



**CONWY COUNTY
BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**HOUSING
SUPPORT
PROGRAMME
STRATEGY**



Sir Conwy, yr amgylchedd iwan I fod yn
ddiogel, yn iach ac yn annibynnol

Conwy County, the right environment to be
safe, healthy and independent

March 2022

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Foreword

Welcome to Conwy's first Housing Support Programme Strategy, which sets out our strategic approach and priorities for housing support and homelessness prevention services from 2022 to 2026.

Our Strategy supports the Welsh Government's vision and aims for the prevention of homelessness, the transformational shift that we are committed to in order to move to a rapid rehousing approach via our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, Conwy's Corporate priority of ensuring that 'people in Conwy have access to affordable, appropriate, good quality accommodation that enhances the quality of their lives' and delivery of our Local Housing Strategy.

We have seen great changes in the last few years as a result of the pandemic, the 'Everyone In' approach and the suspension of the priority need assessment for homeless households. This has led to additional pressures on services, with an increase in the number of people making homeless applications and needing temporary accommodation, coupled with longer stays in temporary accommodation due to a shortage of suitable and affordable housing. There has also been an increased need for support services to prevent homelessness from arising, or to help people attain and maintain accommodation.

The need for a greater supply of affordable housing is key to ending homelessness, and this is a considerable challenge. But there are also significant challenges associated with ensuring that everyone who needs support can access the right support for them, as housing related support services play a major role in preventing homelessness. We will continue to work with partners to strengthen our homelessness prevention support to people who are at risk of becoming homeless, and to address further challenges as we emerge from the pandemic and face issues such as the impact of the rise in the cost of living. We need to work with a range of stakeholders to achieve the huge changes required to end homelessness. Tackling and preventing homelessness is a public services matter, rather than solely a Housing matter; we are able to achieve more by working together and considering it to be 'everyone's business.'

Our strategic priorities outlined in this Strategy show the breadth of the work that is being undertaken to address a wide range of support needs in order to mitigate the damaging impact of homelessness and work towards homelessness being rare, brief and non-repeated.

Cllr Emily Owen

1.0 Introduction

The Housing Support Programme Strategy 2022-2026 (the Strategy) incorporates the local authority's statutory duty to produce a homelessness strategy and the strategic planning requirements for the Housing Support Grant (HSG). Therefore this Strategy identifies Conwy's strategic approach to homelessness prevention and housing related support services, and identifies the priorities for HSG funded services. The Strategy is a four year document, with a review to be undertaken at the mid-way point.

The HSG came in to being in April 2019, when three existing grants were amalgamated; the Supporting People Programme, Homelessness Prevention Grant and Rent Smart Wales Enforcement. It is an early intervention grant programme to support activity which prevents people from becoming homeless, stabilises their housing situation or helps potentially homeless people to find and keep accommodation. It augments, complements and supports the local authority's statutory duties to prevent homelessness.

There are now more people living in temporary accommodation and requiring affordable housing and support in order to move on from homelessness and not experience it again. Building on the work done during the pandemic there is a need to tackle the issues that cause homelessness and strengthen early intervention and prevention work. There is also a huge need to increase access to affordable housing in order to meet demand.

Ending homelessness requires suitable, affordable and sustainable accommodation. It also requires the provision of the right type of support at the right time for anyone who needs it, ensuring that services are provided in a trauma-informed way.

1.1 Purpose of the Strategy

This Strategy sets out Conwy's key priorities for the next four years for homelessness prevention and housing related support services in relation to the HSG and statutory duties under the Housing (Wales) Act 2014. It incorporates Conwy's Homelessness Strategy (2018-2022) and therefore satisfies the statutory requirements for a homelessness strategy under Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014.

This Strategy supports Conwy's commitment to achieving Welsh Government's vision of ending homelessness in Wales and making it 'rare, brief and unrepeatable' when it does occur.

The number of households facing homelessness has risen significantly since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 and remains at a high level, with a growing number of households living in temporary accommodation, and for longer periods of time. Significant involvement from a wide range of partners and stakeholders is required in order to achieve the vision.

This Strategy prioritises the prevention of homelessness wherever possible by the use of early interventions that are tailored to meet individual needs and endorses the principles that underpin homelessness prevention:

- Tackling and preventing homelessness is a public services matter
- The earliest interventions are the most effective and the most cost effective, and should always be the interventions of first choice
- All services should place the individual at the centre and work together in a trauma informed way

The priorities identified are based on the findings from the comprehensive needs assessment completed in December 2021, and take into consideration the views of key stakeholders. More recent engagement undertaken during a consultation process on the draft version of this strategy has also been used to inform this final Strategy document.

1.2 Vision and principles

Conwy's vision for homelessness prevention and housing related support services is as follows:

Key services deliver a coordinated approach to homeless prevention activities to ensure homelessness in Conwy is rare. Where homelessness cannot be prevented, people can move into settled accommodation quickly and can access appropriate support, to ensure that homelessness is unrepeatable. If temporary accommodation is required it will be used for a short period only.

To achieve the vision there are four key principles, which are set out below:

- We will ensure that early interventions are available to people who are threatened with homelessness, to enable them to access the support, information, advice and assistance that they need to prevent homelessness wherever possible
- Where homelessness cannot be prevented temporary or supported accommodation provided is of a high standard
- Where homelessness cannot be prevented it will be 'rare, brief and unrepeatable'
- Housing related support services will be available to everyone who needs them to assist people to live as independently as possible

1.3 National, regional and local context

The Strategy is underpinned by legislation, national strategies and frameworks that impact on Homelessness Services and the Housing Support Programme, including the following:

- Housing (Wales) Act 2014
- Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

- Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015
- Equality Act 2010
- Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011, and the Welsh Language Standards regulations
- Housing Support Grant Practice Guidance 2021UK General Data Protection Regulation
- Welsh Government Homeless Action Plan 2021-2026
- Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Guidance 2021
- Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2016
- The Homeless (Suitability of Accommodation) (Wales) Order 2015
- Preventing Homelessness and Promoting Independence: A Positive Pathway to Adulthood
- National Pathway for Homelessness Services to Children, Young People and Adults in the Secure Estate

Locally this Strategy contributes to delivery of Conwy's Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027 and is one of three strategies that have been developed to support the implementation of Conwy's Local Housing Strategy (LHS).



Conwy's 2018 LHS vision is for 'People in Conwy have access to affordable, appropriate and good quality accommodation that enhances their quality of life'. In order to achieve this there are 4 key objectives:

- Increase the supply of affordable housing
- Ensure housing support is available to those in need
- Improve the quality of the private sector
- Ensure people understand their housing options to enable them to make an informed decision

The LHS contributes directly to Outcome 4 of Conwy's Corporate Plan, which is that 'People in Conwy have access to affordable, appropriate, good quality

accommodation that enhances the quality of their lives'. This is supported by the following priority actions:

- Working to increase the supply of affordable and accessible accommodation
- Working in partnership we will review our services to further strengthen our homelessness prevention approach, whilst planning for a shift towards rapid rehousing for those experiencing homelessness so that is rare, brief and unrepeated

2.0 Needs Assessment

Local authorities are required to undertake a comprehensive needs assessment every four years, with a light touch review every two years. The needs assessment is undertaken in partnership with key stakeholders and uses national and local data to inform our strategic priorities for services and their delivery.

The Statement of Need document sets out the current and future demands for homelessness prevention and housing support services, including regional needs, and sets out how the needs identified will be met through the discharge of statutory duties. It is published separately.

2.1 Needs Assessment Process

Conwy's needs assessment was completed in December 2021, and was produced in line with the Housing Support Grant Guidance (March 2021.) It was conducted in partnership with a range of key stakeholders and information gathered from a number of relevant and reliable sources.

The following data sources were used:

- Population needs assessment
- Local Authority well-being assessment
- Homelessness statistics and other housing data such as waiting lists
- Welsh index of multiple deprivation
- Feedback from service users and HSG delivery partners
- Regional VAWDASV needs assessments
- Supporting People Outcomes data
- Needs data from HSG delivery partners
- Supporting People Pathway data
- Unmet needs data over the last 12 months from HSG delivery partners and homelessness applications data
- CCBC's prospectus 2021

Housing Support Grant Lead Officers decided to join together to consult with Providers and Service Users to inform the production of their individual HSG Needs Assessments, which in turn have informed the priorities detailed in this Strategy. A North Wales regional questionnaire was distributed to HSG delivery partners, with a separate questionnaire completed by people who had experience of using HSG

funded services. These responses provided information which was considered in the production of the Needs Assessment, a draft of which was subject to consultation with Conwy's HSG delivery partners and service users and agreed with Conwy's HSG Planning Group in January 2022. It is published separately.

2.2 Key Findings

The Needs Assessment was agreed by Conwy's HSG Planning Group in January 2022, following consultation on a draft version with key stakeholders. The Needs Assessment has identified the following key findings and issues:

Services report increases in:

- Complex cases, particularly people who have mental health issues along with other needs
- The number of referrals for people experiencing domestic abuse issues
- The number of young people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- The number of referrals to services and waiting list for services
- The number of people who are homeless, with a particular rise in the number of single people
- Length of stays in supported accommodation due to a shortage of move-on options

Feedback from HSG delivery partners and Supporting People Outcomes data demonstrate that there is a need for more services to meet the needs of people with:

- Mental Health issues
- Substance misuse issues
- Offending behaviour
- Complex needs
- Fleeing domestic abuse
- Young people

'Complex needs' are persistent and interrelated health and/or social care needs, which impact an individual's life and the ability to function in society, and include:

- Mental, psychological or emotional health needs
- Physical health needs
- Drug and/or alcohol dependency
- Contact with the criminal justice system
- Experience of domestic violence or abuse

People with complex needs require a high level of support that is beyond the support that housing-related support services can provide, with support being needed from at least one other service. It is usually as a result of a combination of needs.

There is a need for:

- An increased supply of affordable housing for a range of households due to changes in the property market, particularly for single people
- Accommodation and services for people with certain offending behaviour and/or complex needs
- Earlier intervention in order to maximise opportunities to prevent homelessness

2.3 Conclusion

Our Needs Assessment and consultation and engagement work in relation to this Strategy have identified 4 strategic priorities for the next 4 years.

The increase in the number of people making homeless applications and requiring temporary accommodation has resulted in increased pressure on a range of services. There are some key areas for attention:

- An increase in the number of single people requiring assistance due to homelessness, and for whom there is a lack of affordable housing. This includes very young and care experienced people
- Difficulties in the provision of suitable temporary or supported accommodation for people who have offending behaviour, mental health issues, substance misuse issues, dual diagnosis or other high level need for support
- An increase in the number of people fleeing domestic abuse and a lack of specialist services
- A lack of appropriate support to meet the needs of some people, particularly those who may have higher level or complex needs, resulting in an increased likelihood of repeat homelessness. People may have multiple support needs and/or support needs that require a multi-agency approach

3.0 Strategic Priorities

To support Conwy and key partners in achieving the Welsh Government's vision of making homelessness 'rare, brief and unrepeatable', four strategic priorities for the delivery of HSG services and statutory homelessness prevention services have been agreed. These have been reached as a result of the needs assessment, stakeholder and service user engagement, wider consultation, Welsh Government policy and guidance and corporate priorities.

3.1 Priority 1: Move towards a Rapid Rehousing approach in the delivery of homelessness prevention services

Why

This is Conwy's overarching priority and encompasses all homelessness services, with the main emphasis on the prevention of homelessness wherever possible by early intervention.

How

Our Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) outlines the changes that are required over the next five years and beyond in order to transform how homelessness services are provided and deliver a rapid rehousing approach.

Key Actions

We will deliver a rapid rehousing approach by implementing our RRTP with four key areas of focus:

- Transform the quality and use of temporary accommodation
- Increase the supply of affordable housing
- Ensure support is available to those who need it
- Strengthen partnership working arrangements to ensure homelessness prevention is prioritised across all services

Conwy's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan is available on the Council's website:

www.conwy.gov.uk

Priority 2: Strengthen our partnership working to ensure that people's support needs are met, and that more complex/higher level needs are addressed via the provision of multi-agency support

Why

There is an increased need for services which support people with more complex/higher level needs, in particular those associated with mental health, offending behaviour, substance misuse and domestic abuse, which can be co-occurring.

How

We will:

- Ensure HSG services meet the needs of people requiring homelessness and prevention services
- Work more closely with key services such as HMPPS, Health, SMS services, Community Safety

Key Actions

- Review current HSG services in consultation with delivery partners and service users to agree gaps and service enhancements

- Implement clearer pathways for accessing appropriate support

Priority 3: Provide additional services for people fleeing domestic abuse

Why

There has been an increase in the number of people fleeing domestic abuse. Some people may require specialist services.

How

We will remodel services and provide additional services to fill identified gaps, including accommodation with 24 hour support available

Key Actions

We will review current HSG services in consultation with delivery partners and service users to agree gaps and service enhancements

Priority 4: End youth homelessness

Why

An increasing number of young people are experiencing homelessness, and there is a particularly acute lack of affordable housing to meet their needs

How

Address the most common reasons for young people becoming homeless via earlier intervention work carried out in conjunction with other services

Key Actions

- Work with Education and Youth Services to improve early identification for at risk families and opportunities for intervention
- Review the planning process for care leavers

4.0 Stakeholder Engagement

A range of key partners and wider stakeholders have provided information and participated in consultation and engagement to develop this Strategy:

- BCUHB Mental Health Services
- BCUHB Substance Misuse Services
- CCBC Vulnerable Persons Team
- CCBC Social Care
- CCBC Disabilities Team
- CCBC/DCC Housing First
- VAWDASV

- Current Housing Support Grant delivery partners, including third sector organisations and registered social landlords
- Service users
- CCBC Housing Strategy Team
- CCBC Homeless Prevention Team
- CCBC Housing Support Grant Team, including the Single Pathway
- North Wales Police
- HMPPS

Key partner and stakeholder involvement has taken place at various points in the production of this Strategy and has enabled a range of needs and issues to be identified, and for these to shape this final document.

Consultation has been undertaken with the duties set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which requires all public bodies to follow 5 ways of working:

- Involvement - the importance of balancing short-term needs with the needs to safeguard the ability to also meet long-term needs
- Integration - considering how the public body's well-being objectives may impact upon each of the well-being goals, on their objectives, or on the objectives of other public bodies
- Prevention - the importance of involving people with an interest in achieving the well-being goals, and ensuring that those people reflect the diversity of the area which the body serves
- Long-term - acting in collaboration with any other person (or different parts of the body itself) that could help the body to meet its well-being objectives
- Collaboration - how acting to prevent problems occurring or getting worse may help public bodies meet their objectives

Due to the impact of the pandemic much of this work has been carried out remotely. We will look to carry out additional forms of consultation to inform the updating of the Strategy in 2024.

North Wales regional surveys were sent to HSG delivery partners and service users in order to inform the needs assessment:

<https://www.conwy.gov.uk/sep/snap/hsgstrategy/user/en/>

<https://www.conwy.gov.uk/sep/snap/hsgstrategy/user/cy/>

<https://www.conwy.gov.uk/sep/snap/hsgstrategy/provider/en/>

<https://www.conwy.gov.uk/sep/snap/hsgstrategy/provider/cy/>

4.1 Stakeholder feedback

Feedback from HSG Delivery Partners

In total there were 113 responses to the North Wales questionnaire; 28 of those stated they were responding for Conwy. The main themes arising were:

- An increase in the number of mental health issues (sometimes relating to increased alcohol intake) and an increase in the number of people with more complex mental health needs
- An increase in poor mental health mental well-being
- A greater degree of relapse for service users who suffer with mental health
- An increase in anti-social behaviour
- An increase in the number of very high risk people needing accommodation
- An increase in anxiety and depression following isolation periods and socialisation issues; many people have developed social anxiety and do not want to attend events with others
- An increase in substance misuse
- An increased number of referrals for people with complex needs
- A deterioration in those with dementia
- Increased mental health and co-occurring issues such as substance misuse, domestic abuse etc. The substance of choice has changed and individuals are using different substances which they know little about
- More clients who have begun drinking more and appear to have an alcohol
- Dependency
- A much higher volume of domestic abuse referrals than pre-pandemic, with some referrals that require more care than support and are therefore not suitable for our service
- More people not sustaining temporary accommodation due to mental ill health and a lack of understanding from that service with engagement with these cohort groups
- On-line type support was sometimes available and although this worked for some, it did not work for others
- The use of self-isolating/Covid as a reason to not engage with services/Project
- Workers
- An increase in the number of self-neglect meetings, prevention of death meetings, safeguarding referrals and MDTs called by support staff to bring agencies together
- Difficulties or reluctance to access primary care services

Emerging Trends / Complexity of Referrals

Providers stated that some people had developed social anxiety and felt isolated following the periods of lockdown due to the pandemic. People were also in financial difficulty due to increases in their bills and/or changes in their income. Relationship breakdown was another reason for people needing services and/or becoming homeless. Access to mental health services was also raised as a gap in service.

Rapid Rehousing

Organisations identified a lack of affordable accommodation in which to rehouse people as being a barrier to Rapid Rehousing, but were generally supportive of Rapid Rehousing, provided there was sufficient accommodation available.

Organisations were also prepared to offer accommodation and support for people requiring it. Some felt that 5 years to implement a Rapid Rehousing approach would

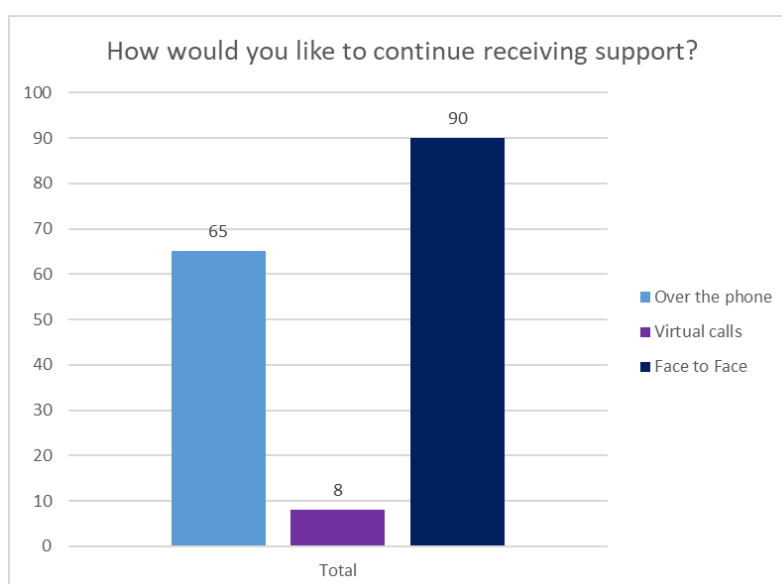
not be achievable. Organisations would like to see suitable affordable accommodation, particularly for young people, with support if required, feature in Conwy's RRTP.

Feedback from Service Users

The following gives a brief overview of the feedback from service users who responded for Conwy. In total there were 103 responses for Conwy out of a total of 531 for North Wales. (Note: not all questions were mandatory and therefore not all responses will equate to 103.)

92 people chose to disclose the type of support they received; 48 were living in supported accommodation and 44 received floating support.

The majority of individuals would prefer to continue to have face to face support.



94% of responders rated the quality of their accommodation as satisfactory or above (50% rated it as excellent, 34% stated that it was good and 10% rated it as satisfactory.)

82% of responders stated that public transport allowed easy access to support

88% of responders felt safe in their accommodation, 10% only felt safe sometimes

68.6% of responders reported that they did not feel isolated, 7.8% did feel isolated and 23.5% sometimes felt isolated

93.2% reported feeling listened to by their support providers

22.5% of responders said that they could afford current rented accommodation prices, 22.5% said that they could not and 55% said that they maybe could

There is an absence of feedback from some key sources, including:

- those who may have been refused for support services following interaction with providers
- those who have left services into homelessness
- those who have not benefitted from services

Ways to address this will be considered when the Strategy is reviewed in 2024.

5.0 Impact Assessments

5.1 Impact assessment process

One of Conwy's values is that 'We are fair to all'. The Corporate Plan identifies a number of cross cutting themes that impact on its priorities, including 'Treating people fairly and supporting equal opportunity'. This is underpinned by plans such as the Strategic Equality Plan.

An Integrated Equality Impact Assessment was carried out, using Conwy's multi-purpose tool that ensures that the appropriate steps are taken to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty Equality Impact Assessment legislation, due regard is given to the Socio-economic Duty and consideration of the Welsh Language Standards.

5.2 Key findings

In summary, the majority of the impacts identified are positive. Projects and services commissioned with HSG funding promote positive engagement with people who use the services. Services are person centred and promote independence and do not exclude anyone due to any of the protected characteristics. Two negative impacts were identified in relation to data collection, which will be addressed via enhanced equalities information provision.

6.0 Implementing, monitoring and reviewing the Strategy

6.1 Working with partners

The Council will work with key partners to ensure that the Strategy and actions are implemented, monitoring and reviewing progress and agreeing revisions where appropriate, based on performance evaluation. Key partners will be involved in the review of this Strategy and its priorities in 2024.

6.2 Funding sources

In order to deliver our priorities the following funding will be used in Conwy:

- Housing Support Grant

- Social Housing Grant
- Core Funding (statutory service provision)

6.3 Monitoring, reviewing and evaluation arrangements

Conwy's HSG Planning Group will retain an overview of the Strategy and will receive regular updates from the HSG Team on its implementation. This group has the following membership:

- CCBC Head of Regulatory and Housing Services
- CCBC Housing Services Manager
- CCBC Housing Solutions Manager
- CCBC Director of Social Services & Education
- CCBC Head Of Integrated Adult and Community Services
- CCBC Head of Service - Children, Families and Safeguarding
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
- National Offender Management Service
- Voluntary sector (Health & Social Care Facilitator)
- Cymorth Cymru or CHC
- Chair of Service Provider Forum
- Landlord Representative
- Portfolio Member with responsibility for Housing Support Grant

In line with our HSG Conditions we will monitor, review and evaluate the strategy and action plan as follows:

- Quarterly, six monthly and annual progress reports will be prepared and shared with the following groups/partners:
 - Conwy's HSG Planning Group
 - Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group
 - Strategic Housing Partnership
 - Welsh Government