

Appendix 2

Please describe the overall aim and purpose of the proposed activities.

The overarching and principle objective of 'The Accommodation Officer Scheme' is to alleviate homelessness in Ceredigion through the provision of a service that increases the availability of suitable, affordable and improved standard private rented accommodation. To this end 'The Accommodation Officer Scheme' aims to prevent homelessness by working with Welsh Government the Local Authority and regional private landlords to promote good practice, improve property standards and meet the shortfall from existing, private rented sector, registered social housing and statutory housing provision.

The percentage of people living in Private Rented Accommodation within Ceredigion is higher than the Welsh National average and This Scheme was established to meet the increasing demand for affordable private sector accommodation.

'The Accommodation Officer Scheme' aims to deliver some of the strategic housing objectives of the Welsh Government to prevent homelessness (as detailed in the Housing Act 2014) to complement existing provision within Ceredigion as part of the local Housing Strategy and to work with partner agencies to ensure positive social impact

What is your proposed model of service to tackle and prevent homelessness?

The Accommodation Officer Scheme is a model with two main functions –

1. To develop a lettings agency with a view to providing suitable, sustainable and affordable accommodation.

The Accommodation Officer Scheme has been operating successfully for 10 years and is perfectly placed to provide the housing options needed by the Local Authority under Section 64 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 as it has over previous years. The Scheme manages and leases private rented accommodation and now operates out of two High Street social lettings agencies based in Aberystwyth and Cardigan.

Affordability is crucial in allocating suitable accommodation and long term sustainability is a primary consideration for each individual tenancy. This service is a source of positive move-on for tenants in temporary emergency accommodation The Accommodation Officer Scheme is measured on building up a portfolio of available properties/ tenancies and ideally accommodating 'priority needs' clients (50%) within these properties. The scheme currently has 58 properties (leased or managed) housing and sustaining 148 tenants of whom the majority are vulnerable and in receipt of support.

The more people we can accommodate through the Accommodation Officer Scheme will result in a reduction in the use of temporary and supported accommodation, less reliance on pressurised Local Authority resources, and ultimately a reduction in homelessness

2. To work with Welsh Government, the Local Authority and Private Landlords to disseminate good practice and also to promote compliance with housing regulations and legislation.

Hand in hand with the necessary and continued increase in sourcing private rental property is the need to promote and maintain high living standards within properties across the County. The housing stock across Wales is ageing and requires investment in order to be 'fit for purpose'. It is through Section 180 funding that the Accommodation Officer Scheme has helped to improve standards within the supported housing sector, social housing sector and private rented sector, in line with local and national housing strategies, and also in line with health and regeneration strategies (Ceredigion Unitary Development Plan; Homes For Wales White Paper; Housing Need & Demand in Wales; etc.) Through negotiation with landlords – the Accommodation Officer chairs both the local Landlord Forum and the Local Landlord Steering Group which focuses on implementation of good practice and shared local knowledge, uniformity of documentation (landlord packs, tenant packs, generic tenancy agreement, AST's, etc.) and awareness of minimum standards expected.

Our model of service includes

- Two social letting agencies in Aberystwyth and Cardigan providing a visible presence on the high street and promoting the scheme through window display and ease of direct access.
- The letting agencies also enable people to access other associated services through the Accommodation Officer Facility for example support services, bond scheme, maintenance social enterprise, etc.
- The Scheme actively seeks out new landlords who are prepared to rent out units/ properties to lower income and no income tenants at affordable rents
- The Lettings agencies provide a portal and opportunity for local Registered Social Landlords to advertise voids within their lists and advertise their complimentary services i.e. handyman, elderly person services, etc.
- Direct working contacts between the Scheme and the Local Authority are maintained with the Accommodation Officer being represented in the Housing Department on a weekly basis in order to exchange information with the housing and homelessness team, liaise with environmental services and licensing, discuss allocations, etc.
- The Accommodation Officer Scheme handles complaints/ feedback from tenants, liaises with the Dyfed Powys Police and Probation Service to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour across the portfolio
- The Accommodation Officer Scheme provides a Chair for the Local Authority founded Landlord Steering Group and

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- All Accommodation Officer staff are NFOPP (National Federation of Property Professionals) qualified