend to relate to repairs, adaptations, or the need to move in to more suitable accommodation that meets their changing needs as they get older. The main cause of homelessness for older people is usually due to eviction by family.
- 10.65 Over the last two years only one household has been accepted as homeless due to vulnerability as a result of old age.
- 10.66 In general terms older people are not identified through available statistics as homeless or at risk of homelessness. However it is important to recognise that for many older people their homelessness, or housing problem, may be hidden. There is a strong likelihood that they are being housed through the Housing Register and as such are not recorded within homelessness statistics.

People with Disabilities

- 10.67 Information available suggests that the most common reason for homelessness amongst people with physical disabilities is that the accommodation is no longer suitable for their needs.
- 10.68 In 2016/17, 3 households were owed a section 75 duty who were vulnerable as a result of physical health or disability. This only represents clients to whom a S75 duty was owed. The actual number of clients approaching the Housing Solutions service with a physical disability is much higher than this.
- 10.69 The Housing Solutions team will need to ensure that it has access to both temporary accommodation and move on accommodation that meets the needs of people with a range of physical disabilities.

Learning Disabilities

- 10.70 Housing need for individuals with learning disabilities is growing. Individuals with disabilities are living longer and family expectations are changing. Both the individuals

themselves and their families have a greater awareness of the rights of people with a disability to housing and support services as independent adults.

- 10.71 In Conwy there are currently 45 Supported Living schemes that provide a home to 101 adults who have learning disabilities. These houses are located throughout Conwy in a variety of residential areas. Typically, each house provides a home to on average 3 people, each with their own bedroom, shared communal areas and who are tenants.

Single People

- 10.72 Evidence throughout the review highlights that homelessness is a significant issue for single people in the district, particularly for young people. This problem is exacerbated by the high house prices and private rent levels, and the limited number of single person social housing available.
- 10.73 Single people account for 58% of applications that resulted in a S62 assessment in 2016/17. Single people accounted for 39% of those owed a S66 duty, 70% of those owed a S73 duty and 43% of those owed a S75 duty.
- 10.74 This accounts for a very significant proportion of Housing Solutions customers and poses particular challenges when trying to secure both temporary and permanent accommodation for this client group, particularly for those aged under 35 years.

Offenders

- 10.75 It is estimated that 30% of offenders lose their accommodation during custody. Therefore, it is evident that more needs to be done to ensure that appropriate and timely housing advice is delivered to prisoners to ensure that homelessness is prevented. It is also recognised that stable accommodation can reduce the risk of re-offending by up to 20%; therefore, homelessness prevention has much wider benefits to the community.
- 10.76 The following table illustrates the number of households owed a S75 duty for the last two financial years who are vulnerable as a result of being a former prisoner.

Table 10.4 Offenders accepted as homeless		
Financial Year	Number of acceptances where vulnerable due to being a former prisoner	Percentage of all accepted cases
2015/16	1	5.8%
2016/17	5	7.2%

Source: WELSH GOVERNMENT RETURNS

- 10.77 While the numbers are low, they have increased in the last year, and may be linked to issues with the Prisoner Pathway. The numbers only represent those clients owed a S73 duty found to be vulnerable as a result of leaving prison. The number of offenders seeking advice from the service is much higher than this. Leaving prison was the stated reason for homelessness for one household owed a S66 duty, 66 households owed a S73 duty, 27 households found to be either not in priority need or intentionally homeless, and 7 households owed a S75 duty.
- 10.78 In 2015/16 a national Prisoner Pathway was introduced with the aim of providing prisoners facing homelessness with support 56 days before their release. The Pathway also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all the agencies and organisations involved in the process, resulting in a more coordinated approach and better support for people leaving custody.
- 10.79 However, there have been a number of issues at a local level in relation to its successful implementation, with many prisoners being released with no accommodation secured, or the Housing Solutions team being given very limited notice prior to release.
- 10.80 A new 'super prison', HMP Berwyn, opened in Wrexham in February 2017. The first releases from this prison are due in 2018. This may have an impact upon the number of prisoners being released locally.
- 10.81 Conwy contributes to the funding of the Regional Resettlement Officer who is based in Wrexham Housing Solutions Team and covers Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.
- 10.82 The aim of the post is to carry out the s62 assessment on behalf of each Local Authority and decide on what duty is owed and develop a personal housing plan with the prisoner. This is then passed on to the appropriate Local Authority and they continue to work with the prisoner and notify if they believe a S68 duty to accommodate has been triggered. All of this should be happening at around 66 days prior to release in order to give the L.A. time to relieve homelessness and the prisoner the opportunity to work on their personal housing plan.

Substance Misuse

- 10.83 Research by Crisis found that two thirds of homeless people cite drug or alcohol use as a reason for first becoming homeless and those who use drugs are seven times more likely to be homeless than the general population.

- 10.84 There are high levels of stress and mental illness associated with being homeless and it is not uncommon for those traumatised by homelessness to use drug or alcohol as a coping mechanism. The research identified that 27% of the homeless people surveyed reported having or recovering from an alcohol problem and 39% of homeless people surveyed reported taking drugs or recovering from a drug problem.
- 10.85 Serious mental illness is often accompanied by substance misuse problems and 12% of the homeless population has both a mental health and substance misuse.
- 10.86 The Homeless Health Needs Audit identified that 54% of respondents used drugs and 40% stated that they had an alcohol problem.

Complex needs

- 10.87 The Housing Solutions team is seeing an increasing number of complex cases, including both single people and families.
- 10.88 The Housing Solution's service has struggled to find sustainable solutions for these households.
- 10.89 The Housing Solutions team has identified difficulties in being able to get individuals with complex and multiple needs into supported accommodation. There is currently no data to support this. Work will need to be undertaken with the Supporting People team to capture where people are unable to access supported accommodation because their needs are too high, alongside capturing reasons for evictions from supported accommodation.

Ex-armed Forces

- 10.90 To date there have been no homeless acceptances where a household has been found vulnerable due to leaving the armed forces.
- 10.91 The National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel provides advice to both current and former members of the armed forces on how to secure housing in Wales, including how to access the support and homelessness prevention service provided and delivered by local authorities.
- 10.92 Conwy County Council entered into a Community Covenant with the Armed Forces Community in Conwy.
- 10.93 The aim of the Covenant is to encourage local communities to support the Armed Forces community in their area; promote understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting service community and recognise and remember sacrifices made.
- 10.94 Within this the Council undertakes to ensure that Veterans returning to Conwy have access to appropriate accommodation via SARTH.
- 10.95 Within the Housing Solutions service a Housing Solutions Officer specialises in working with veterans. The post works with voluntary groups focusing on the veterans community in Conwy and around the veterans community covenant.

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender

- 10.96 To date no research has been undertaken to look at access to accommodation and support for gay, lesbian and bi-sexual households.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- 10.97 The European Commission has identified that the current Syrian conflict has triggered the largest humanitarian crisis since World War II. The Prime Minister has announced that the UK will relocate and resettle 20,000 Syrian, resettling 4,000 people per year/400 a month from refugee camps on the Syrian border.
- 10.98 The Welsh Government has a national co-ordinating role and, together with the WLGA, has set up a national taskforce to manage a dispersal and integration programme. All Councils in Wales have been invited to voluntarily participate in the Syrian Resettlement Programme.
- 10.99 Families being resettled in the UK will receive five years humanitarian protection status. The resettled families are not economic migrants or asylum seekers and they will have full UK citizen rights, responsibilities, and entitlements for the full five years.
- 10.100 The Syrian Resettlement Programme will run in parallel with the UNCHR's Syria Humanitarian Admission Programme (HAP) and is based on need/vulnerability. In particular, the scheme will prioritise:
- Women and children at risk
 - People in severe need of medical care
 - Survivors of torture and violence.
- 10.101 Those eligible for the scheme are allowed to bring their immediate family with them, limited to one spouse/partner (who must be over 18) and their minor dependents (under 18). Generally, families will comprise between 4-6 people.
- 10.102 Conwy have participated in the Programme and have pledged to support up to 5 families per year. To date accommodation has only been found for 2 families, a further symptom of the lack of affordable housing opportunities in the County.

Homeowners

- 10.103 Mortgage Rescue Scheme operates in Conwy to help qualifying owner occupiers who are in difficulty with their mortgage repayments and are at risk of their home being repossessed.
- 10.104 The Mortgage Rescue Scheme is managed by Grŵp Cynefin Housing Association, and assistance will only be given where the applicant falls within a priority need category, as defined in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by Priority Need (Wales) Order 2001). The decision on priority need will be made by the Council. The scheme provides a number of options:
- 10.105 Outright purchase of the property

- Homebuy Scheme (only available when the scheme is funded by the Welsh Government)
- Shared ownership (only available where the scheme is funded solely by Grŵp Cynefin, for example no Welsh Government funding).

10.106 There have not been any instances where this has been successfully accessed in the last few years.

10.107 The table below shows the number of cases where the Council has owed a housing duty to households threatened with homelessness due to mortgage arrears.

Table 10.5 Households presenting as homeless due to mortgage arrears		
Duty	2015/16	2016/17
S66	2	4
S73	2	4
IH or NPN	1	1
S75	0	1

Source: Welsh Government Statistics

10.108 The numbers are relatively low, although it is recognised that many homeowners may not approach the Local Authority for assistance when in mortgage arrears, often as they are unaware of the services and support available.

10.109 The following table shows the number of mortgage cases heard in Conwy County Court over the last five years. On average 20 cases are heard annually.

Table 10.6 Conwy County Court mortgage cases			
Possession Type 2012			Number of cases
Mortgage	Claims	4	20
	Outright Orders	4	
	Repossessions	4	
	Suspended Orders	4	
	Warrants	4	
Possession Type 2013			Number of cases
Mortgage	Claims	4	20
	Outright Orders	4	
	Repossessions	4	
	Suspended Orders	4	
	Warrants	4	
Possession Type 2014			Number of cases
Mortgage	Claims	4	20
	Outright Orders	4	
	Repossessions	4	
	Suspended Orders	4	
	Warrants	4	
Possession Type 2015			Number of cases
Mortgage	Claims	4	19
	Outright Orders	4	
	Repossessions	4	
	Suspended Orders	3	
	Warrants	4	
Possession Type 2016			Number of cases
Mortgage	Claims	4	18
	Outright Orders	4	
	Repossessions	4	
	Suspended Orders	2	
	Warrants	4	

Source: Ministry of Justice

BME

10.110 The data indicates a very low level of homelessness amongst BME groups, however ethnicity recording for Housing Solutions cases is very poor, whereby ethnicity is only recorded for half of the cases dealt with by the service in 2016/17.

10.111 Where ethnicity is recorded, the majority of customers are White British. It is unclear if this is because other ethnic groups are not experiencing any housing difficulties, if they do not know which agencies to approach, if there is a reluctance to approach statutory agencies or if they are more likely to turn to local communities for support and help. It is evident that further work needs to be done to identify the housing needs and incidences of homelessness amongst this client group.

Gypsies and Travellers

- 10.112 According to the 2011 Census, there are 65 persons identifying as Gypsy or Travellers in Conwy. There were 33 Gypsy Traveller households 32 of whom were accommodated in Bricks and Mortar. It is likely that these numbers are an under representation of the numbers in the local authority at the time given. Research in other areas suggests that it is likely that some Gypsies or Travellers may be reluctant to declare themselves.
- 10.113 The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 makes it a mandatory for all councils to carry out an assessment of Gypsy and Traveller accommodation needs and take action on the findings.
- 10.114 The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Needs Assessment identified the need for a transit site. Planning Policy is currently trying to identify suitable sites.
- 10.115 The Council has also been able to secure funding to develop a static site for 4 households. That static site is now complete and since January 2017 has been occupied by 4 households and managed by Conwy Housing Solutions. The Council is the site owner and Cartrefi Conwy are the site agent.
- 10.116 There is a Residents Association and at the end of the initial 2 years there may be scope for self-management by the Residents Association.
- 10.117 There is a Lettings Policy for the Site and the waiting list is accessed via the Common Housing Register Team.
- 10.118 The Council holds a small database to record reports of unauthorised encampments; while the data is not directly comparable year on year, a total of 32 unauthorised encampments were reported in 15/16, 27 in 2016/17 and to date 23 have been reported in the first six months of 2017/18.
- 10.119 The draft Housing Strategy identifies the need for a Gypsy Traveller transit site to manage unauthorised encampments.

Chapter Summary and Recommendations

The Needs of Identified Client Groups – Identified Gaps & Issues

- Work needs to be undertaken to better understand levels of homelessness in rural areas across Conwy, alongside a need to raise awareness within rural communities of the risks of homelessness and how they may be helped to prevent it.
- There are high levels of youth homelessness, and a lack of suitable housing options for this client group. A multi-agency approach to homeless prevention is essential, and where young people do become homeless, specialist provision and support is essential. The developing Young Persons Positive Accommodation and Support Pathway provides the starting point for this.
- There is a need to ensure that the medical needs of single homeless people in Conwy are met. They should be given the same choices in relation to accessing health care service as the general population, while recognising that homeless people, may not find it easy to access mainstream service provision.
- Evidence throughout the review highlights that homelessness is a significant issue for single people in the district, particularly for young people, which is exacerbated by a lack of suitable and affordable accommodation options.
- There are significant move on issues for single people in temporary accommodation and supported accommodation, this is in part due to individual's having complex and multiple needs, and in part due to the lack of suitable and affordable accommodation for single people in the County.
- 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.
- There is a high prevalence of mental health issues amongst homeless people in North Wales, with the majority of individuals feeling that these needs are not being met.
- There is a need to implement the recommendations from the Homelessness Health Needs Audit.
- There is a very high number of complex cases, including both single people and families with multiple and challenging needs. The Housing Solution's 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.

11. Consultation

- 11.1 Consultation has been central to the development of this Homelessness Review and will continue to be an important element when developing the Homelessness Strategy.
- 11.2 Consultation has been undertaken through a range of different methods with customers, partner agencies and Council staff.

What do Council staff think?

- 11.3 Front line staff were invited to join a focus group, with the aim of surveying staff opinion on current service provision, whilst also using their experiences to shape future services in Conwy. The sessions were an unstructured discussion, allowing staff the opportunity to direct the session according to their main concerns and opinions. A full version of the results can be found in Appendix 2.
- 11.4 Some of the key findings from the session are detailed below.
- 11.5 The key strengths of the Housing Solutions service included:
- Co-location with the Homefinder service, and strong links between the services and central location for customers.
 - Very effective partnership working including co-location with some key partners, including Children's Services, Shelter, hospital & CAB.
 - Strong team who work well together and responds well to change.
 - Good policies and procedures in place and easily accessible.
 - Agile working, gives the staff the opportunity to work at different offices and from home, this helps staff manage their caseload, and results in better outcomes for customers.
 - Strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention, very proactive service and can achieve good results where customers come in early on.
 - Strong focus on providing a good service for customers – moving to a one stop shop approach.
- 11.6 Areas for improvement were identified as:
- Improved access to the private rented sector – more affordable properties.
 - The need to better manage client's expectations regarding both social and private rented housing options.
 - Improve communication with other departments and services, often Housing Solutions are the last to be made aware that a customer is about to become homeless.
 - Raise awareness of the service with partners to encourage more timely referrals and raise awareness of the service with customers, some people do not know where to go, and often access the service when it is too late for homelessness to be prevented.

- Improved access to mental health services.
 - Need for more appropriate access to emergency accommodation as clients with very high or complex support needs are placed in B&B with little or minimal support. Often in these situations support from adult social care is not forthcoming.
- 11.7 Potential barriers for customers accessing the service were identified as:
- Telephone system, clients are not able to easily access the service via the telephone as it is unreliable and often just gives an engaged tone.
 - Heavy caseloads impact upon the quality of service provided to customers.
 - Unrealistic customer expectation.
- 11.8 Staff felt that the following issues impeded their ability to successfully prevent homelessness:
- Difficulty in accessing private rented sector – there is often a stigma attached to being homeless, and many landlords do not want to accept customers who have been homeless or are on universal credit/LHA. There is such high demand for private rented accommodation that landlords can afford to be picky. Many buy to let mortgages have clauses that prevent landlords renting to clients who have been homeless. Insurance restrictions also make it difficult for private landlords to accept homeless clients. Rent Smart Wales is also impacting on the availability of private rented accommodation
 - Welfare reform has resulted in increased homelessness
 - Affordability issues – it can be impossible to access affordable accommodation
 - Heavy caseloads (85 cases on average) – this impacts upon the service offered to clients, and the ability to undertake effective prevention work. This also impacts upon stress levels of staff members.
- 11.9 The following gaps were identified in service provision across Conwy:
- There is a need for more supported accommodation, both generic and specialist.
 - There was a strong need for direct access provision.
 - A need for accommodation for large families, including supported family accommodation.
 - Development of more affordable accommodation options, especially for single people under 35 years.
 - Increase in numbers of clients experiencing financial hardship, more work needs to be done with them in relation to budgeting.
 - Provision for young people with complex/multiple needs – Nightstop and Supported Lodgings are often full, and can't take clients with higher needs.
- 11.10 In relation to specific issues relating to any particular customer groups the following were identified.
- Clients with complex needs - cuts in other services (i.e adult social care) are impacting upon homelessness. Witnessing an increase in people with multiple needs becoming

homeless, there are concerns that there is a risk of a serious incident occurring with vulnerable people being placed in B&B without support/input from other agencies/adult social care- especially the case for clients with mental health and substance misuse issues.

- Prisoner pathway is not working; prisoners are approaching Housing Solutions without prior notification and without any work having been undertaken whilst in prison.
- Move on from supported accommodation isn't working effectively with risks of tenancy failure.
- There is no income restriction within the allocations policy, which means households who have a high income can still be offered social housing, given the high demand for social housing this approach should be reviewed.

What are the views of our partners?

- 11.11 Consultation with partner agencies was seen as essential to the review process, particularly where there is a need to work more closely with other agencies to ensure a joined up approach to homeless prevention.
- 11.12 Questionnaires were sent out to key partner agencies throughout the borough, seeking feedback on the Housing Solutions service, and suggestions for service improvement. A full version of the results can be found in Appendix 3.
- 11.13 Some of the key strengths of the Housing Solutions service were identified as:
- The accessibility of the team, and positive working relationships.
 - Quick response to seeing clients.
 - Accessible location.
 - Good personal housing plans and notification letters.
 - Good partnership approach.
 - Responsive to emails and calls.
 - One Stop approach and the range of services offered with various partner organisations (Shelter, CAB, SARTH etc).
 - Assisting tenants with access to the private rented sector – lettings agency with no application fees and working with landlords who will accept benefit claimants.
 - Clients seen promptly and for the most part, helped by Housing Solutions.
 - Staff are very capable, professional, customer focused and willing to go the extra mile for their clients.
- 11.14 The following areas for improvement were cited:
- Greater capacity - Housing Solutions Officers appear to have large workloads and the service could do with more officers to meet the demands on the service.

- More hands on help to practically find accommodation where the client faces multiple barriers i.e. poor credit, housing benefit claimant etc.
- More resources.
- Wider range of emergency/temporary accommodation.
- Tenancy support and tenancy sustainment.

11.15 The following barriers were identified in accessing the Housing Solutions service:

- Location of the service means many may have to travel to access it.
- Difficulty getting for customers getting through to the service on the phone.
- Some customers report delays in getting an assessment after completing a first contact.
- Some single people report a lack of assistance generally.
- Difficulty to access face to face services due to poor transport links and parking difficulties.
- Lack of awareness of the service – no prominent signage on the building.
- Client's lack of awareness of the service.

11.16 In response to what more can be done to prevent homelessness in Conwy, the following were suggested:

- Improved communication and information regarding clients in order to make a suitable and sustainable let.
- More family and general needs provision.
- More floating support.
- Complex needs scheme.
- A rent guarantee scheme, whereby the Council guarantees the rent for 6 months for people who struggle to get a tenancy due to poor credit, previous arrears, vulnerability etc.
- High intensity/greater support to help people find accommodation.
- Change prevention fund payments to a grant rather than a loan.
- Specialist support for hoarding.
- Access for clients to a budgeting tool to enable them to work out whether they can afford to live in a particular property.

11.17 Partner organisations felt that the following additional services should be provided to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness:

- A greater investment in Floating Support as these services have reduced / disappeared due to funding cuts. These types of service are invaluable and a relatively small investment at the front end can save a far greater amount when dealing with increasing numbers of homeless people and greater pressures on Social Service Teams.

- Night shelter service/provision for rough sleepers.
- Emergency accommodation for single homeless.
- Mother and baby unit.
- Drop in local services in various areas of Conwy.
- Temporary accommodation other than B&B.
- Supported family accommodation for families with high needs.
- More generic supported accommodation.
- Need for greater supported housing provision together with better support for people leaving supported housing (provision of tenancy training, furniture package etc.).
- More co-located joined up services.

11.18 Partners cited the following concerns and issues in relation to future levels of homelessness:

- Roll out of Universal Credit in June 2018 will lead to increase in rent arrears/possession cases.
- Roll out of Universal Credit likely to impact on the number of private landlords willing to rent to benefit dependent households.
- A minor hike in interest rates might push people who are just about managing into mortgage arrears.

What do customers think of our service?

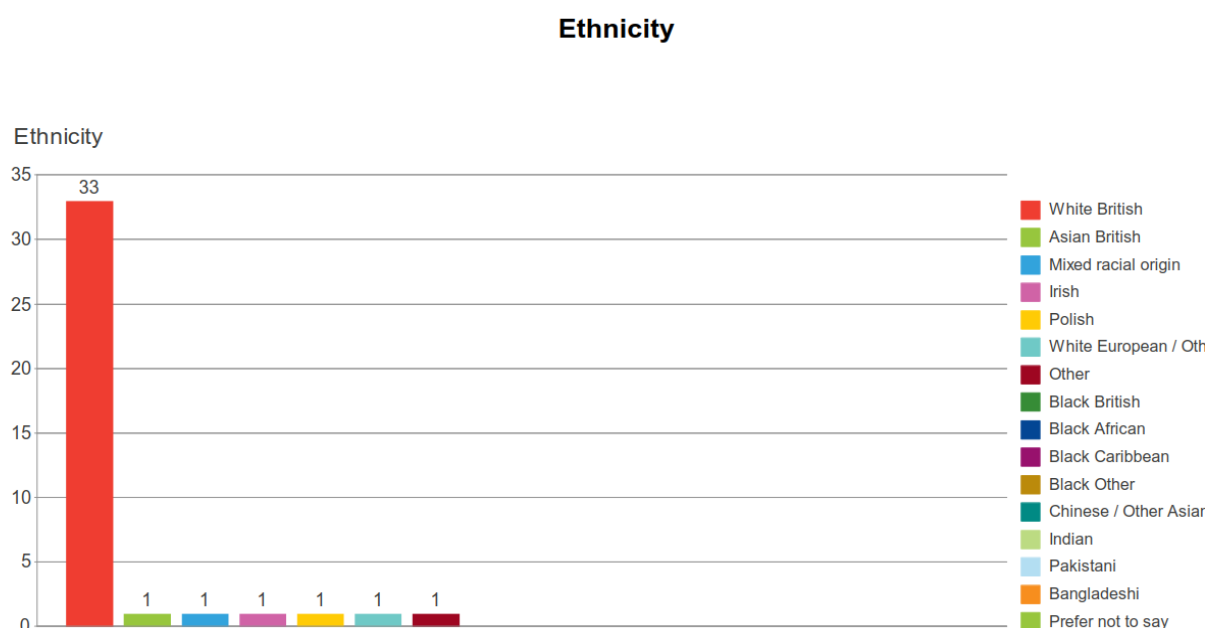
11.19 Consultation with individuals who are either currently homeless or had experienced homelessness in the past is vital to the review, and the results will be used to improve existing services and develop new ones where appropriate.

Online Questionnaire

11.20 An online questionnaire was made available to service users and ran for a month in November and December 2017. A total of 39 questionnaires were completed.

11.21 The key findings are detailed below. A full report detailing the consultation responses can be found in appendix 4.

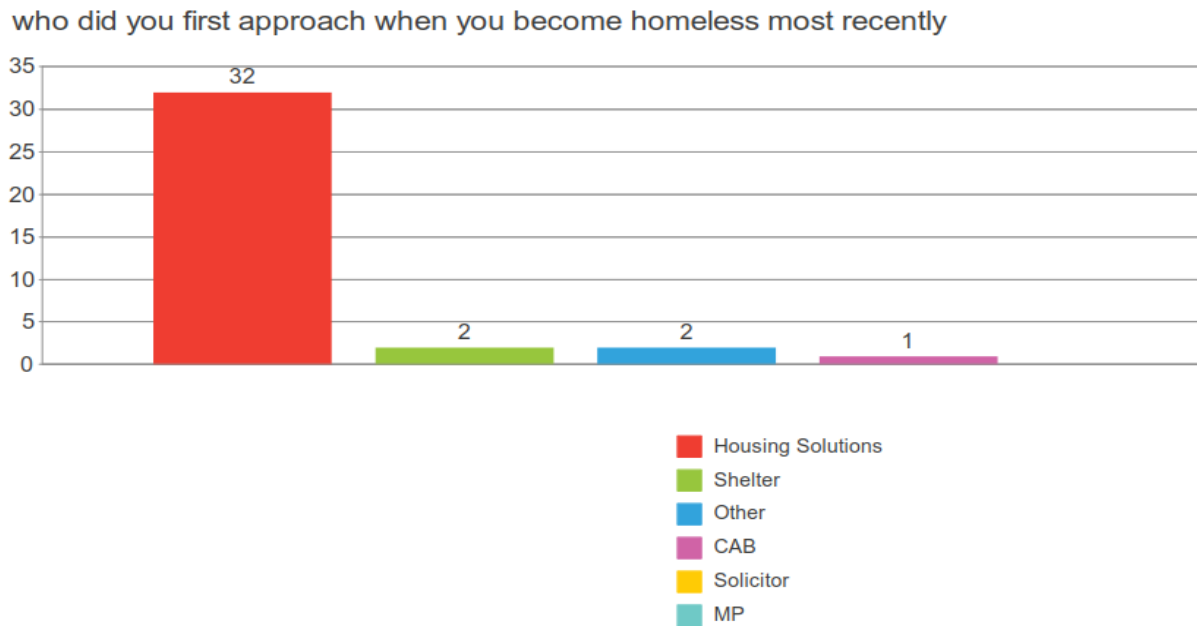
11.22 Of the citizens that responded, 50% were female. 24% of respondents were aged 55-64 years, 21% were aged 35-44 years, 16% were aged between 26-35 years, and 16% were aged 18-25 years. The ethnicity of respondents is detailed in the graph below, 87% were White British.

Chart 11.1 Ethnicity of respondents

- 11.23 The majority of respondents were single people (63%), followed by single parents (16%) and couples with children (16%).

Homelessness

- 11.24 In response to the question have you ever been homeless before, a total of 39 respondents responded to this question of which 21 had not been homeless before and 18 had previously been homeless.
- 11.25 46% of respondents had previously been homeless, this may indicate an issue of repeat homelessness in Conwy. This may be an indication of the following; that the accommodation being accessed by individuals may not be suitable for their needs, that underlying issues causing homelessness are not being addressed, people are not being referred to support, or services are not successfully supporting people to sustain accommodation. Further work will need to be undertaken to identify the scale of repeat homelessness, and the causes.
- 11.26 Of the customers who had been homeless before, only 4 gave the reason for their former homelessness; 3 had become homeless due to relationship breakdown and the remaining customer became homeless due to family/friends evicting. 6 customers answered the question had they sought help from Housing Solutions when they were previously homeless; 2 customers responded that they had, of these 1 stated that they had had a positive experience.
- 11.27 36 customers answered the questions had they ever slept rough in the past, of these 8 (22%) answered that they had slept rough in the past.
- 11.28 The graph below shows who customers approached in the first instance when they became homeless most recently.

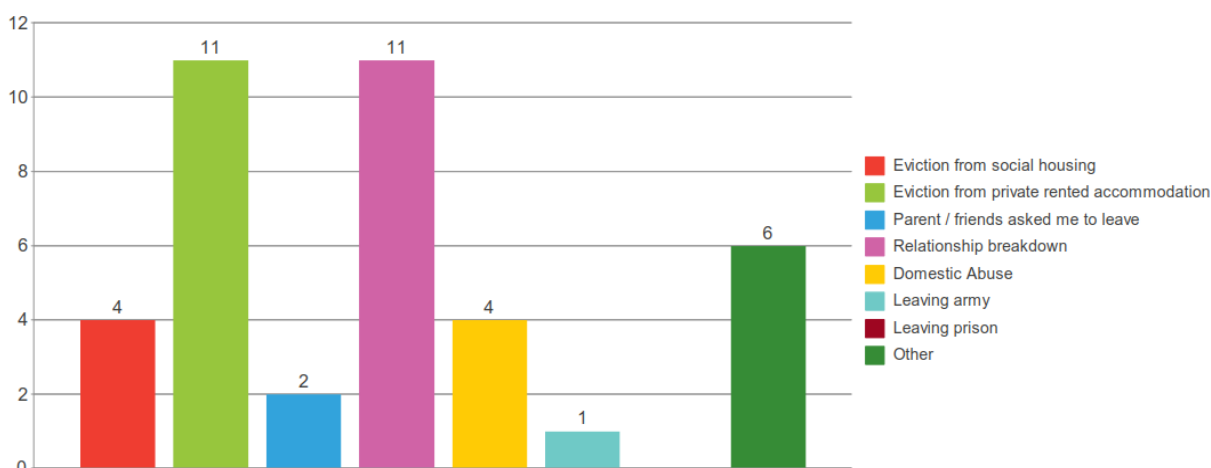
Chart 11.2 Who did you first approach when you become homeless?

11.29 The majority of respondents first approached Housing Solutions when they were homeless or threatened with homelessness (86%), followed by Shelter (5%).

11.30 The reasons for homelessness are detailed in the following graph. The main causes of homelessness cited were due to eviction from private rented accommodation (28%) and relationship breakdown (28%). Other main causes of homelessness included eviction from social housing (10%) and domestic abuse (10%). This mirrors the main causes of homelessness identified through the Welsh Government returns.

Chart 11.3 What caused your homelessness?

What caused your homelessness this time?

*Advice Received*

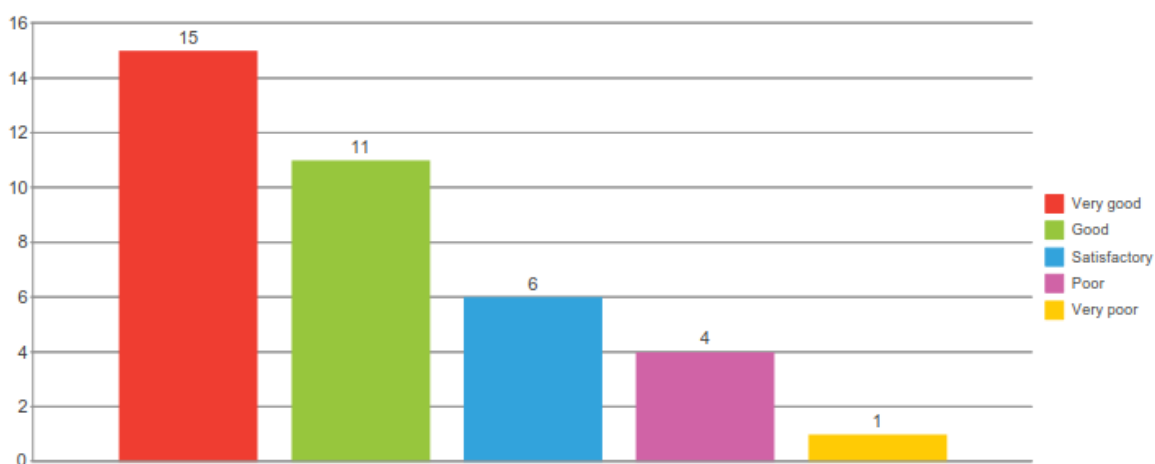
- 11.31 38 customers responded to the question did the service meet your expectations, 74% of customers stated that their expectations were met. Customers were asked what their expectations were, 13 clients responded that they expected help in getting accommodation, although only 4 customers specifically stated that they expected social housing.

Quality of Service Provided

- 11.32 Customers were asked to rate the service that they received from the Housing Solutions service; responses are detailed in the graph below.

Chart 11.4 How would you rate Housing Solutions?

How would you rate the service from Housing Solutions?



- 11.33 37 customers responded to this question, and the majority rated the service as either good or very good (70%), 14% of customers rated the service as poor or very poor.

- 11.34 Of the customers that responded to the following questions 84% felt that they had received clear information and advice about the services available.
- 11.35 In relation to Housing Solutions staff, 95% of respondents found the staff knowledgeable and 92% found the staff to be helpful and kind.
- 11.36 78% of respondents felt that they received enough information. However, 53% of respondents did not feel that they were kept informed of what was going on. Ongoing communication and regular contact with customers is essential and will need to be built into case management processes. The use of technology, including text messages and social media, may provide opportunities for doing this, with a reduced impact upon staff resources.
- 11.37 Customers were asked that if they were threatened with homelessness, were they provided with a full housing assessment and a personal housing plan. 79% of customers responded that this had happened.

Prevention of Homelessness

- 11.38 Customers were asked if the service prevented them from becoming homeless; 38 respondents answered this question, of which 50% of respondents answered yes to this question.
- 11.39 64% of customers stated that the service helped them to find alternative accommodation; this included the provision of temporary accommodation.
- 11.40 Clients were asked what extra help or services could have prevented them from becoming homeless, 12 customers responded to this question and their responses included; nothing/not sure (6), money to pay arrears (2), landlord negotiation (1), domestic abuse support (1), more social and private rented housing (1) and being able to remain in the accommodation after parent died (1).
- 11.41 Clients were also asked if there was anything they could have done themselves to prevent their own homelessness, 30 clients responded to this question, of which 93% felt that they could not have done anything.
- 11.42 Customers were asked what could be done to improve the service offered by the Housing Solutions team. Responses included more ongoing contact from the team, this was cited by 5 respondents, 3 respondents stated the need for more staff and resources to deal with the demand, 1 client wanted face to face contact, and 1 customer cited the need for improved communication between staff member. 1 client felt that the processes and paperwork were complicated. In relation to access to accommodation 2 clients stated there was a need for more social housing and 2 stated that there was a need for more emergency accommodation/hostel. 8 customers either felt that nothing was needed to improve the service or were unsure what more could be done.

11.43 Some of the individual responses are shown in the below.

"The team did everything they could to help me, but I was frustrated by the lack of emergency accommodation near to my family and children's school."

"More contact from housing officer."

"We think it could be improved by getting a hostel in Llandudno, lots of street homeless in Llandudno."

"Make things easier, too complicated and not enough houses for everyone."

"Too many people for the staff to deal with so it can be hard to get hold of them, and sometimes I didn't know what was happening."

"Excellent service."

Temporary Accommodation

11.44 Only 15 respondents completed the questions in relation to temporary accommodation.

11.45 Of these, 4 had been placed in B&B accommodation; 3 of these clients felt it was suitable for their needs, the remaining client did not answer this question.

11.46 In relation to the standard of the B&B accommodation, 1 client rated it as very good and 1 rated it as satisfactory, no clients stated that they had to move away from support when moving into B&B.

11.47 8 clients stated that they were provided with temporary accommodation, only 2 clients responded to the question on suitability of the accommodation, both of whom found the accommodation to be suitable for their needs, although one client had to move their children to a different school as a result of going into temporary accommodation.

11.48 Whilst in temporary accommodation 2 clients felt the team kept them up to date with their case and 2 did not. Of the 4 clients that responded to the question, all felt that they received adequate support whilst in temporary accommodation.

11.49 Clients were given the opportunity to make further comments in relation to the service, these are summarised in the box below.

"Need more help, not enough staff for everyone."

"Overall a good experience. Could have done with more updates."

"Moved on to supported accommodation, great job."

"You were brilliant."

"Thank you, very grateful."

"I was prevented from becoming homeless but found the system stressful to deal with as my officer was so busy all the time. But she did her job at the end of the day and we didn't become homeless."

"Lovely officers, very kind."

Telephone Survey

- 11.50 In addition to the online questionnaire 20 telephone interviews were conducted with current and former service users to understand in more depth about their experiences of homelessness and the services that they had received.
- 11.51 The full results of this consultation can be found in appendix 5, the key findings are detailed below.
- 11.52 Telephone interviews were conducted in December 2017 with customers who had used Conwy Housing Solutions service during 2016/17, this included customers to whom the Council had accepted a S66 duty, S73 duty, S75 duty, customers placed in temporary accommodation, and cases where the Council had made a no priority need decision. It included a range of open and closed cases.
- 11.53 Of the customers interviewed 65% were female. 90% of customers interviewed were White British, one customer described their ethnicity as Moroccan/Arabic. For the remaining customer this question was not asked as the customer became upset during the interview and it was jointly agreed to not continue the interview. 35% of customers interviewed were aged between 35-44 years, and 25% were aged 25-34 years.
- 11.54 The majority of clients interviewed were single people (40%), followed by single parents (35%). Of the clients interviewed, 6 were accommodated in temporary accommodation, 6 were closed cases, 5 were open S66 duty cases, 2 were open S73 duty cases and 1 was a S75 duty temporary accommodation case.

Homelessness

- 11.55 In response to the question have you ever been homeless before a total of 3 customers had been homeless in the past. The reasons for being homeless previously included loss of private rented accommodation (2) and relationship breakdown (1). Of these, 2 had approached Conwy Housing Solutions, 1 customer stated that they had a positive experience with the service and 1 stated the experience had not been positive. The level of repeat homelessness identified through the telephone interviews was much lower than that identified through the customer online survey.
- 11.56 90% of the customers interviewed contacted Housing Solutions when they became homeless. The remaining 2 clients approached friends and private landlords prior to contacting the Council.
- 11.57 The main causes of homelessness identified were relationship breakdown followed by loss of private rented accommodation. Other reasons cited included that the accommodation was unsuitable, private rented sector disrepair (2 cases), fleeing violence (2 cases), ran out of money, bereavement, social housing unsafe and pregnancy.

Quality of Service Provided

- 11.58 Customers were asked to rate the service that they received from the Housing Solutions service; responses are detailed in the table below.

Table 11.1 Service Received from Housing Solutions	
Very good	11
Good	2
Satisfactory	2
Poor	0
Very poor	5
Total	20

- 11.59 65% of respondents rated the service as either very good or good, with 25% of respondents rating the service as very poor. Of the 5 customers that rated the service as very poor, 4 of these were single people who were not accommodated as they were not in priority need.
- 11.60 Customers were invited to comment on the service received, there were mixed responses from customers about their experience. A significant number spoke very positively about their experience, describing the Housing Solutions service as “very good,” “off the scale excellent” and “helpful.” While other customers spoke about receiving a mixed service, with staff not remaining in contact regularly or keeping them informed, with the words “abrupt,” and “lacking empathy” used to describe staff members. One customer felt that the service did nothing until they actually became homeless, when work could have been done during the notice period. Specific comments from customers are detailed in the box below.

“I was very grateful for the help that they gave me. I couldn't have asked for more.”

“The service I received was very good, I was really satisfied.”

“The service from the whole of the Housing Solutions team has been off the scale excellent. They helped me to find private rented accommodation, and once I was moved in they rang me to see if I was settled and helped me set up gas and electricity. They went above and beyond. I also explained that I was dyslexic and the officer broke down each stage and explained it for me.”

“I was advised that I could remain in the Council tenancy with my wife for 56 days. I didn't hear anything from her for 2 weeks. I had to keep chasing her. No one replied to my telephone messages. She only contacted me 2 days prior to me becoming homeless.....The service is a shambles, it was diabolical.”

“Some staff can sometimes be abrupt.”

“They said there was nothing they could do to help. They never gave me any real help or any help finding accommodation. I found the members of staff to be very matter of fact and a bit blasé, not empathetic.”

“They didn't stay in touch with me, I had to keep going there for updates.”

- 11.61 Customers were asked if the service had met their expectations; 14 responded that the service had met their expectations, 5 stated if had not, and 1 responded that their expectations were partly met.
- 11.62 Customers stated that they had expected more help and advice in finding somewhere to live, another stated they expected a helping hand; 2 customers stated the service had exceeded their expectations.
- 11.63 Customers were asked if they had had received clear information and advice about the services available, 17 (85%) responded that they had.
- 11.64 In relation to Housing Solutions staff 17 customers (85%) found the staff knowledgeable and 17 (85%) found the staff to be helpful and kind.
- 11.65 13 of the customers (65%) felt that they were kept informed of what was going on, 7 customers felt the service had failed to keep in contact with them. Comments were made that the customers often felt that they had to do the chasing to find out what was happening with their case and that telephone messages were not responded to.
- 11.66 Customers were asked that if they were threatened with homelessness, were they provided with a full housing assessment and a personal housing plan. 15 (75%) of customers responded that this had happened.

Prevention of Homelessness

- 11.67 Clients were asked if the service had prevented them from becoming homeless, only 3 customers stated that the service had prevented them from becoming homeless, a further one case was ongoing.
- 11.68 12 of the customers stated that the service helped them to find alternative accommodation; for 6 clients this was temporary accommodation, and 6 had been helped to find permanent accommodation.
- 11.69 Clients were asked what help or services could have prevented them from becoming homeless in the first place. The majority of customers who became homeless did not feel that their homelessness could have been prevented, by either other services or themselves. Two customers became homeless following release from prison and both felt that given their release date was known in advance more work should have happened prior to release to find accommodation.

“Work when I was in prison, I never got any housing advice in prison. I then went into a probation hostel for 11 weeks, and again nothing was done then.”

“Plans in place for when people are released from prison so they don't become homeless.”

Improving services

- 11.70 Customers were asked what could be done to improve the existing services, the responses are detailed below. Many customers felt that nothing needed to be done to improve the service, however other customers suggested that the service could provide

more hands on support in finding accommodation, others suggested that the service needed to stay in touch with customers more regularly. One customer felt that more empathy was needed.

- 11.71 Two customers raised the issues of moving into unfurnished accommodation and the impact this had on them and their families. It was suggested that either they were given more time to prepare to move, or that furniture packages should be provided. One customer stated a hostel was needed in Conwy.

“Nothing, there’s no way you can improve on excellence.”

“Should give you time to get your stuff together and get furniture sorted before you move into permanent accommodation. I only signed for the flat on Monday and today (Thursday) I have the keys, but I have no furniture or cooker. Would be good to have time to sort furniture or be provided with a furniture package.”

“Stay in touch with people when they’re in temporary accommodation and keep them informed about when they’re going to be rehoused.”

“The Council could provide more information, more help, stay in touch, returning phone calls as a minimum.”

“They could show more understanding and be willing to try and help. They need to work to try and prevent homelessness. There should be a plan in place when coming out of prison. My release date was known but nothing was put in place. Also need a hostel in Conwy for emergencies.”

Bed & Breakfast

- 11.72 Of the customers interviewed 9 had been placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. 7 of these households felt it was suitable for their needs. For the 2 households that found the accommodation to be unsuitable this was based on sharing a room with all family members, sharing bathrooms and the lack of cooking facilities.
- 11.73 A couple of households stated that the B&B accommodation was fantastic and the manager was really kind.

“We only had 1 room for me and the three children, we had to share a bathroom and there was no cooking facilities. Luckily we were only there for a week.”

- 11.74 In relation to the standard of the B&B accommodation, 4 households rated it as very good, 1 households as good, 3 households rated it as satisfactory and 1 rated it as very poor. 2 of the households placed into emergency accommodation felt that the placement had resulted in them having to give up work, change children’s schools or affect any other support that they received, however both stated they would have had to have done this anyway due to their homeless situation.

Temporary Accommodation

- 11.75 Of the customers interviewed 6 had been placed in temporary accommodation. All of these clients felt the accommodation was suitable for their needs. A couple of customers stated that they were extremely happy with their accommodation and would like to stay there permanently. 5 customers rated the accommodation as very good and 1 rated it as good.
- 11.76 However, one customer did raise concerns that he had been in temporary accommodation for a very long time and felt that he had been forgotten about.

"Initially the service was very good. I couldn't fault it. However I have been in my temporary accommodation for 3.5 years now, and feel like the service have forgotten about me."

"The temporary accommodation is awesome I wish we could stay here."

"The service has helped me, I wish I could continue to live in my temporary accommodation as we are settled here."

- 11.77 Only one of the households placed into temporary accommodation felt that the placement had resulted in them having to give up work, change children's schools or affect any other support that they received.

"Difficult as children had to change school, I am really afraid that they will have to move again when I am permanently rehoused. I really want us all to be settled."

- 11.78 Customers were also asked if they felt that they were provided with adequate support whilst in temporary accommodation, 5 customers stated that they were, with 1 client feeling that they were not receiving adequate support.
- 11.79 Of the households placed in temporary accommodation 6 felt that they were kept up to date on their case and prospects for being rehoused by Housing Options, 1 customer felt that the service had not kept them up to date.
- 11.80 The table below details other comments made by customers during the telephone interview in relation to the overall service received.

"Everybody was fantastic and helped and supported me all the way through."

"I am very happy in the temporary accommodation, we have been here for 2 years and I feel we are now beginning to recover. The children have progressed and I have got a job. My Housing Solutions officer was great, I had a personal connection with her and it was really good to be able to speak to someone"

"My Housing Solutions Officer has been amazing, she's been able to sort any problems out I have some debt problems and she's referred me to the CAB."

"My only concern is having to keep moving to different accommodation, I have a disability so it makes it difficult to keep packing and unpacking. I also suffer with stress and anxiety so really need stable accommodation to reduce the anxiety"

"I am not getting support from anyone, I am drinking too much and am grieving but getting no support."

"Diabolical service, felt as I was working and a single male I was treated as if I was at the bottom of the list for any kind of help."

"I understand there is a long wait for Council housing, but it would be nice if there was more council housing."

Homelessness Forum

- 11.81 The Homelessness Forum was re-launched in November 2017, and the first meeting was used to consult with a range of partner organisations. Four key themes were identified as emerging issues based on early statistical analysis. Attendees were asked a series of questions regarding each theme.
- 11.82 A summary of the responses is detailed below, the full responses can be found in appendix 6.

Homeless Prevention

- 11.83 A number of gaps were identified in Service provision across Conwy, these included the need for more supported accommodation (generic and specialist), the needs for direct access provision to respond to the increasing number of rough sleepers and improved access to private rented accommodation including support for landlords.
- 11.84 In order to be able to better prevent homelessness locally it was identified that there was a need for all agencies to work effectively together with a greater understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, including establishing better links with the job centres.

Rough Sleeping

- 11.85 There is no accurate understanding of rough sleeping across the County, with a view that the official count carried out in November doesn't accurately reflect the true level of rough sleeping due to the fact that more people sleep rough in Conwy during the summer months, many rough sleepers will disappear from the streets on the night of the count, and the official count is unable to fully cover rural areas.
- 11.86 It was identified that there is a need to develop an intelligence based understanding of the true level of rough sleeping across the County. There was no or little knowledge of the national Street Link number amongst partner agencies and the wider public.

- 11.87 There was a strong consensus that there was a need for both direct access provision/night shelter and an effective and assertive outreach service.
- 11.88 It was also identified that there was a need for a targeted preventative approach for clients at risk of sleeping rough. i.e. armed forces, prison, hospital.

Customer Expectation

- 11.89 It was widely agreed that customers, and to a lesser extent, many partners, had unrealistic expectations regarding the housing options available, particularly in relation to social housing.
- 11.90 In order to better manage customer expectation there is a need to ensure more information is available for both partners and customers, including data regarding the availability of social housing.
- 11.91 There was a view that services should move towards multi-agency personal plans that follow people around and have links to wider range of services not multiple plans for different agendas, this would enable a more joined up approach, and consistent messages being delivered.

Affordability

- 11.92 In order to ensure that social housing remains affordable to those who need it there is a need to consider innovative design and construction models i.e. Zed pods. There is also a need to ensure that the existing social housing stock is used effectively to accommodate those in need, including addressing under-occupation, and renting out spare rooms. The workshop agreed that there was a need for shared housing, alongside the need to review service charges to identify more affordable models.
- 11.93 The group identified the following in order to make private rented accommodation accessible; management of private rented properties by Housing Association partners, private rented incentive schemes that will attract landlords, and reduce the risk associated with Universal Credit, pre-tenancy training for tenants, bonds throughout the life of the tenancy and support for landlords.

Chapter Summary and Recommendations

Consultation – Identified Issues & Gaps

- There is a need to raise awareness of the work of the Housing Solutions service with both customers and partners.
- Partnership working needs to be improved in some areas with some key partners including mental health services and adult social care.
- There is a need to improve access to affordable private rented accommodation, including options for single people under the age of 35 year, including an attractive landlord incentive scheme.
- There is a need to better manage client expectation; partners have a key role to play in this.
- A need for more supported accommodation was identified by frontline staff and supported by partners, including the need for direct access provision and an outreach service
- There is a need for a better joined up response in responding to clients with complex needs, to ensure that support is in place to resolve the underlying medical and support needs.
- There is a need to promote the Street Link number to both partners and the public
- Stakeholder feel that the social housing should be used more effectively to meet those in the greatest housing need, this included addressing under-occupation and reviewing the allocations policy to consider implementing an income restriction for those that can afford other housing options.
- Customer consultation responses indicate an issue of repeat homelessness, this will need to be explored in more detail to understand the issue and causes of this. It will be essential to ensure that customers are supported to develop the necessary skills to sustain tenancies.
- Customer consultation responses indicate that a significant proportion of customers did not feel that they were kept informed about their case by Housing Solutions. Ongoing communication and regular contact with customers is essential and will need to be built into case management processes. The use of technology may be able to support staff with this, reducing the impact upon resources.
- Customers consultation responses recognised the shortage of staff resources in being able to meet the demands on the service, and the impact that this then had on the customer experience.
- Customer consultation responses identified that prevention work was not happening pre-release in prisons, resulting in ex-offenders being released from prison as homeless.
- Customer consultation responses were very positive in relation to the standard of temporary accommodation, with some customers wishing to remain in this accommodation. Flexible accommodation options may need to be considered whereby the accommodation provided as temporary could become the permanent offer. A need for furniture packages was also identified

12. Resources

- 12.1 The advice and accommodation providers listed in the above sections are all important resources in assisting in providing homeless services and homeless prevention. However, it is currently impossible to put a financial figure on all of the resources available as they are spread across many services and often services are not dedicated solely to homeless people.
- 12.2 The following budgets have been identified as contributing directly to the prevention of homelessness and the provision of homelessness services.

Housing Solutions Budget

- 12.3 The budget for the Council's Housing Solutions service is set on an annual basis.

Table 12.1 Housing Solutions budget	
2017/18	£
Housing Solutions	230,110
Emergency Accommodation	360,000
Leasehold Accommodation	616,000
PSL Deposit/Prevention fund	28,000
Gross Budget	£815,110
Income Projected for Emergency Accommodation	£135,000
Income Projected for Leasehold Accommodation	£284,000
Projected Income	£419,000

Source: Housing Solutions Budget

Prevention staff are partial funded through the Supporting People budget. The service receives £251,960 for Housing Solutions Officers. In addition to this Supporting People fund the tenancy liaison team which is integrated into the Conwy Housing Solutions service (£197,180).

Transitional grant funding (TGF)

- 12.4 To facilitate the introduction of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 transitional grant funding was allocated to support the implementation of the Homeless provisions within the Act.
- 12.5 For the period 1/4/15-31/3 /18 Conwy has received £431,365 (Yr1 £210,385 / Yr2 £114,300 / Yr3 £106,680) which has been utilised for the following: provision of an in house debt advice service; an increased prevention fund; additional staff resources to mitigate the increase in demand and workload; regional and sub-regional projects (Regional Reviewing Officer and Prison Link Officer) and generally increasing access into the private rented sector. An additional £50,000 has recently been made available which must be spent by 31/3/18. This funding is to be used to undertake research into a Housing First Model (jointly with Denbighshire), Landlord incentives and young persons' services.

- 12.6 Although Transitional Funding has ended, an additional award of Homeless Prevention Grant is to be allocated for 2018-2019. Initial indications for Conwy are of an award of £106,680 which is the same value as the 3rd and final year of Transitional Funding (2017-2018).
- 12.7 This funding has been identified as 1 of 10 funding streams linked to the Flexible Funding Pathfinder Initiative. Conwy is 1 of 7 Local authorities selected as Pathfinder Areas for 2017-2018 onwards.
- 12.8 The Full Flexibility pathfinder will give 100% flexibility across grants in order to achieve increased programme alignment, make more effective use of funding and meet local needs. This greater financial freedom and flexibility is expected to enable pilot areas to work differently, giving more scope to design services to support the Government's drive for more preventative, long-term approaches.

Grants under consideration for Funding Flexibility 2018/19

- Supporting People
 - Flying Start
 - Families First
 - Communities First Legacy Fund
 - Employability Grant
 - Promoting Positive Engagement for Young People
 - Out of School Childcare
 - Homelessness Prevention
 - Independent Living
 - St David's Day Fund
- 12.9 The transitional funding will become part of the Flexible Funding Pathway in Conwy in 2018/19.

Supporting People

- 12.10 Supporting People has a budget £6,452,534, which funds a range of homeless prevention services, including supported accommodation and floating support.
- 12.11 Welsh Government has indicated that the budget will be protected for the next two years.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)

- 12.12 The table below details the DHP allocation and spend over the last three financial years.
- 12.13 The allocation for 2017/18 is £230,668

Table 12.2 DHP allocation and spend

Year	Allocation	Spend
2014/15	£217,097	£215,664
2015/16	£153,656	£152,836
2016/17	£193,913	£193,607

Source: Conwy Housing Benefit

12.14 In all of the years detailed above the DHP budget was fully allocated, but not all payments were released before year end.

12.15 The following services are funded by Welsh Government through Homeless Prevention Funding (formerly known as s180 funding)

Table 12.3 Welsh Government Homeless Prevention funded projects

Local scheme organisation	Description
NACRO	Conwy & Denbighshire Bond Scheme
NACRO	Conwy Resettlement Service
Grwp Cynefin	Going it Alone - Youth Homelessness

Source: Conwy Housing Solutions

Making the Best use of Resources

12.16 All available public, private and third sector resources need to be prioritised and targeted in a coordinated fashion to allow maximum impact and effectiveness in tackling homelessness.

12.17 Conwy will be one of the Flexible Funding Pathway areas. The Flexible Funding Pathway provides an opportunity to jointly align funding and provide a joined up and holistic approach to preventing homelessness and its underlying causes. However, there is also an identified risk that the demands on this funding pathway from other services (including adult social care) may jeopardise the funding of homeless prevention services.

13. Future Trends

- 13.1 Whilst there has been considerable success in preventing homelessness in Conwy, there are many factors which potentially may have an effect on the number of people faced with homelessness. It is important that these are recognised and, wherever possible, services enhanced to minimise the negative effect of each of the factors.
- 13.2 The following factors have been identified as having a potential impact upon the number of people in Conwy who may become homeless or threatened with homelessness over the next few years:
- The continuing impact of the economic climate, financial pressures and personal debt.
 - Financial pressures on local government budgets and homelessness services, including uncertainty regarding on-going Homeless Transitional Funding Grants.
 - Many of the services which sustain people in their own tenancies or provide alternative accommodation options are funded through Supporting People. It is important to recognise that any reductions in funding would have a significant impact on future levels of homelessness.
 - Reducing numbers of social rented housing through historic right to buy sales coupled with a reduction of void levels could result in less available accommodation for those on the housing register.
 - The lack of one-bedroom accommodation, and in particular affordable housing options for under 35 year olds, is likely to lead to an increase in young single people being unable to resolve their own housing issues. This will result in an increased demand from this customer group on the Housing Solutions service and other support and advice services.
 - Welfare Reform has already begun to have an impact upon homelessness levels, and it is likely that the further welfare reforms, including the introduction of Universal Credit will continue to impact upon individual's ability to meet their housing costs.
 - In particular the roll out of Universal Credit in Conwy will mean that for households reliant on benefits to pay their rent once transferred on to Universal credit there will be a 6 week delay. This will result in rent arrears and potentially lead to an increase in evictions, as has been witnessed in other areas of England and Wales. 53.4% of Conwy's working age benefit applicants will lose out when they transfer to Universal Credit.
 - There may be an on-going increase in evictions by housing providers due to rent arrears as a result of Welfare Reform, particularly once Universal Credit is rolled out.
 - Ongoing financial pressures on households may lead to overcrowding and breakdown in family relationships.
 - An aging population will require appropriate housing and support to prevent an increase in homelessness amongst older households.

- The national increase in the prison population increases the risk of people losing their home whilst in custody.
- The new prison in Wrexham will begin to release prisoners in 2018, this is likely to result in an increase in prison leavers accessing service provision in Conwy.
- Rent Smart Wales – the increased requirements of landlords, may continue to result in some landlords, including smaller scale, or ‘accidental’ landlords choosing to sell their properties, reducing the number of private rented properties available for Housing solution clients.
- Wilfa Newydd will generate additional housing demand from up to 11,700 construction workers at its peak in the mid-2020s. There will be a significant requirement for additional housing over the build period and beyond which is likely to impact on the most vulnerable and cause potential displacement in the private rented sector.
- Affordability issues and the very limited access to private rented accommodation, including shared accommodation options, makes it increasingly more and more difficult for the Housing Solutions service to be able to find affordable and sustainable housing options for clients. Unless affordable accommodation is available it is anticipated that homelessness will continue to increase.
- The high caseloads of the Housing Solutions service are currently unmanageable and impact upon the service’s ability to effectively prevent or relief homelessness. If this continues both homelessness and placements into temporary accommodation will increase.
- The removal of intentionality for homeless families by 2019 will have an impact on services, with the need to find suitable accommodation options for families with often complex and multiple needs, and a poor tenancy history, placing a demand on the Housing Solutions team.
- An increase in mortgage rates would result in an increase in people unable to meet their mortgage payments, with a likely increase in repossessions, including both home-owners and buy to let landlords.
- The end of interest only mortgages - the Financial Conduct Authority estimates that 600,000 interest-only mortgages will have reached the end of their term by 2020 – and half of those borrowers have no means to pay back the debt. A third of the shortfalls are expected to be more than £50,000.

14. Key Findings

14.1 The Homelessness Review has identified the following key issues, which will need to be addressed within the Homelessness Strategy.

- Owner-occupation is the dominant tenure within Conwy. However, accessing this tenure has become increasingly difficult given house price increases over the past few years, with a house price affordability ratio in 2017 of 6.05, compared with 5.42 in Wales.
- The social rented sector plays a vital role in providing affordable accommodation in Conwy. However, the overall proportion of social rented stock is lower than the national average and the number of lettings made to new tenants is far outweighed by the number of households on the Housing Register, this is particularly the case for single person accommodation.
- The private rented sector is the second biggest tenure in Conwy and plays an important role in providing accommodation for a variety of households and income groups who cannot access owner occupation or social renting. Access to the private rented sector is frequently used to prevent homelessness. However, loss of private rented accommodation is the main cause of homelessness in Conwy. It is becoming increasingly more difficult for Housing Solution's customer to access private rented accommodation, this is in part due to affordability, a competitive market, and reluctance from landlords to accept tenants in receipt of benefits.
- Affordability is a significant issue within parts of Conwy 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 Local Housing Market Housing Assessment has identified Conwy needs 172 social rented properties to be developed annually.
- The main causes of homelessness in Conwy are:
 - Loss of rented or tied accommodation
 - Parents and relatives no longer willing to accommodate,
 - Relationship breakdown
 - Domestic Abuse
 - Leaving prison
- A range of prevention tools need to be developed against all main causes of homelessness is to be successfully prevented.
- Conwy Housing Solutions is an effective partnership model and provides customers with access to a range of housing and advice services under one roof. The service provides a high quality service to customers, and has effective systems, tools, policies and procedures in place.
- There is an increasing demand on the Housing Solutions service following the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. An increasing number of

households are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Conwy. Evidence throughout the Review suggests that this increase will continue.

- The current caseload size of Housing Solutions Officers is unmanageable and not sustainable in the long term. The high caseloads are impacting upon the team's ability to successfully prevent and relieve homelessness, with the inevitable impact this then has on the level of B&B and temporary accommodation placements. There is a need to review caseloads, structure and resources to ensure that caseloads remain at a manageable level and opportunities for effective prevention are maximised.
- The Housing Solutions service is able to both successfully prevent and relieve homelessness, and the number of successful outcomes increased significantly in 2016/17.
- There is a need to ensure that the Housing Solutions team is able to more effectively prevent homelessness by helping people to remain in their existing accommodation.
- Loss of Private Rented Accommodation - there is a need to ensure that there is a more targeted approach to preventing people losing their home in the private rented sector. Both landlords and tenants need to be able to access immediate support and advice as soon as difficulties arise in the tenancy. Landlord and tenant liaison/mediation alongside a dedicated resource to resolve any difficulties at the outset will provide an important prevention tool.
- Family/Friends Evicting- there is a need to ensure a more targeted and pro-active response for households who are being asked to leave by family or friends. Effective and timely mediation, together with home visits, and planned moves into alternative accommodation should be introduced. Greater use should be made of the existing mediation provision.
- Non-violent Relationship Breakdown - access to mediation services may assist in preventing homelessness and buying time to enable planned moves into alternative accommodation.
- Domestic Abuse - there is a need to raise awareness of the range of services available to people experiencing domestic abuse, including emergency provision and support, floating support, planned moves and target hardening.
- Prison Leavers - work will need to happen both nationally and locally to ensure that the Prisoner Pathway is working effectively and provides opportunities to find accommodation solutions prior to release.
- There are high numbers of households in temporary accommodation, and a high use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation. Work will need to be undertaken to reduce these numbers and ensure effective throughput and move on. It will also be necessary 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, including future projected demand, through the development of a temporary accommodation plan.

- To ensure efficient throughput of temporary accommodation there is a need for ongoing casework once households are accommodated and a S75 duty owed, together with a private sector offer policy.
- There are a very high proportion of single people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness (51% of Housing Solutions customers). Specific housing options and prevention solutions will need to be developed to meet the needs of single people. 70% of all customers owed a S73 duty were single, more work needs to be undertaken to understand the reason for this and ensure that prevention work is targeted accordingly.
- Young people are over-represented in the homelessness statistics and supporting people data, when compared with population 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 tackles the underlying causes of homelessness including 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.
- Many agencies contribute to tackling homelessness and to ensure early intervention and effective referral processes it will be necessary to work closely with these agencies and provide housing related training as appropriate.
- There are many examples of excellent partnership working to prevent homelessness, there is a need to continue to develop these partnerships and implement joint protocols. There is a need for a more joined up approach to early intervention and prevention with adult social care colleagues. This is particularly the case for responding to clients with complex needs to ensure the right support is in place to resolve the underlying medical and support needs.
- There are a very high number of complex cases, including both single people and families with multiple and challenging needs. The Housing Solution's 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.
- In response to the increasing number of single people with complex needs a range of innovative solutions need to be explored including Housing First.
- There is a need to increase awareness of the Housing Solutions Service and other services available across Conwy 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 is a need to ensure that customer's expectations in relation to housing are realistic through ensuring that information in relation to housing availability and options is easily available and accessible, including through online tools.
- There is an increasing number of people sleeping rough across Conwy as indicated by a number of data sources supported by consultation responses.

- There is a need for an effective and assertive outreach service to operate across Conwy to provide a rapid response to new rough sleepers and co-ordinate a multi-agency targeted approach to working with entrenched rough sleepers.
- There is a need for a commissioned direct access provision to ensure that accommodation is available for those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough. Alongside this there is a need to develop a No Second Night Out (NSNO) offer to ensure emergency accommodation is available to anyone found to be rough sleeping.
- There is also a need to develop a consistent service offer to Rough Sleepers, which challenges a street based lifestyle and engages with individuals to access services and stop rough sleeping, this includes a co-ordinated response with the charities currently offering drop-in services to rough sleepers across Conwy.
- There has been an increase in the number of evictions from social housing from 2014/15 due to rent arrears. It is essential that social housing tenants are able to access debt and money advice, and that referral pathways with Citizen's Advice Bureau should be fully utilised. The development and implementation of pre-eviction protocols is also essential, early referrals to Housing Solutions increase the likelihood of successful prevention outcomes.
- The impact of welfare reform set against a backdrop of a difficult economic climate 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 a 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.
- It has been identified that Welfare Reform will have a big impact in Conwy, it is estimated that 53.4% of Conwy's working age benefit applicants will lose out when they transfer to Universal Credit and will need transitional protection. 2,600 households will require transitional protection estimated to be in the sum of £3,371,494; 986 households have seen a high impact from the welfare reforms (loss of more than £30.00 per week). Private renters and lone parents make up the majority of this group. The Council will need to work in partnership with agencies, including Citizen's Advice Bureau and Shelter, to ensure that these households do not become homeless.
- The ending of automatic entitlement to the housing costs element of Universal Credit for unemployed 18–21 year olds is likely to lead to an increase in youth homelessness. Work will need to be done with a range of agencies to mitigate this risk, including working with the Young Person's Positive Pathway to keep young people at home where it is safe to do so, and enable them to access education, training and employment opportunities.
- There is a lack of affordable housing options for single people under the age of 35, especially for those individuals reliant on benefits. The shared room rate for under 35's, introduced in January 2012, has had an impact upon this and is a likely contributory factor in the high levels of homelessness amongst this age group.
- There is a need to maximise access to social housing for households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. There is a need to continue to review

the SARTH policy and partnership to ensure that it meets the needs of Housing Solutions Customers and Conwy County Borough Council's priorities.

- There is a need to develop a comprehensive landlord offer, that enables clients to not only access the private rented sector but to also successfully sustain this accommodation.
- There is a need to review the Social Lettings Agency offer to ensure that it attracts landlords and enables the Council to discharge its duty into the private rented sector.
- Data from the Housing Register and the Local Housing Market Assessment demonstrates a very high demand for single person accommodation, a demand that is not met through current supply.
- There is a need to develop a range of affordable housing options for single people under the age of 35; this may include lodging schemes, house shares and supported provision.
- The issues surrounding overcrowding and under-occupation for social housing tenants needs to be better understood.
- There are high levels of demand for supported accommodation. A formal needs assessment would provide a comprehensive understanding of the need for housing related support services across Conwy to inform a robust commissioning strategy.
- There is a need to further understand if the needs of individuals with complex and multiple issues are able to access current supported provision, or if there is a need for a different approach. There is also a need to better understand the reasons for exclusions and evictions from supported provision.
- The support needs of families with children need to be considered and addressed especially while in temporary accommodation.
- There is a range of organisations, including voluntary organisations, providing services for people who are homeless and in need. There is a need to work with these organisations to ensure a consistent offer to homeless people that supports and sustains independence.
- There are issues surrounding move on from supported accommodation, with many single people struggling to find affordable and sustainable move on solutions. There is need to review the existing move on panel and in order to fully understand the scale and issues surrounding move on it is recommended that Homeless Link's Move On Plans Protocol is used.
- There is a high prevalence of mental health issues amongst homeless people in North Wales, with the majority of individuals feeling that these needs are not being met.

- There is a need to ensure that the medical needs of single homeless people in Conwy are met. They should be given the same choices in relation to accessing health care service as the general population, while recognising that homeless people may not find it easy to access mainstream service provision. There is need to implement the recommendations from the Homelessness Health Needs Audit.

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15. Next Steps

Consultation

- 15.1 In order to ensure that the information contained within this review is a true reflection of homelessness in Conwy the review will be made available to all stakeholders and the wider public for consultation.
- 15.2 Following consideration by Economy and Place Scrutiny and Cabinet, the Review will be made available for formal consultation before being approved by the Authority.
- 15.3 The consultation process is an integral part of the Homelessness Strategy development process. Conwy County Council is required to give all partners who supply services and those who use them, the opportunity to discuss and agree what the future priorities that underpin the Homelessness Strategy should be.

Strategy Development

- 15.4 Following this review and consultation responses the Council is required to produce and publish a Homelessness Strategy. At the time of writing this review the six Councils of North Wales were in discussions with Welsh Government regarding the development of a Regional Homelessness Strategy with local delivery plans to address issues specific to each Authority.
- 15.5 Conwy's Homelessness Prevention Steering Group will be fundamental to the development of this strategy, and the implementation and monitoring of the targets agreed within the action plan.
- 15.6 The Strategy must reflect the joint approach by agencies to tackle and prevent homelessness in the Region and therefore it is appropriate that a multi-agency approach is taken to: -
 - Identifying priority areas.
 - Agreeing priorities.
 - Identifying key actions.
 - Agreeing an action plan.
 - Jointly delivering the action plan.
- 15.7 The Council is committed to working with its partners to preventing homelessness in Conwy.

Appendices

1. Welsh Audit Office Report - Conwy's Position
2. Housing Solutions Focus Group
3. Stakeholder Questionnaire Responses
4. Customer Questionnaire Responses Online survey
5. Customer Telephone Survey Responses
6. Homelessness Forum Workshop

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Appendix 1 - Welsh Audit Office Report – How Local Government Manages Demand – Homelessness

Conwy County Borough Council's response to the report and recommendations.

Background

The Welsh Audit Office review of homelessness services across Wales assessed if local authorities and their partners are addressing demand through the development of appropriate and effective prevention approaches.

The review methodology included audit fieldwork at five local authorities; a commissioned survey of citizens about local authority services; a detailed analysis of data and expenditure on homelessness services; website and document reviews; and interviews with national organisations. Based on the findings of this audit, the report has concluded that local authorities are reacting to the problems caused by homelessness with varying degrees of success, but there is limited focus on preventing the fundamental causes of homelessness.

In order to meet the requirement of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 to have a Homelessness Strategy adopted by 2018, Conwy County Borough Council commissioned Housing Consultants arc4 to undertake a formal review of homelessness across Conwy, upon which to base a strategic approach to tackling homelessness.

The homelessness review is required to cover:

- An analysis of the past, current and future levels of homelessness
- An audit of the services aimed at preventing, accommodating and supporting people who are or may become homeless
- A review of the resources available to spend on homelessness within the borough

The review process has drawn upon a wide range of sources, including homelessness statistics, supporting people data, housing advice data and a series of consultation exercises.

As the publication of the Welsh Audit report has coincided with the conclusion of Conwy's own Homelessness Review arc4 have produced this short report detailing how the recommendations of the Welsh Audit Report apply to Conwy. This report also identifies what actions are needed locally in response to the Welsh Audit's recommendations.

The findings of Conwy's Homelessness Review will inform the development of a North Wales Regional Homelessness Strategy, which will be supported by a local delivery action plan. The identified actions within this report will feed into Conwy's local delivery action plan, together with the identified actions following on from the Homelessness Review.

Recommendations from the Welsh Audit Report

Recommendation 1

Implementing the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 requires local authorities to develop services which are focussed on preventing homelessness and reducing demand. These are very different to traditional casework led homelessness services, and prevention work requires new skills and early interaction with users and potential users. We found local authorities' progress in revising and strengthening services is variable

We recommend that local authorities:

- ensure their staff are sufficiently skilled to deal with the new demands of mediating, problem solving, negotiating and influencing with homeless people; and
- review and reconfigure their services to engage more effectively with homeless and potentially homeless people to prevent homelessness.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- Conwy Housing Solutions is an effective partnership model and provides customers with access to a range of housing and advice services under one roof. The service provides a high quality service to customers, and has effective systems, tools, policies and procedures in place.
- The Housing Solutions service is able to both successfully prevent and relieve homelessness, and the number of successful outcomes increased significantly in 2016/17.
- Only 26 % of all successful prevention outcomes enabled households to remain in their accommodation. There is a need to ensure the Housing Solutions team are able to more effectively prevent homeless by helping people remain in their accommodation and a need to ensure that there are a range of tools in place to enable the team to do this. This is especially important given the limited supply of alternative affordable accommodation options.
- There was a strong commitment from all staff to work to prevent homelessness and achieve positive outcomes for the customer.
- A high level of customer satisfaction was identified throughout the customer consultation undertaken as part of the review. In response to the online customer survey 70 % of customers rated the service as either very good or good, and 65% of customers interviewed by telephone rated the service as good or very good.
- In relation to staff skills 95% of respondents found the staff knowledgeable and 92% found the staff to be helpful and kind.
- Conwy Housing Solutions provides a welcoming environment for clients, with a dedicated reception area and private interview rooms. However the main interview room used for triage has a glass partition between the member of staff and customers. This can create a barrier to being able to build a good rapport with the customer.
- The high demand for services and unmanageable caseloads (detailed under recommendation 8) mean that staff are not able to dedicate the necessary time to cases,

and as such opportunities for early intervention and prevention are lost. This is impacting upon the increasing use of temporary accommodation and emergency accommodation. Increased staff resources and joined up work with partner agencies would enable more pro-active prevention to happen.

- Through the customer consultation a high proportion of customers felt that the team failed to maintain contact with them, this is linked to the high caseloads and demand on officers time.

Identified Actions

- Target prevention work at the main causes of homelessness
- Target prevention work at enabling people to keep their existing accommodation
- Regularly review staff competencies and develop annual training plans
- Ongoing communication and regular contact with customers is essential and will need to be built into case management processes. The use of technology may be able to support staff with this, reducing the impact upon resources.
- Remove the glass partition in the interview room
- Review staff resources in order to be able to meet the demand on the service and achieve prevention outcomes (Detailed in recommendation 8)

Rag Rating

Green/amber

Recommendation 2

The Welsh Government provided funding to support local authorities to implement the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and this funding has been critical in enabling new preventative services to be developed. The funding is in place until 2019-20 but authorities need to ensure they use to headspace provided by these resources to revise their services to deliver their responsibilities in the future.

We recommend that local authorities review their funding of homelessness services to ensure that they can continue to provide the widest possible preventative approach needed. Reviews should consider use of Supporting People as well as General Council fund monies to support delivery of the authority's homelessness duties.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- In 2017 Conwy Housing Solutions was shortlisted for the CIPFA Public Finance Innovation Awards. The service was commended for its approach for partnership working.
- Whilst the Homelessness Review identifies services that are funded that contribute directly to the prevention of homelessness and the provision of homelessness services, it

has not identified other funding streams that focus on early intervention and tackling the associated causes of homelessness.

- Housing Solutions and Supporting People are managed by the Housing Services Manager, which provides opportunities for an effective focus on prevention and joint commissioning.
- There are high levels of demand for supported accommodation. A formal needs assessment would provide a comprehensive understanding of the need for housing related support and prevention services across Conwy to inform a robust commissioning strategy.
- The flexible funding pathway provides an opportunity to jointly align funding and provide a joined up and holistic approach to preventing homelessness and its underlying causes. However there is also an identified risk that the demands on this funding pathway from other services (including adult social care) may jeopardise the funding of homeless prevention services.
- Services funded centrally by Welsh Government through s180 funding may not be strategically aligned with individual Local Authority priorities around homeless prevention. There is a need that this money in future be linked to the priorities identified within Local Authority Homelessness Strategies.

Identified Actions

- Following the Homelessness Review and the development of a local delivery action plan a formal needs assessment should be undertaken to understand of the need for housing related support and prevention services across Conwy. This together with the Homelessness Review and Strategy should inform a robust joint commissioning strategy.
- Homeless prevention services need to be safeguarded under the flexible funding pathway.
- Conversations should take place with Welsh Government to ensure that S180 funded services are strategically aligned with meeting the priorities identified within the Council's Homelessness Strategy.

Rag Rating

Amber/red

Recommendation 3

How services are configured and managed at first point of contact can significantly influence how effective local authorities are in managing and reducing demand. Easy to access services which maximise usage, avoid gate keeping and focus on early solutions can significantly improve the prospects for successful homelessness prevention. We found that some authority point of entry systems are poorly designed which reduces the authority's prospects for early intervention to prevent homelessness from occurring.

We recommend that local authorities:

- design services to ensure there is early contact with service users;
- use 'triage' approaches to identify and filter individuals seeking help to determine the most appropriate response to address their needs; and
- test the effectiveness of first point of contact services to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- Conwy Housing Solutions a high quality service and has effective systems and procedures in place, with a clear customer journey, and clearly defined roles and responsibilities within the team.
- The current triage system appears to work well, with follow up detailed assessments undertaken over the telephone to effectively manage demand and resources.
- However the high demand for services and unmanageable caseloads (detailed under recommendation 8) mean that staff are not able to dedicate the necessary time to cases, and as such opportunities for early intervention and prevention are lost.
- Through the consultation it was identified that some customers did not know where to go when they were homeless or threatened with homelessness, and as such opportunities for early intervention were lost. There is a need to raise awareness of Conwy Housing Solutions amongst partners and residents.
- There was a higher than anticipated proportion of customers who approached the service when they were homeless on the day, this accounted for 33% of all assessments. There was no opportunity for homelessness to be prevented. There is a need to raise awareness and encourage customers to seek help at a much earlier point.
- A very high percentage of people owed a duty under S73 were single people. While the reasons for this are not clear there is a possibility that the service is struggling to prevent single people from becoming homeless due to a lack of options available for single people and as such single people may be progressing to S73. There is also a possibility that single people are not approaching the service for assistance until they are actually homeless.

Identified Actions

- here is a need to raise awareness of the Conwy Housing Solutions with partners and residents to ensure early intervention and effective prevention.
- The resource and demand issues identified in recommendation 8 need to be resolved if the service is to successfully prevent homelessness for the majority to customers approaching the service.

- There may be some benefit to understand why single people are significantly over-represented as being owed a S73 duty, in order to develop a more targeted approach and preventing single people from becoming homeless.
- The first point of contact should be tested through mystery shopping to ensure customers are given the correct services at the correct time.

Rag Rating

Green/amber (linked to demand)

Recommendation 4

Establishing clear standards of service that set out what the authority provides and is responsible for is critical to ensuring people know what they are entitled to receive and what they need to resolve themselves. We found that authorities are not always providing clear, concise and good quality information to help guide people to find the right advice quickly and efficiently.

We recommend that local authorities publish service standards that clearly set out what their responsibilities are and how they will provide services to ensure people know what they are entitled to receive and what they must do for themselves. Service standards should:

- be written in plain accessible language;
- be precise about what applicants can and cannot expect, and when they can expect resolution;
- clearly set out the applicant's role in the process and how they can help the process go more smoothly and quickly;
- be produced collaboratively with subject experts and include the involvement of people who use the service(s);
- effectively integrate with the single assessment process;
- offer viable alternatives to the authority's services; and
- set out the appeals and complaints processes. These should be based on fairness and equity for all involved and available to all.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- Conwy Housing Solutions has a clear vision and values. The vision of the Conwy Housing Solutions service is 'Helping you to find the solution. 'The team values are:
 - We will take responsibility
 - We will be professional with everyone we deal with
 - We will be reliable and supportive
 - We will act with integrity

- We will be enterprising

- The service has a clear customer pledge, although this is not visible at the office location. This clearly sets out what the service will provide for the customer and what is expected from the customer in relation to engagement and behaviour.
- There are no adopted customer service standards in place.
- There is no regular customer satisfaction monitoring.

Identified Actions

- Develop and publish clear service standards in line with WAO recommendations
- Consult with customers on the development of these standards
- Ensure that effective monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure that the service adheres to these standards.
- Report on this as part of regular performance reports
- Measure customer satisfaction regularly and report on this as part of regular performance reports.

Rag Rating

Red

Recommendation 5

Local authorities need to design services to engage with service users effectively and efficiently, but current standards are too variable to ensure service users are getting access to the advice they need. To improve current performance we recommend that local authorities make better use of their websites to help manage demand by:

- testing the usability and effectiveness of current website information using our lines of enquiry set out
- increasing and improving the range, quality and coverage of web based information; making better use of online applications; and
- linking more effectively to information from specialist providers' and advice specialists, such as Citizens Advice.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- There are many very positive examples of effective joint working initiatives between the Housing Solutions team and other key partners. This includes a Citizen's Advice Bureau adviser based within the officer, and a fast track system for Housing Solutions customers to access timely money and debt advice.

- Shelter also are located within the office one day a week, which provides opportunities for joined up working and the ability for customers to access a range of advice under one roof.
- There is a need to provide more information on the website to enable customers to access more information and be able to help themselves or seek advice from the relevant agency.
- There is a need to ensure that customer expectation is realistic, and as such there is a need to ensure that they are provided with accurate information regarding their prospects for being able to successfully access different forms of housing. Information is not currently easily available or accessible on the Conwy Housing Solutions website regarding the limited supply of social housing. Accurate information on the number of voids that become available annually, by property type and location can help both partners and customers understand that other housing options may be more realistic. Choice Based Lettings (CBL) systems are a very useful way of providing this information to customers.
- In the longer term implementing a housing options online tool will assist client's in identifying their own personal housing solutions.
- The use of social media also provides opportunities for providing useful information to customers in a simple and accessible format
- The use of text messaging and webchats provide opportunities to maintain contact and provide advice, but with a reduced demand on resources.

Identified Actions

- Update the Housing Solutions website as detailed within the Audit reports recommendations
- Increase the amount of information and online applications available, including linking homelessness assessments to housing register applications and pathway referrals, so that only one form needs to be completed.
- Ensure customers are provided with accurate information, particularly in relation to the availability of social and private rented accommodation to help manage expectation
- Develop an online tool to provide customers with housing options information and prevention advice bespoke to their personal circumstances
- Use social media to provide general information
- Use webchats and text messages to provide advice and updates

Rag Rating

Red

Recommendation 6

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014 introduces a new duty on social services and housing associations to collaborate with local authority homelessness services in preventing

homelessness. We found that these arrangements are not operating effectively and service responses to prevent homelessness and assist homeless people are not always being provided, nor are they consistently effective.

We recommend that local authorities set out and agree their expectations of partners identifying how they will work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly and all partners' performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- There are many very positive examples of effective joint working initiatives between the Housing Solutions team and other key partners. This includes the co-location of staff including Citizen's Advice Bureau and Shelter.
- A member of staff from the Mental Health Team within adult social care also spends one day a week in the office, the aim of which is to improve joint working between the teams and provide improved outcomes for customers.
- A team member of the team has been embedded with Step-Down Discharge Team based at the Local Hospital to improve hospital discharge arrangements for those in housing difficulty.
- The Council is in the process of developing a protocol with RSLs around referrals and joint working where tenant is threatened with homelessness.
- The service is also currently reviewing the joint 16/17 year old protocol with Children's Services, and is establishing the Young Person Positive Accommodation and Support Pathway.
- As part of the review process a multi-agency Homelessness Prevention Steering Group and Homelessness Forum were established. This has consolidated a joined up partnership approach to tackling homelessness at both a strategic and operational level.
- However, there is still a need to improve partnership working with a wide range of agencies and encourage them to become involved in the work of the Housing Solutions service, including its preventative agenda. Many partner Agencies often don't understand the pressures within the housing sector and the limitations.
- There is a need for a more effective and joined up approach with colleagues from adult social care, with the need to improve and foster better joint working and focus on prevention and early intervention.
- Many agencies work to tackle homelessness, and to ensure effective early intervention there is a need for close working with these agencies, effective information sharing and the provision of joint training, with the potential to pilot multi-agency personal plans
- There is a need for a better joined up approach in responding to clients with complex needs, to ensure that support is in place to resolve the underlying medical, social care and support needs.
- There is a need for a more joined up approach to early intervention and prevention with adult social care colleagues. This is particularly the case for responding to clients with

complex needs to ensure the right support is in place to resolve the underlying medical and support needs

Identified Actions

- In line with WAO recommendation set out and agree Housing Solutions expectations of partners identifying how they will work together to alleviate homelessness. The agreement should be reviewed regularly and all partners' performance reviewed to identify areas for improvement
- Seek corporate commitment to preventing homelessness that all senior managers sign up to.
- In partnership develop a clear vision for homelessness prevention that all partners can sign up to.
- Involve partner agencies in the development of the Homelessness strategy and the implementation of the local delivery plan.
- Develop a range of joint protocols with key partner organisations focused around the prevention of homelessness
- Continue and expand the co-location of key services working with Housing Solutions
- Pilot a single personal plan

Rag Rating

Amber/Red

Recommendation 7

Local authorities monitoring systems and evaluation approaches to ensure compliance with their responsibility under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty are not working as well as they should.

We recommend that local authorities address weaknesses in their equalities monitoring, and ensure that their homelessness service accurately records and evaluates appropriate data to demonstrate equality of access for all service users that the local authority has a duty towards.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- For 496 (49%) of assessments by Conwy Housing Solutions service no ethnicity was recorded on the Welsh Government returns. There is a need to improve data recording in relation to ethnicity.
- For the cases where ethnicity was recorded 510 individuals were white, 6 were of mixed/multiple ethnic group and 1 was recorded as other.
- Young people are over-represented within the homeless population.

- There are a lack of affordable housing options for single people under the age of 35.
- Single people accounted for 71% of all 573 cases, this may suggest that single are more likely to actually become homeless.
- The service does not routinely collect information in relation to client's protected characteristics.

Identified Actions

- There is a need to improve data recording in relation to ethnicity.
- In line with the WAO recommendation there is a need ensure that the service accurately records and evaluates appropriate data to demonstrate equality of access for all service users that the local authority has a duty towards.
- There is a need to routinely collect information in relation to customer's protected characteristics, and use this information to ensure equality of access for all customers.

Rag Rating

Red

Recommendation 8

Managing demand can be challenging for local authorities. There are some clear lessons to be learnt with regard to the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and homelessness prevention duties that can be applied to managing demand in other services

We recommend that local authorities use the checklist set out in Appendix 10 (of the report) to undertake a self-assessment on services, to help identify options to improve how they can help manage demand.

Conwy's Homelessness Review Findings

- There is an increasing demand on the Housing Solutions service following the implementation of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. An increasing number of households are homeless or threatened with homelessness in Conwy. Evidence throughout the Review suggests that this increase will continue.
- The high caseloads mean that there is a risk that opportunities for effective prevention work will be missed as staff will not have the ability to spend the necessary time on each case, or will not have the ability to respond in a timely fashion where the risk of homelessness is imminent.
- The current caseload size of Housing Solutions Officers is unmanageable and not sustainable in the long term. The high caseloads are impacting upon the team's ability to successfully prevent and relieve homelessness, with the inevitable impact this then has on the level of B&B and temporary accommodation placements. There is a need to review

caseloads, structure and resources to ensure that caseloads remain at a manageable level and opportunities for effective prevention are maximised.

Identified Actions

- There is an urgent need to review caseloads, structure and resources to ensure that caseloads remain at a manageable level and opportunities for effective prevention are maximised.
- In line with the WAO recommendation undertake the self-assessment checklist.

Rag Rating

Amber?

Appendix 2 – Housing Solutions Focus Group

Focus Group 26th September 2017

1. *What would you consider the strengths of the Housing Solutions team to be? What works well?*

- Co-location with the Homefinder service, and strong links between the services
- Co-location of other agencies – CAB, Mental health Services, Shelter
- A Housing Solutions Officer sits with children's services one day a week, providing a joined up service for 16/17yr olds.
- Strong team who work well together
- Good policies and procedures in place, all the necessary paperwork and forms are in place and easily accessible.
- Central location for customers, and moving Social Lettings Agency to a better location
- Agile working, gives the staff the opportunity to work at different offices and from home, this helps staff manage their caseload, and results in better outcomes for customers
- ICT system
- Paperless
- Service is very good at adapting and responding to change
- Strong partnerships in place
- Strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention, very proactive service and can achieve good results where customers come in early on.
- Strong focus on providing a good service for customers – moving to a one stop shop approach
- All customers receive the same level of service, the team makes the same effort for any customer accessing the service
- Trying to improve access to the private rented sector – low fees for landlords, no fees for client

2. *What areas could be improved?*

- Improved access to the private rented sector – more affordable properties.
- Need to better manage client's expectations regarding both social and private rented housing options
- Improve communication with other departments and services, often Housing Solutions are the last to be made aware that a customer is about to become homeless

- Raise awareness of the service with partners to encourage more timely referrals
- Raise awareness of the service with customers, some people do not know where to go, and often access the service when it is too late for homelessness to be prevented.
- Improved access to mental health services
- Need for more appropriate access to emergency accommodation as clients with very high or complex support needs are placed in B&B with little or minimal support. Often in these situations support from adult social care is not forthcoming
- Improve relationship with Shelter
- Need to have a more flexible temporary accommodation portfolio

3. What barriers do you think customers face in accessing the service?

- Telephone system, clients are not able to easily access the service via the telephone as it is unreliable and often just gives an engaged tone.
- Heavy caseloads impact upon the quality of service provided to customers
- Unrealistic customer expectation

4. What stops you from being able to prevent homelessness?

- Difficulty in accessing private rented sector – there is often a stigma attached to being homeless, and many landlords do not want to accept customers who have been homeless or are on universal credit/LHA. There is such high demand for private rented accommodation that landlords can afford to be picky. Many buy to let mortgages have clauses that prevent landlords renting to clients who have been homeless. Insurance restrictions also make it difficult for private landlords to accept homeless clients
- Welfare reform has resulted in increased homelessness
- Affordability issues – it can be impossible to access affordable accommodation
- Its getting harder to place clients in suitable and affordable accommodation
- Private landlords want to receive Housing Benefit directly
- Clients are unable to sustain accommodation due to affordability issues
- Heavy caseloads (85 cases on average) – this impacts upon the service offered to clients, and the ability to undertake effective prevention work. This also impacts upon stress levels of staff members.
- Increase in customers alongside requirements of the new Act has an impact upon ability to undertake work, the fact that local connection is not taking into account until the end also means more work for the team.
- Rent Smart Wales is making some PRS landlords sell properties – impacting upon both homelessness due to landlords serving notice, and also reduces the number of private rented properties available.

5. *What do you feel are the gaps in service provision across Conwy?*

- There is a need for more supported accommodation
- Specialist accommodation for people with mental health issues
- Specialist accommodation for people with substance misuse – wet provision
- Direct access provision
- Family supported accommodation
- Accommodation for large families
- Development of more affordable accommodation options
- Shared accommodation for single people under 35 yrs.
- Increase in numbers of clients experiencing financial hardship, more work needs to be done with them in relation to budgeting.
- Provision for young people with complex/multiple needs – Nightstop and Supported Lodgings are often full, and can't take clients with higher needs

6. *Are there any specific issues relating to any particular customer group?*

- Clients with complex needs- cuts in other services (i.e adult social care) are impacting upon homelessness. Witnessing an increase in people with multiple needs becoming homeless, there are concerns that there is a risk of a serious incident occurring with vulnerable people being placed in B&B without support/input from other agencies/adult social care- especially the case for clients with mental health and substance misuse issues
- Prisoner pathway is not working; prisoners are approaching Housing Solutions without prior notification and without any work having been undertaken whilst in prison.
- Move on from supported accommodation isn't working properly, people are being placed in band 1, and are quickly made an offer of accommodation, but they move in unprepared, and without furniture etc, - this is leading to tenancy failure. There is a need for an improved transition period and a review of the current approach.
- There is no income restriction within the allocations policy , which means households who have a high income can still be offered social housing, given the high demand for social housing this approach should be reviewed.
-

Appendix 3 – Stakeholder Questionnaire Responses

Homelessness Review 2017

Stakeholder Questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent out to a range of partner organisations across Conwy. The questionnaire sought views on the Housing Solutions service and what more needed to be done to prevent homelessness in Conwy.

The findings are detailed below (based upon 5 returns)

Feedback Questionnaires

1. Partner agencies were asked what they considered the strengths of the Housing Solutions team to be. The following strengths were listed.

- The accessibility of the team, and positive working relationships
- Quick response to seeing clients
- Accessible location
- Good personal housing plans and notification letters
- Good partnership approach
- Responsive to emails and calls
- One Stop approach and the range of services offered with various partner organisations (Shelter, CAB, SARTH etc)
- Assisting tenants with access to the private rented sector – lettings agency with no application fees and working with landlords who will accept benefit claimants.
- Clients seen promptly and for the most part, helped by Housing Solutions
- Staff are very capable, professional, customer focused and willing to go the extra mile for their clients.

2. Partner agencies were asked how the Housing Solutions service could improve the service that it offers. The following response was received.

- Greater capacity Housing Solutions Officers appear to have large workloads and the service could do with more officers to meet the demands on the service.
- More hands on help to practically find accommodation where the client faces multiple barriers i.e. poor credit, housing benefit claimant etc.”
- More resources
- Wider range of emergency/temporary accommodation

- Tenancy support and tenancy sustainment.

3. *Partner agencies were asked to identify any barriers to accessing the Housing Solutions service.*

- Location of the service means many may have to travel to access it
- Difficulty getting for customers getting through to the service on the phone.
- Some customers report delays in getting an assessment after completing a first contact
- Some single people report a lack of assistance generally
- Difficulty to access face to face services due to poor transport links and parking difficulties
- Lack of awareness of the service – no prominent signage on the building.
- Client's lack of awareness of the service

"Knowledge of the service; most of the clients who present at CAB with housing issues have never heard of Conwy Housing Solutions; many think that the office on Conwy Road is the council and are reluctant to attend. It is likely that they will not make contact unless they are referred by a partner organization"

4. *Agencies were asked what more could be done to prevent homelessness in Conwy. The responses are detailed below.*

- "We have had less transparent dealing with Conwy Social Services team which resulted in two evictions from referrals made for Housing. Had certain information been made available it could have led to a more appropriate letting. As it was we took in two clients (separate situations) and placed them in supported living accommodation that was not suitable. Both led to evictions. In terms of prevention, honest dialogue at the beginning could have prevented these cases."
- "Conwy could look to build more properties, this could include Extra Care which could potentially free up more family/general needs properties."
- More floating support available to help with prevention.
- Complex need scheme
- A rent guarantee scheme, whereby the Council guarantees the rent for 6 months for people who struggle to get a tenancy due to poor credit, previous arrears, vulnerability.
- High intensity/greater support to help people find accommodation
- Issue prevention fund payments as a grant not a loan.
- Specialist support for hoarding.
- Access for clients to a budgeting tool to enable them to work out whether they can afford to live in a particular property

"It might be useful if clients in rented accommodation had access to a budgeting tool to enable them to work out whether they can afford to live in a particular property; experience is that clients work out that they can afford the rent but don't budget for service charges, Council Tax, utilities, contents insurance etc."

5. *Agencies were asked what additional services the Council or other agencies should be providing to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness and whether there were any gaps in service provision?*

- "Would like to see a greater investment in Floating Support as these services have reduced / disappeared due to funding cuts. These types of service are invaluable and a relatively small investment at the front end can save a far greater amount when dealing with increasing numbers of homeless people and greater pressures on Social Service Teams."
- Night shelter service/provision for rough sleepers.
- Emergency accommodation for single homeless
- Mother and baby unit
- Drop in local services in various areas of Conwy
- Temporary accommodation other than B&B
- Supported family accommodation for families with high needs
- More generic supported accommodation
- Need for greater supported housing provision together with better support for people leaving supported housing (provision of tenancy training, furniture package etc.)
- Aim to deliver a more joined up service with Housing Solutions, third sector, DWP, healthcare, NACRO, armed forces societies etc, where knowledge and specialisms can be exploited.

6. *Agencies were asked if they anticipated any future trends or problems that may lead to an increase in homelessness for any specific client group?*

- "One area for concern is the roll out of Universal Credit. The delay in people receiving money is increasing rent arrears and could lead to more evictions due to rent arrears"
- Roll out of Universal Credit in June 2018 will lead to increase in rent arrears/possession cases
- Roll out of Universal Credit likely to impact on the number of private landlords willing to rent to benefit dependent households.
- A minor hike in interest rates might push people who are just about managing into mortgage arrears.

Other Comments

“Very positive that the Homelessness Forum has started again in Conwy. The first meeting was very useful and interesting.”

DRAFT

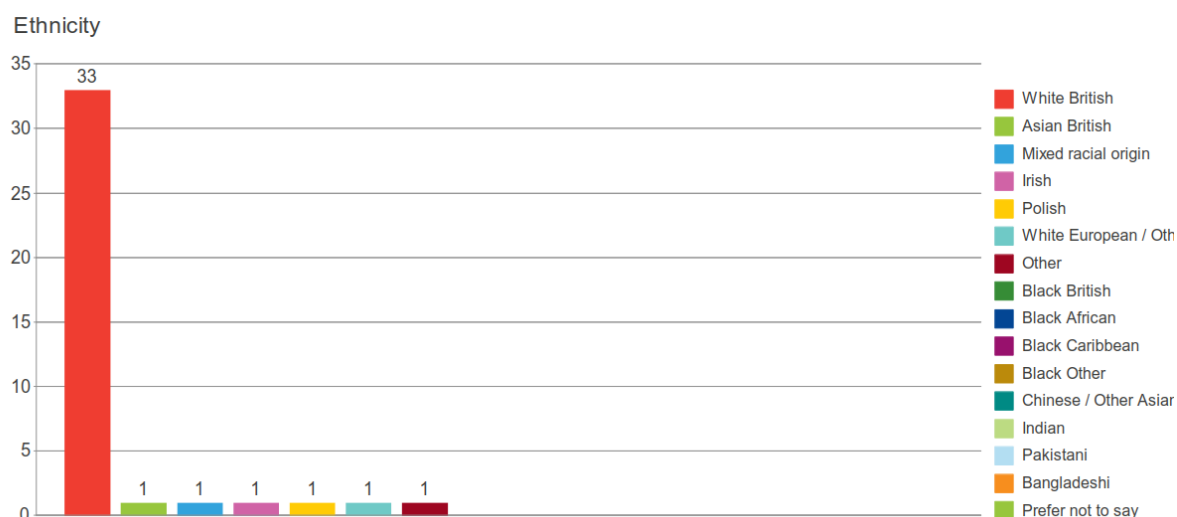
Appendix 4 - Homeless Review 2017 Service User Questionnaire Analysis

Equalities Information

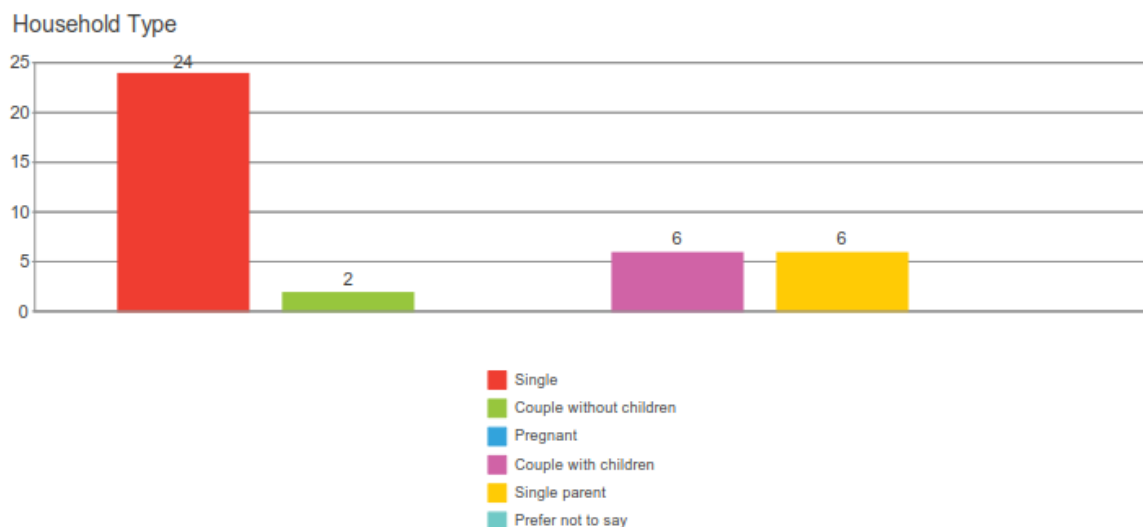
Gender	Respondents
Male	19
Female	19
Other	-
Prefer not to say	-

Age	Respondents	Age	Respondents
16 – 17	-	45 – 54	7
18 – 24	6	55 – 64	9
25 – 34	6	Over 65	3
35 – 44	8	Prefer not to say	-

Ethnicity



Household Type



Previous Homelessness

Have you ever been homeless before?	Yes	18
	No	21

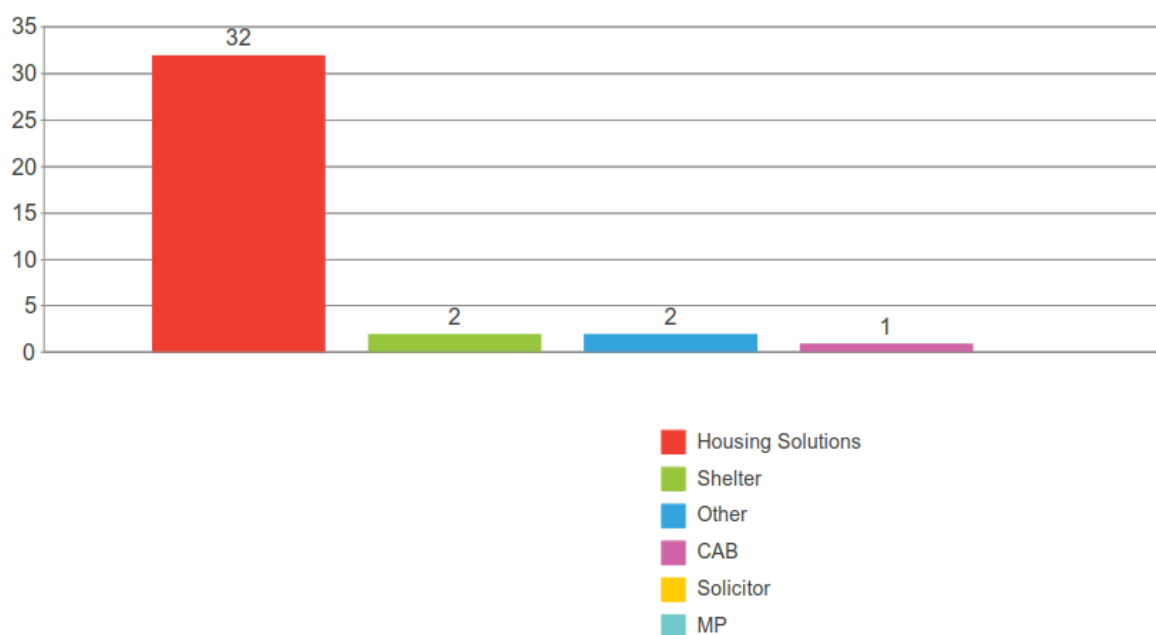
If yes, what caused your homelessness before?			
Eviction from social housing	-	Domestic abuse	-
Eviction from private rented	-	Leaving the armed services	-
Parent / friend asked you to leave	1	Leaving prison	-
Relationship breakdown	3	Other	-

Did you contact the Housing solution team when you were homeless or threatened with homelessness?	Yes	2
	No	4

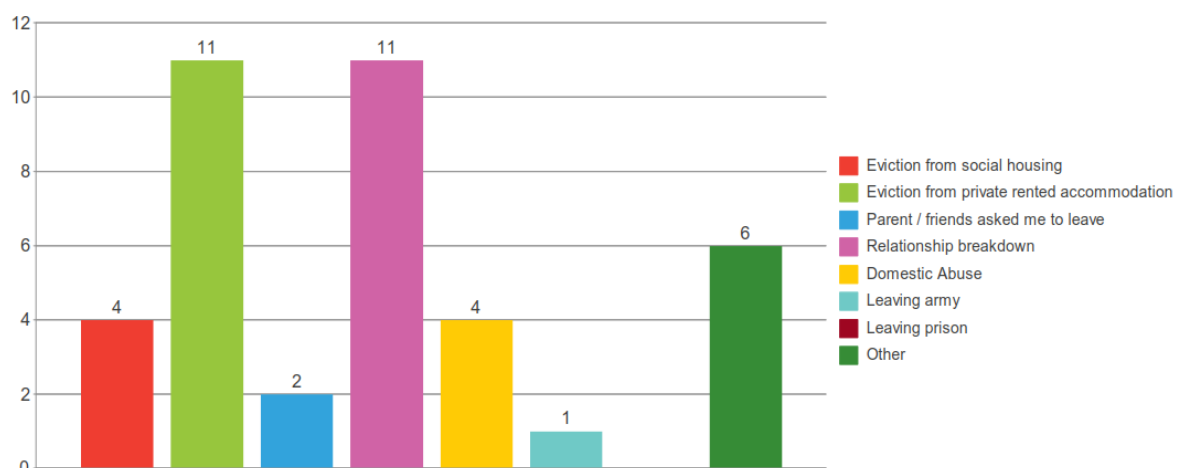
Did you have a positive experience / outcome the last time you contacted Housing Solutions?	Yes	1
	No	-
Comments	They were very helpful to me	

Have you ever slept rough?	Yes	8
	No	28

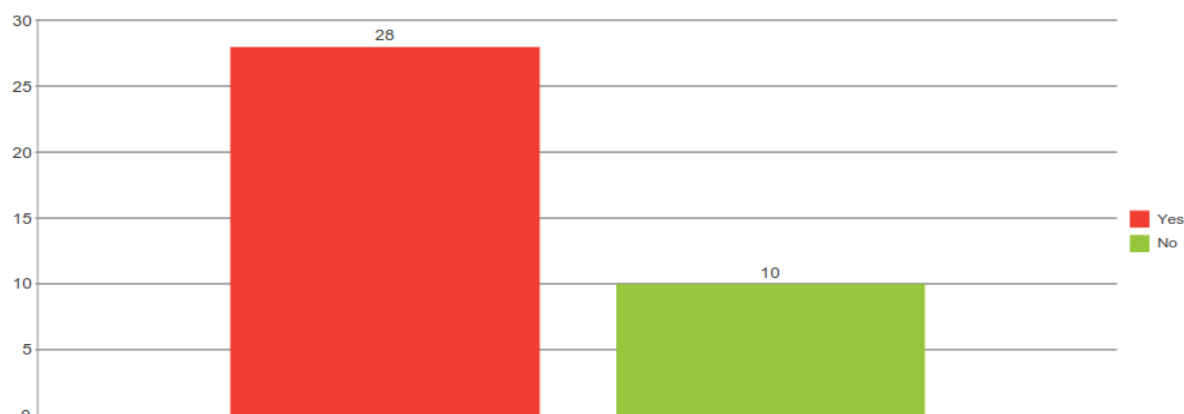
who did you first approach when you become homeless most recently



What caused your homelessness this time?

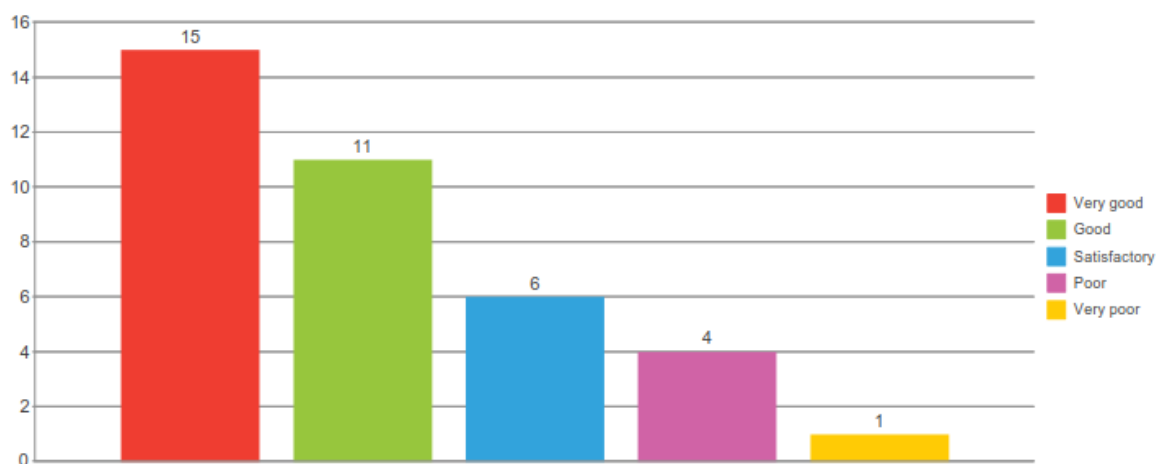


Did the service from Housing Solutions meet your expectations?



What were your expectations? Please give details (maximum 100 characters)	
	For them to help me find somewhere to live.
	That I was provided with accommodation for myself and my children
	Assistance with sourcing own accommodation
	Social Housing
	Social Housing
	Council house
	Help with housing
	Just help
	Helped me understand the process as well as helped me in finding out about how to get my place, ID, etc
Thought she would have had more help. Housed instantly with Denbighshire. Denbighshire staff were more helpful, and there was much more contact from them.	
Thought she would have had more help. Housed instantly with Denbighshire. Denbighshire staff were more helpful, and there was much more contact from them.	
	to find suitable accommodation. was aware of the demand for social.
	to get help being housed after being street homeless
	to be rehoused
	to help find accommodation
	To help find move-on accommodation
	Not sure
	To find my own accommodation
	Get me a house
	I thought they would actually help
Not sure, first time using the service. Didn't know anyone who had accessed before, so was completely unaware of the process.	
	not sure. Hoping to get out of the current situation.
Situation wasn't resolved the last time service was accessed. Same situation raised less than a year later. Affordability.	
	to find a roof for myself and two dependants.
	Very good
	To get my own place (Client closed due to lack of contact)
	I did not know what was happening.
	Social Housing
	I wasn't sure what to expect
	not to be street homeless.
	help with accommodation
	to be given emergency accommodation
	never been in this situation before, so not sure.

How would you rate the service from Housing Solutions?



Quality of Service Provided	Total	Yes	No
Base	300	221	79
Did you receive clear information and advice about the services available?	38	32	6
Did you find the staff knowledgeable?	38	36	2
Do you think you were kept informed of what was going on?	38	18	20
If you were threatened with homelessness, were you provided with a full assessment and a personal housing plan?	38	30	8
Did the Housing Solutions Service prevent you from becoming homeless?	38	19	19
Did you find the staff kind and helpful?	37	34	3
Do you think you received enough information?	37	29	8
Did the member of staff help to find you alternative accommodation?	36	23	13

What do you think we could do to improve the existing services?

What do you think we could do to improve the existing ser...	Don't know
	Nothing further
	More contact
	More CONTACT!
	More CONTACT!
	More staff
	More call backs.
	One application form for all mental health services?
	Better communication skills between staff.
Denbighshire was much better than Conwy. More contact with the client ion Denbighshire, phone and face to face. CHS didn't explain what was going on.	
Denbighshire was much better than Conwy. More contact with the client ion Denbighshire, phone and face to face. CHS didn't explain what was going on.	
	more contact
	service was good. We need more council houses.
	Does not know, says it's fine the way it is.
	Not sure
	Give everyone emergency accommodation (Client was Non-priority)
The team did everything they could to help me, but I was frustrated by the lack of emergency accommodation near to my family and children's schools.	
	Resolve peoples situations
	More money should be invested by the government into this scheme.
	not sure
	More contact from housing officer
	doing a good job. Very pleased
We think it would be improved by getting a hostel in Llandudno, lots of street homeless in Llandudno	
Make things easier, too complicated and not enough houses for everyone. Client found paperwork + processes confusing and overwhelming	
	I don't know
Too many people for the staff to deal with so it can be hard to get hold of them, and sometimes I didn't know what was happening.	
	I don't know
	more staff. more resources. More council housing.
	excellent service
	not enough service for single men

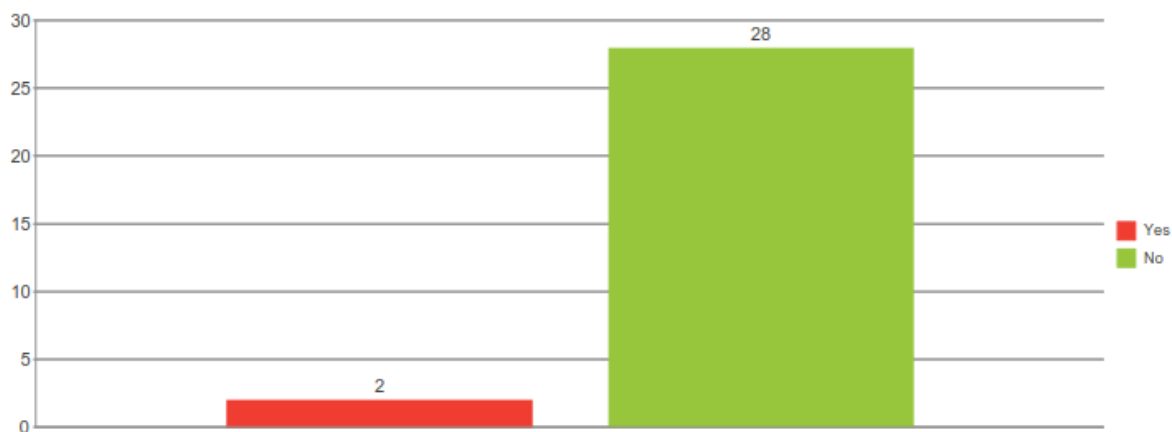
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What extra help could have prevented you from becoming homeless?

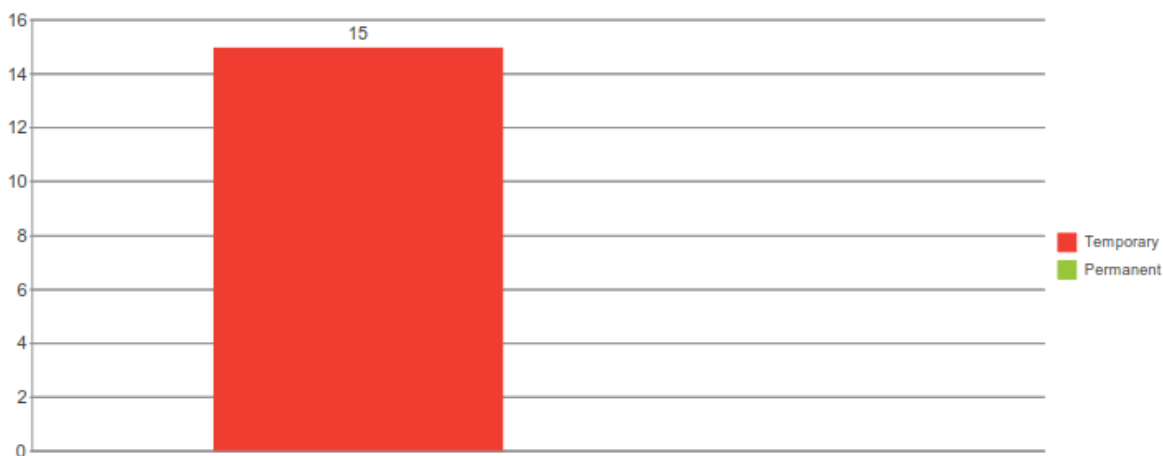
What extra help or services could have prevented you from...

Don't know
 Unsure
 Unsure
 Money to pay arrears
 Money to pay arrears
 Someone to talk Landlord down
 Someone being able to speak to my mum about domestic violence before it was too late.
 Nothing, parents kicked them out
 Nothing, my landlord was moving back into my home so it could not have been saved.
 I should have been able to stay in my house after mam died.
 More staff, more private accommodation and more social housing.
 Not sure

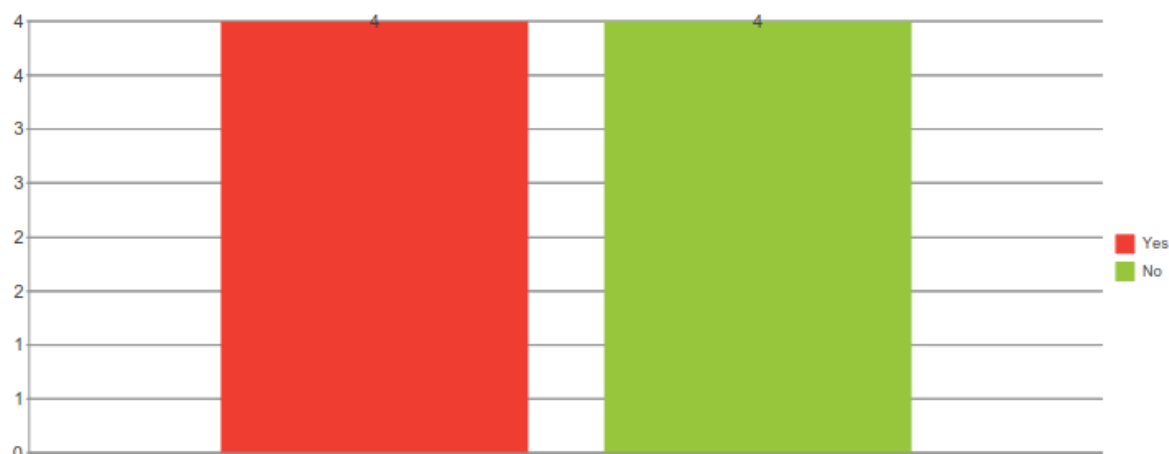
Was there anything you could have done yourself to have prevented your homelessness or resolved your own housing situation?



Were you provided with temporary or permanent accommodation?



Were you placed in B&B accommodation by the Housing Solutions Team?



Was your B & B suitable for your needs?

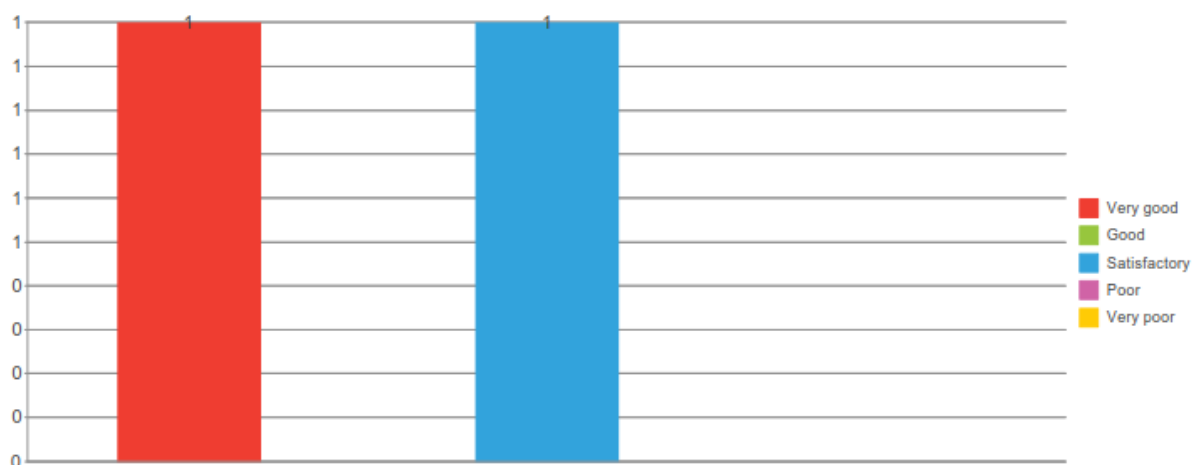
Yes

3

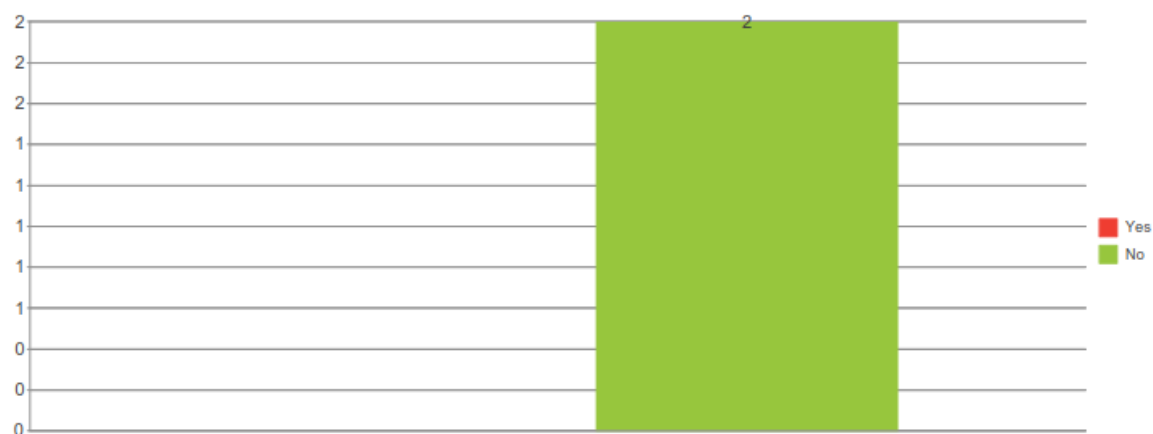
No

-

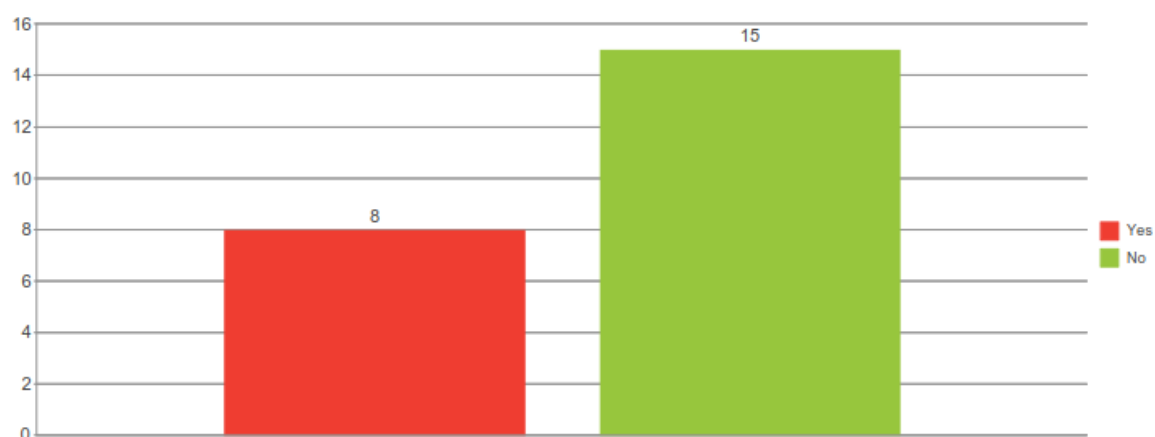
How would you rate the standard of B&B accommodation provided?



Did your stay at B&B necessitate you having to give up work, change your children's schools or affect any other support you receive?



Other temporary accommodation
Were you placed in other temporary accommodation by the Housing Solutions Team?



Other temporary accommodation
Was the other temporary accommodation suitable for your needs?



Other temporary accommodation
Did your stay in other temporary accommodation necessitate you having to give up work, change your children's schools or affect any other support you receive?



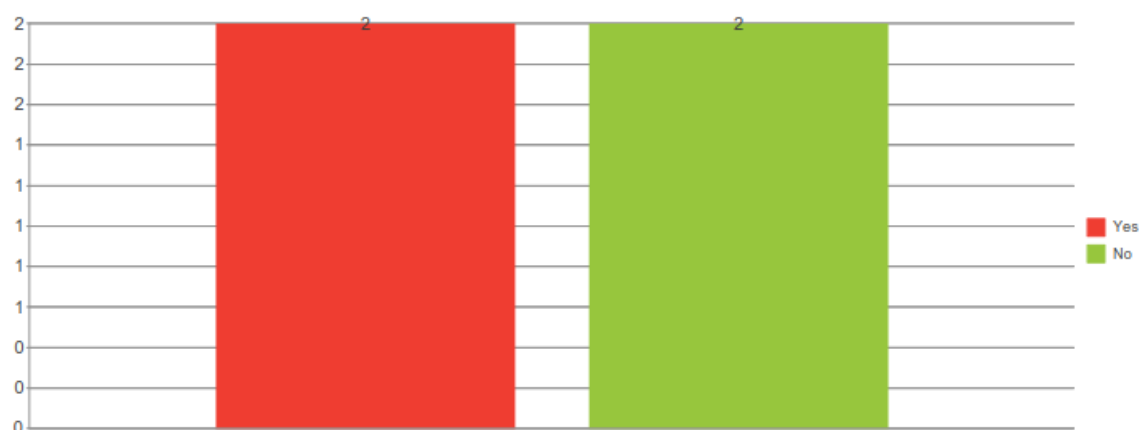
If yes please provide details ...

I had to change my children's schools

Other temporary accommodation
How would you rate the standrd of other temporary accommodation provided?



Whilst in temporary accommodation were you regularly contacted by Housing Solutions Team about your case and your prospects of being rehoused?



Do you feel you had adequate support whilst you were in temporary accommodation?

Yes

4

No

-

Please use the space below to make any further comments

Need more help!! Not enough staff for everyone.

Overall a good experience. Could have done with more updates

Moved on to supported accommodation, great job!

You were brilliant

Thank you, very grateful.

situation on-going

I was prevented from becoming homeless but found the system stressful to deal with as my officer was so busy all the time. But she did her job at the end of the day and we didn't become homeless.

lovely officers. Very Kind

Appendix 5 – Customer telephone survey responses

Customer Consultation – Telephone Interview Responses

December 2017

Telephone interviews were conducted with customers who had used Conwy Housing Solutions service during 2016/17, this included customers to whom the Council had accepted a S66 duty, S73 duty, S75 duty, customers placed in temporary accommodation, and cases where the Council had made a no priority need decision. It included a range of open and closed cases.

A total of 20 customers were happy to take part in the telephone interviews. The interviews ranged in time from 6 minutes to 40 minutes, with the majority taking between 20-30 minutes. The duration of the interview was very much led by the customer and how much they wished to discuss about their situation and experience.

The findings are detailed below.

Gender

Gender	
Male	7
Female	13
Not stated	0
Total	20

- 65% of customers interviewed were female

Age

Age	
Under 17	0
18-24 years	4
25-34 years	5
35-44 years	7
45-54 years	3
55-64 years	1
65+ years	0
Total	20

- 35% of customers interviewed were aged between 35-44 years.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	
White British	18
Other	1
Not stated	
Total	20

- 90% of customers interviewed were White British, one customer described their ethnicity as Moroccan/Arabic. For the remaining customer this question was not asked as the customer became upset during the interview and it was jointly agreed to not continue the interview.

Household Composition

Household Composition	
Single	8
Couple without children	2
Pregnant	0
Single parent	7
Couple with children	3
Total	20

- The majority of clients interviewed were single people (40%), followed by single parents (35%).
- Of the clients interviewed 6 were accommodated in temporary accommodation, 6 were closed cases, 5 were open S66 duty cases, 2 were open S73 duty cases and 1 was a S75 duty temporary accommodation case.

Homelessness

In response to the question have you ever been homeless before a total of 3 customers had been homeless in the past. The reasons for being homeless previously included loss of private rented accommodation (2) and relationship breakdown (1). Of these, 2 had approached Conwy Housing Solutions, 1 customer stated that they had a positive experience with the service and 1 stated the experience had not been positive.

The table below shows which organisation the respondents first approached when they were homeless or threatened with homelessness most recently.

Organisation	
Housing Solutions	18
Shelter	0
CAB	0
Solicitor	0
MP	0
Other	2
Total	20

90% of the customers interviewed contacted Housing Solutions when they became homeless. The remaining 2 clients approached friends and private landlords prior to contacting the Council. The reasons why clients became homeless are detailed in the box below.

Reason for Homelessness	Number
Eviction from social housing	0
Eviction from private rented sector	3
Parents/friends/family eviction	2
Relationship breakdown	4
Domestic Abuse	1
Leaving Army	0
Leaving Prison	2
Other	8

- The main causes of homelessness identified were relationship breakdown followed by loss of private rented accommodation. Other reasons cited included that the accommodation was unsuitable, private rented sector disrepair (2 cases), fleeing violence (2 cases), ran out of money, bereavement, social housing unsafe and pregnancy.

Quality of Service Provided

Customers were asked to rate the service that they received from the Housing Solutions service; responses are detailed in the table below.

Service Received from Housing Solutions	
Very good	11
Good	2
Satisfactory	2
Poor	0
Very poor	5
Total	20

- 65% of respondents rated the service as either very good or good, with 25% of respondents rating the service as very poor. Of the 5 customers that rated the service as very poor, 4 of these were single people who were not accommodated as they were not in priority need.
- Customers were invited to comment on the service received, there were mixed responses from customers about their experience. A significant number spoke very positively about their experience, describing the Housing Solutions service as “very good,” “off the scale excellent” and “helpful.” While other customers spoke about receiving a mixed service, with staff not remaining in contact regularly or keeping them informed, with the words “abrupt,” and “lacking empathy” used to describe staff members. One customer felt that the service did nothing until they actually became homeless, when work could have been done during the notice period. Specific comments from customers are detailed in the box overleaf.

"I was very grateful for the help that they gave me. I couldn't have asked for more."

"They've been very helpful, one person in particular is always very helpful when we go in and takes the time to speak to us."

"The service I received was very good, I was really satisfied."

"The service from the whole of the Housing Solutions team has been off the scale excellent. They helped me to find private rented accommodation, and once I was moved in they rang me to see if I was settled and helped me set up gas and electricity. They went above and beyond. I also explained that I was dyslexic and the officer broke down each stage and explained it for me."

"I was advised that I could remain in the Council tenancy with my wife for 56 days. I didn't hear anything from her for 2 weeks. I had to keep chasing her. No one replied to my telephone messages. She only contacted me 2 days prior to me becoming homeless (i.e. 54 days after I had approached the service). I managed to find my own private rent and got help with the deposit from Nacro. The service is a shambles, it was diabolical."

"They didn't show any respect for me."

"Some staff can sometimes be abrupt."

"I wasn't provided with any real help. I understand that budgets are tight, but I feel the service has washed its hands of me. They said there was nothing they could do to help. They never gave me any real help or any help finding accommodation. I found the members of staff to be very matter of fact and a bit blasé, not empathetic."

"They didn't stay in touch with me, I had to keep going there for updates."

- Customers were asked if the service had met their expectations; 14 responded that the service had met their expectations, 5 stated it had not, and 1 responded that their expectations were partly met.
- Customers stated that they had expected more help and advice in finding somewhere to live, another stated they expected a helping hand; 2 customers stated the service had exceeded their expectations.
- Customers were asked if they had received clear information and advice about the services available, 17 (85%) responded that they had.
- In relation to Housing Solutions staff 17 customers (85%) found the staff knowledgeable and 17 (85%) found the staff to be helpful and kind.
- 13 of the customers (65%) felt that they were kept informed of what was going on, 7 customers felt the service had failed to keep in contact with them. Comments were made that the customers often felt that they had to do the chasing to find out what was happening with their case and that telephone messages were not responded to.
- Customers were asked that if they were threatened with homelessness were they provided with a full housing assessment and a personal housing plan. 15 (75%) of customers responded that this had happened.

Prevention of Homelessness

Clients were asked if the service had prevented them from becoming homeless, only 3 customers stated that the service had prevented them from becoming homeless, a further one case was ongoing.

12 of the customers stated that the service helped them to find alternative accommodation; for 6 clients this was temporary accommodation, and 6 had been helped to find permanent accommodation.

Clients were asked what help or services could have prevented them from becoming homeless in the first place. The majority of customers who became homeless did not feel that their homelessness could have been prevented, by either other services or themselves. Two customers became homeless following release from prison and both felt that given their release date was known in advance more work should have happened prior to release to find accommodation.

The two clients that felt that more could have been done made the following comments.

"Work when I was in prison, I never got any housing advice in prison. I then went into a probation hostel for 11 weeks, and again nothing was done then."

"Plans in place for when people are released from prison so they don't become homeless."

Improving services

Customers were asked what could be done to improve the existing services, the responses are detailed below. Many customers felt that nothing needed to be done to improve the service, however other customers suggested that the service could provide more hands on support in finding accommodation, others suggested that the service needed to stay in touch with customers more regularly. One customer felt that more empathy was needed.

Two customers raised the issues of moving into unfurnished accommodation and the impact this had on them and their families. It was suggested that either they were given more time to prepare to move, or that furniture packages should be provided.

One customer stated a hostel was needed in Conwy.

"Nothing, there's no way you can improve on excellence."

"Nothing it's a good service."

"Should give you time to get your stuff together and get furniture sorted before you move into permanent accommodation. I only signed for the flat on Monday and today (Thursday) I have the keys, but I have no furniture or cooker. Would be good to have time to sort furniture or be provided with a furniture package."

"Stay in touch with people when they're in temporary accommodation and keep them informed about when they're going to be rehoused. I thought I would only be in temporary for a short while so didn't buy curtains, I have just hung up sheets, but I've now been here more than 3 years."

"The Council could provide more information, more help, stay in touch, returning phone calls as a minimum."

"When I was rehoused I had no furniture I had to wait to get things, it would be good to have help with that."

"They could show more understanding and be willing to try and help. They need to work to try and prevent homelessness. There should be a plan in place when coming out of prison. My release date was known but nothing was put in place. Also need a hostel in Conwy for emergencies."

"They could give you more help finding accommodation, and a list of landlords."

Bed & Breakfast

Of the customers interviewed 9 had been placed in Bed & Breakfast accommodation. 7 of these households felt it was suitable for their needs. For the 2 households that found the accommodation to be unsuitable this was based on sharing a room with all family members, sharing bathrooms and the lack of cooking facilities.

A couple of households stated that the B&B accommodation was fantastic and the manager was really kind.

"We only had 1 room for me and the three children, we had to share a bathroom and there was no cooking facilities. Luckily we were only there for a week."

"The chalet was awful. We had to keep filling up the electric meter."

In relation to the standard of the B&B accommodation, 4 households rated it as very good, 1 households as good, 3 households rated it as satisfactory and 1 rated it as very poor. 2 of the households placed into emergency accommodation felt that the placement had resulted in them having to give up work, change children's schools or affect any other support that they received, however both stated they would have had to have done this anyway due to their homeless situation.

Temporary Accommodation

Of the customers interviewed 6 had been placed in temporary accommodation. All of these clients felt the accommodation was suitable for their needs. A couple of customers stated that they were extremely happy with their accommodation and would like to stay there permanently. 5 customers rated the accommodation as very good and 1 rated it as good.

However, one customer did raise concerns that he had been in temporary accommodation for a very long time, and felt that he had been forgotten about.

"Initially the service was very good. I couldn't fault it. However I have been in my temporary accommodation for 3.5 years now, and feel like the service have forgotten about me. It's like once they helped me into temporary accommodation they felt their job was done, they haven't stayed in touch."

"The temporary accommodation is awesome I wish we could stay here."

"The service has helped me, I wish I could continue to live in my temporary accommodation as we are settled here."

Only one of the households placed into temporary accommodation felt that the placement had resulted in them having to give up work, change children's schools or affect any other support that they received.

"Difficult as children had to change school, I am really afraid that they will have to move again when I am permanently rehoused. I really want us all to be settled."

Customers were also asked if they felt that they were provided with adequate support whilst in temporary accommodation, 5 customers stated that they were, with 1 client feeling that they were not receiving adequate support.

Of the households placed in temporary accommodation 6 felt that they were kept up to date on their case and prospects for being rehoused by Housing Options, 1 customer felt that the service had not kept them up to date.

The table below details other comments made by customers during the telephone interview in relation to the overall service received.

"Everybody was fantastic and helped and supported me all the way through."

"I am very happy in the temporary accommodation, we have been here for 2 years and I feel we are now beginning to recover. The children have progressed and I have got a job. My Housing Solutions officer was great, I had a personal connection with her and it was really good to be able to speak to someone"

"My Housing Solutions Officer has been amazing, she's been able to sort any problems out I have some debt problems and she's referred me to the CAB."

"My only concern is having to keep moving to different accommodation, I have a disability so it makes it difficult to keep packing and unpacking. I also suffer with stress and anxiety so really need stable accommodation to reduce the anxiety"

"I am not getting support from anyone, I am drinking too much and am grieving but getting no support."

"Diabolical service, felt as I was working and a single male I was treated as if I was at the bottom of the list for any kind of help."

"I understand there is a long wait for Council housing, but it would be nice if there was more council housing."

Appendix 6 – Homelessness Forum Workshop

Consultation Workshop - 7th November 2017

Homelessness in Conwy

1. What do you consider the main causes of Homelessness to be across Conwy?

- Relationship breakdown
- Domestic abuse
- Rent affordability
- Welfare reform
- Veterans/leaving armed forces
- Domestic abuse
- Substance misuse
- Prison leavers
- Eviction
- Financial difficulties/debt
- Choice or not choice
- Hospital discharge
- Mental health
- Hoarding
- Family breakdown
- Job loss
- Affordability
- Benefit sanctions
- Landlords wanting properties back
- Benefit cap
- Anti-social behaviour
- Leaving care

2. What gaps are there in service provision (accommodation, support, advice, self help?)

- No accommodation, or little
- Night shelter

- Soup kitchen
- Caravan/bus – beds, shower, room, something to eat
- Community services hub
- Accommodation in Conwy for young people
- Supported accommodation for families
- Affordable housing
- Floating support
- Households to take people who need accommodation
- Knowledge of benefits available, services available
- Female only provision
- Mother & baby provision
- More mental health accommodation
- Wet hostel
- Shortage of landlords
- Support for landlords in private sector

3. If we could do one thing to better prevent homelessness locally – what would it be?

- Work together including tolerance of each other's roles and responsibilities
- Link people who are accommodated with people who want to share/need accommodation
- Educating landlords on current housing situation in Conwy
- Job centres to deliver advice on homelessness – workshops for people on benefits
- Drop in centres – advice for people who are threatened with homelessness
- Information for young people

Rough Sleeping

1. Do we understand the level of rough sleeping in Conwy?

- No accurate understanding of rough sleeping based on strong evidence
- Official count doesn't provide an accurate picture due to time of year carried out, many rough sleepers will disappear from the streets on the night of the count, doesn't cover rural areas
- Need to tap into intelligence that's out there i.e. night shelters in Rhyl and Wrexham, taxi drivers, bus drivers/delivery drivers, police, PCSOs, rural community councils, foodbank referrals

- Need outreach service to provide regular intelligence
- Hope Restored – Brenda provides free food and will have knowledge of who is rough sleeping
- Streetlink data – although most people were unaware of this number
- Rural rough sleepers are invisible
- Risk management issues for offenders who are rough sleeping due to lack of provision
- We don't understand how hidden homeless population – sofa surfers, people temporarily accommodated with families/friends, NFA
- Vulnerable adults team go out to rough sleepers
- Rough sleeping levels are higher in Conwy in the summer – people camp on the Great Orme

2. *How do we distinguish between people who are accessing services who are rough sleeping as opposed to vulnerably housed?*

- Prison leavers come to the area as cafes that offer free food to homeless people are advertised in the prison
- Hope Restored and Arc Communities will have knowledge of who is actually sleeping rough
- Issue in engaging with entrenched rough sleepers, those who choose to sleep rough, refuse offers of help

3. *What provision do we need locally to both prevent rough sleeping and to ensure a rapid response when people sleep rough for the first time?*

- Need for direct access provision/night shelter
- Outreach provision
- Ability to report rough sleeping through a hotline – promote Streetlink number
- Need immediate response to reports of rough sleeping
- NSNO provision
- Transition into supported and independent accommodation
- NFNO provision
- A safe place where people can access showers, food, have health needs met, begin to build trust
- Nightstop for adults
- Need for general needs supported provision/hostel
- Reconnection policy
- Preventative approach for clients at risk i.e. armed forces, prison, hospital

Customer Expectation

1. *What do you think customer's expectations are in relation to having their housing needs met in Conwy?*

- Be housed in appropriate accommodation – affordable, size meets the need of the family, area, feeling safe/anti-social behaviour
- People often understand what's available in Conwy and what would be classed as appropriate.
- Is there a difference between housing needs and housing wants, particularly in the tough housing market of Conwy. Wanting a 2 bed house, but more likely to get a 2 bed flat..... Wanting 6 bed in Llandudno, but not having any through social housing – Big questions over how we get people to believe what we tell them as many people don't accept or understand the reality – people and professionals alike
- Having other needs met – being close to family, pets
- Accessibility – not feeling isolated, being close to services, facilities
- A basic right to be housed
- People think it's their 'entitlement' this feeling of entitlement is much harder to manage than that of expectations as it often comes with entrenched negative views of public sector services, community, and other members of society
- The right help at the right time
- Start outreach
- Issues with very specific expectations – people chasing that house, that street, that area as opposed to looking at their current situation and what would constitute a positive outcome homeless v's not homeless
- Accommodation is what people expect, but they often don't accept or understand the importance of the care, and support that is offered to them in order to help retain the accommodation or prepare them for the responsibilities of having accommodation
- Some people still view homelessness as a route to social housing
- Private v's social – most people fixate on social housing which is a real challenge when we have so little in Conwy
- Immediate needs v's long term plan

2. *How do we work with partner agencies to ensure that customers have a better and more realistic understanding of their housing options at any earlier stage?*

- Look at legal advice, extending notice periods
- Budgeting plan
- Reducing arrears
- Partners do not understand protocols

- Information sharing
- Homeless hub
- Social housing could do more to support vulnerable people
- Help people to plan before a crisis
- Sharing data – quarterly data updates

3. *How do we better enable customers to make informed choices?*

- Giving more information on their responsibilities
- Move towards Multi-agency personal plans that follow people around and have links to wider range of services not multiple plans for different agenda
- Set expectations
- Honesty backed up with real data would help customers understand the picture of housing in Conwy
- Ensure partner agencies have current data and real picture of housing in Conwy so we have consistent messages out to customers
- Ensure partners don't just put burden on housing teams to fix complex people problems which often extend far beyond just needing accommodation
- Links to health
- Interim help and support for people heading towards a crisis
- Are we honest about secure housing
- CBL can help people to see and understand the challenge of limited supply as they are actively engaged in a bidding process which is transparent v's scarcity of housing in Conwy. Even with honest housing options advice and a clear message over Social not being the answer to short term risk of homelessness, applicants often still content to sit on list and wait for social
- Inform partners about changing picture of supply and demand so they can share with customers and re-enforce expectation setting

Affordability

1. *How can we ensure that social housing remains affordable to those who need it?*

- Innovative design and construction models – Zed pods
- Under-occupation - use spare rooms within homes to rent out or provide temporary accommodation. Promote additional income and/or appeal to people's social conscience
- Continue to lobby – benefit cap will not be introduced in 2018 but will be reviewed again in 2020
- Review service charges – are they needed? Are there cheaper models?

- Still need to consider shared housing to increase the supply
- Increase tenants' employability
- RSLs still need capital grant to build and reduce borrowing costs
- Increasing evictions in social housing are a concern
- Need to benchmark rents – are Conwy rents high?
- Benefit cap cases now having to pay rent
- Is there enough support from social housing providers?

2. What more can we do to make private rented accommodation accessible?

- Use Housing association partners to manage properties on landlord's behalf
- PRS incentives – 6 weeks + month in arrears
- Training/education for tenants
- Universal Credit – job centre, - personal budgeting support, financial capability
- Recruitment for supported lodgings
- Bond throughout life of tenancy – security for tenant – peace of mind for landlord – currently only for 6 months
- Bonds that landlord can apply to be extended
- Universal Credit – advance payments, advice and support – pay 9 weeks rent in advance (spend to save against B&B costs)
- Rent levels – LHA too low
- Tax relief/Rent Smart Wales/UC/Mortgage restrictions all barriers and causing landlord to think is they want to continue
- Education – UC coaches
- Need greater links between DWP and Housing – online, monthly meetings, housing drop in at job centre
- Job centres don't know much about housing element – first time managing it
- Need for appropriate bank accounts – need to be able to set up direct debits
- Support for landlords

3. Is there a need for a common affordability assessment?

- How do we assess if tenant's can afford accommodation
- Issue of credit checks
- At point of triage

- Tough love approach – need for a cultural shift i.e. rent v's Sky. Customers need a realistic expectation
- Realistic expectation

DRAFT