

Full Equality Impact Assessment Report

Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales

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Department of Environment, Sustainability and Housing
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BACKGROUND - TEN YEAR HOMELESSNESS PLAN

This 10 Year Plan sets out some guiding principles around the general direction that the development and delivery of homelessness services will need to take to meet the objective of reducing homelessness to a minimum by 2019.

Where homelessness cannot be prevented, we want to minimise the trauma of the experience of homelessness through swift and appropriate service responses that can provide suitable and sustainable solutions.

The strategic aims underlying the Plan are:

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

A central theme of the Plan is to promote equality of access to services for everyone in accordance with their needs, and for services to be designed around and able to cater for the needs of all groups.

This Plan replaces and builds on the progress made in reducing homelessness in the previous two National Homelessness Strategies for Wales, 2002- 2005 and 2005-2008. It will provide a longer term vision for the future of homelessness services, strengthening the focus on prevention and broadening access to services for all people in accordance with their needs.

A copy of the Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales is available either through the Welsh Assembly Government's web-site or through contacting the Housing Directorate on 01685 729202.

INITIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

OUTCOME SUMMARY

An Initial Impact Assessment was carried out in June 2008. The following table highlights the results of this assessment.

Strand	Evidence	Likely impact
Age	Strong	High
Disability	Satisfactory	Medium
Gender Identity	Strong	High
Race	Satisfactory	Medium
Religion and Belief	No Evidence	Low
Sexual Identity	Satisfactory	Medium

Because the Plan was identified as being likely to have a medium to high impact on the majority of equalities strands, a full impact assessment was identified as being needed.

The tables on the following pages show the sources of evidence that were used in the Initial Impact Assessment.

Record of evidence collected		Assessment of evidence			
		Strong	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No Evidence/ evidence gap
Age					
EVIDENCE	<p>The Griffins Society Visiting Research Fellowship Programme: Supporting People: Good News for Women Ex-Prisoners? (2004)</p> <p>Age Concern Scotland (2008)</p> <p>Live Choices: supporting older homeless people to engage in meaningful occupation in the community (Help the Aged 2006)</p> <p>Housing Choices and Aspirations of Older People (DCLG February 2008)</p> <p>Barnardos (website 2008)</p> <p>Youth Homelessness Research (Epona 2007)</p> <p>Older Person Strategy (WAG 2003)</p> <p>Housing and Ageing Population (CLG – 2007)</p>	x			

Record of evidence collected		Assessment of evidence			
		Strong	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No Evidence/ evidence gap
Disability					
EVIDENCE	Freedom Passes, Disability Discrimination and Disabled Homeless People (May 2006) A Statistical Focus on Diversity 2005 Disabled Women and Domestic Violence: Making the Links (University of Bristol and Warwick)		x		

Record of evidence collected		Assessment of evidence			
		Strong	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No Evidence/ evidence gap
Gender identity					
EVIDENCE	A Statistical Focus on Men and Women in Wales 2007				
	A Statistical Focus on Diversity 2005				
	Briefing, Prison Reform Trust, (March 2004)				
	From Homelessness to Home – The accommodation pathfinder for female offenders to reduce re offending in Wales (NOMs -2007)				
	Home Office Crime Statistics for England and Wales (1999)	x			
	Substance misuse in the older population (post graduate medical journal 2005)				
	General Household Survey 2005 (National Statistics Ombudsman Survey 2006)				
	Homelessness – What’s Gender got to do with it? (Shelter 2002)				

Record of evidence collected		Assessment of evidence			
		Strong	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No Evidence/ evidence gap
Race					
EVIDENCE	A Statistical Focus on Diversity 2005 Causes of Homelessness in Ethnic Minority Communities (ODPM 2005) CRE Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing (Wales) 'Inside Outside' Report (UK Government 2003) Pat Niner Report 'Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Wales' (2005)		x		

Record of evidence collected		Assessment of evidence			
		Strong	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No Evidence/ evidence gap
Religion and Belief					
EVIDENCE				x	

Record of evidence collected		Assessment of evidence			
		Strong	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	No Evidence/ evidence gap
Sexual Orientation					
EVIDENCE	<p>A stock take of current policy and practice relating to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people at local authority level in Scotland that provides a baseline for the policy and practice of local authority in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.(Scottish Executive 2006)</p> <p>The Housing Needs of Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual People in Wales (Stonewall Cymru and Triangle Wales 2006)</p> <p>'Hidden in Plain Sight: Homelessness amongst Lesbian and Gay Youth' - National Centre for Social Research, Stonewall Housing (2001)</p>		x		

OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION - TEN YEAR HOMELESSNESS PLAN

The Plan has been based on wide-ranging consultation with a range of stakeholders, across the fields of health, social care, community safety and housing, at the service planning and delivery level, and with their service users.

The Welsh Assembly Government was assisted to identify the elements that needed to be included within the Homelessness Plan by an external expert panel, the Homeless Strategy Working Group, made up of statutory, private and third sector providers across the fields of health, social care community safety and housing.

The Welsh Assembly Government also held an internal Policy Gateway that allowed officials from across policy areas the opportunity to comment on the Plan. This included officials from within the Inclusion unit.

A wide ranging consultation was held which involved electronic invitations going out to officers from a range of services, along with a request that they undertake an interactive consultation event with their staff and service users on our behalf. This approach was hugely successful, with over 82 organisations submitting a response, many of them on behalf of their staff and service users. The results of this consultation were published in a report placed on the Welsh Assembly Government's web site in July 2009.

This report noted the following comments made which related to equalities. The report also responded to these comments, with amendments to the Plan resulting from these being highlighted in bold. The following paragraphs, under the headings 'comments' and 'responses', are extracts taken directly from the consultation report, which pre-dated the Equality Impact Assessment.

COMMENTS

Concern was expressed at the lack of specific references to some disadvantaged groups such as Gypsy/Travellers, BME and Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people.

There were requests for references to be made on the need for services to be able to cater for the specific cultural, linguistic and literacy needs of ethnic minorities, the need for culturally specific and aware service responses, as well as particular issues for these groups, such as honour based crimes, hate crimes, forced marriages, people trafficking.

Some felt that Gypsies and Travellers particularly warranted special mention because of their particular cultural and linguistic needs and the need for particular service response. This included the right to live a nomadic life, which does not accord with living within mainstream society, as well as the need for special service responses to take this into consideration, most notably, the provision of approved sites so that accommodation needs could be met and the duties placed on local authorities to assess and plan to meet these needs.

Some wanted to see reference to the need for gender specific services, especially for people who have experienced domestic abuse.

It was also noted that there was no specific mention of the needs of older people or of people with disabilities.

RESPONSE

The Welsh Assembly Government has an Inclusive Policy Framework that mainstreams equality. A central theme of the Plan is to promote equality of access to services for everyone in accordance with their needs, and for services to be designed around and able to cater for the needs of all groups.

Message about equality of access to services amended in the Introduction of the Plan.

Section on Planning also amended to highlight the need to ensure that local planning and service delivery takes into account the needs of all groups and is subject to equality impact assessments.

An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out on the Plan when we are close to having a final version of the draft complete. This will include consideration of whether or not the specific needs of any minority group warrants specific mention and may result in further proposals for amendments.

DETAILED ASSESSMENT

Full Assessment undertaken by:

Erica Barrett, Homelessness Policy, Welsh Assembly Government (chair)

Madhulata Patel, Tai Pawb

Brattan Stephen, Triangle Wales, Gwalia

Rhyan Berrigan, Disability Wales

Andrea Nicholas-Jones, Older People, Welsh Assembly Government

Also invited to contribute:

Carol Mooney, Inclusion Unit, Welsh Assembly Government

Geraldine Buckley, Inclusive Policy, Welsh Assembly Government

Date and time: 27th May 2009, 2:00pm

Venue: Welsh Assembly Government Offices, Cathays Park 2 (CP2), Cardiff.

PROMOTING EQUALITIES

Equality of access to service for everyone in accordance with their needs is a central theme of the Homelessness Plan. Equalities is therefore mainstreamed throughout the document, following on from references in the section that contextualises the whole Plan around ensuring that services are accessible to all. The Panel agreed that this approach was appropriate for ensuring that the Plan meets the objective of promoting equalities, though some amendments were necessary in the sections 'Strategic Aims to Deliver the Vision' and 'Preventing Homelessness from Domestic Abuse'. Those sections, with lines through deleted sentences and underlined new sentences, are attached as Appendices A and B, respectively.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS IDENTIFIED

The purpose of the Homelessness Plan is to set some guiding principles around the development and delivery of homelessness services over the next ten years. No negative impacts of the policy were identified. Negative impacts were identified in relation to access to, and provision of, the services that it seeks to direct.

The following pages note the negative impacts or disadvantages that current inadequacies in service delivery have for the various equality strands, along with actions on how these can be addressed.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT - CUTTING ACROSS MORE THAN ONE EQUALITIES STRAND

People do not neatly fit into one equality strand and where people can fit into more than one equality strand, then the disadvantages and discrimination they experience can be compounded. All people are individuals and need to be able to access the services that they need to meet their individual needs and everyone should be treated with dignity and respect, which is not always the case within current service provision.

More needs to be done around raising awareness of people's rights and educating front line service providers.

Preventing situations deteriorating into homelessness through early intervention, which requires easily accessible and responsive services, is important for all groups.

Services are failing to mainstream provision so that can cater for the needs of all equality strands, which results in ghettoisation of groups, compounding the disadvantages that they experience. Services need to become more accessible to and be able to cater for people with complex needs.

The service responses for people that can be considered to fit into one or more of the equality strands are often inadequate to be able to cater for and be sensitive to the needs of people disadvantaged because of the age, disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation.

Action

A key priority for the Homelessness Plan is to ensure that everyone can access the services they need, in accordance with their needs, to help them to address their housing needs and the underlying difficulties.

A series of action plans will be developed, in partnership with delivery agents, to prioritise the activities that will be undertaken to deliver against the Homelessness Plan's objectives.

Ensuring equality of access to services will be a key consideration during the development of these action plans across all areas of the Homelessness Plan. These Action Plans will also be subject to Equality Impact Assessments.

Raising awareness is another key theme of the Homelessness Plan. How to do this will be considered during the action planning process.

The Homelessness Plan will reinforce the statutory duty to ensure that local service delivery is equality impact assessed. By equality impact assessing their services, local service delivery partners will be able to identify any issues that people from disadvantaged groups may have with accessing or receiving their service and be able to put measures in place to ensure that equalities are promoted and negative impacts are mitigated against. This will help to ensure that services are sensitive towards and able to cater for the needs of disadvantaged groups.

Systems developed for monitoring services need to include gathering and analysis of data relating to each of the equalities strands to identify any potential issues that place some groups at a disadvantage with regards to accessing services.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT - YOUNG AGE

Young People aged 16 to 25 are particularly at risk of experiencing homelessness as they move towards independent living.

Lack of life experience and systemic barriers make it more difficult for them to access services. They do not know what help is available or how to access it and often do not have any support to help them to overcome this. They often experience greater difficulties affording private rented sector accommodation because if on benefits they are subject to a single room rent limit and if in employment their inexperience often attracts lower incomes. Their lack of experience and life skills can make it difficult for them to successfully manage and maintain their accommodation. They can experience prejudice against them by some landlords because they can be perceived as high risk tenants.

Young People are not included within the Equalities Bill so it is even more important to ensure that they are not disadvantaged through policy developments and service delivery.

Action

There is a section of the Homelessness Plan dedicated to Young People in recognition of the need to address the particular needs of this age group if we are to achieve our aim of reducing homelessness to a minimum. Young age will also be a theme of the action planning for the Ten Year Homelessness Plan.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT - OLD AGE

Older People can experience homelessness for many of the same reasons as people of any other age. People with an entrenched lifestyle of rough sleeping become older. Accommodation can become no longer suitable because of deterioration in health and/or following discharge from hospital. Older people can also become subject to emotion and/or financial abuse within the home or relationship breakdown. Older people are also among the hidden homeless, being temporarily accommodated by friends of relatives.

Many of the issues that other disadvantaged groups are subject to, also apply to older people. As they become older, their disadvantages can become compounded.

There are a range of housing options available to older people, some of which, such as Sheltered housing, are exclusive to people over the age of 55, however not all older people will be eligible or find these schemes appropriate to their needs. Some landlords also find them attractive as tenants. However, the accommodation found can often not meet the needs of the individual. For example, older people who have to leave their home because of domestic abuse may be placed within settings that cater for their needs as an older person, but are unable to deal with their needs as a person who has experienced domestic abuse.

Action

The Welsh Assembly Government will be developing an Older Persons Housing Strategy which will seek to address the housing needs of the older generation. Older people will also be given specific consideration during the action planning process.

Improved access to services for people with mental and/or physical health problems, including people being discharged from hospital, are

also be covered in the Health and Homelessness Standards recently released .

Age Concern has recently released a report, One Voice, Shaping our ageing society, which is a useful source of information.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT - DISABILITY

The social model of disability proposes that systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently) are the ultimate factors defining who is disabled and who is not in a particular society. It recognizes that while some people have physical, sensory, intellectual, or psychological variations, which may sometimes cause individual functional limitation or impairments, these do not have to lead to disability, unless society fails to take account of and include people regardless of their individual differences. The model does not deny that some individual differences lead to individual limitations or impairments, but rather that these are not the cause of individuals being excluded.

Many people with a mental health problem, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, or combination of these, find it difficult to access accommodation that is suitable for their needs.

The accommodation needs of people who are disabled, or who experience deterioration in their physical ability, can often be catered for through reasonable adjustments, or adaptations, to make their homes suitable for their needs. This would be a better outcome than having to leave, or being unable to return to, their own accommodation due to it no longer being suitable for their needs.

Local authorities hold lists of accessible properties that can help to ensure that disabled people can have access to accommodation that meets their needs.

The concept of lifetime homes, where new houses are built to be accessible and adaptable to meet with changing needs, will help to ensure that more properties are accessible to people with disabilities.

The difficulties for people experiencing mental health in accessing services need to be considered.

Some people can have more than one disability and the difficulty accessing services is compounded where this is the case. An example would be for someone who is both deaf and blind.

Action

Access to information is an important issue. Information needs to be made available in a variety of accessible formats, including Braille, audio tape, the provision of British Sign Language Interpretation, and in plain English for people who may have difficulty understanding because of a learning disability.

If we are to ensure equality of access to service, then there needs to be increased awareness, for both those delivering services and those that need to access services, which can help public bodies understand their obligations and at the same time make it easier for the people they serve to ensure they are treated fairly.

The National Housing Strategy and subsequent action plans from that will seek to address issues surrounding the supply of and access to accommodation for all groups. This will also be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

Improved access to services for people with mental and/or physical health problems, including people being discharged from hospital, are also covered in the Health and Homelessness Standards recently released .

The Homelessness Plan highlights the need for a variety of communication techniques to be used when delivering services and information about services so that they can be made widely accessible and available. How this will be done will be considered during the action planning process.

All services have to comply with Disability Discrimination Act and ensure that services are accessible to people with a mental health problem, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, or combination of these.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT – GENDER

Some respondents to the consultation felt that the Plan should reflect the differing needs of people who are male, female or transgender, especially with regards to domestic abuse.

There is a need for gender sensitive services that can meet the needs of all genders.

Gender sensitive services need to include an awareness of and sensitivity to the cultural needs of ethnic minorities, where ignorance of these can have damaging consequences.

Honour based crimes and the inappropriateness of male service providers directly communicating with females from some ethnic minority groups are examples of issues that service providers need to be aware of and sensitive towards.

Action

The Homelessness Plan includes reference to the need for domestic abuse services to be tailored to meet the needs of all genders.

Local delivery partners will need to ensure that their services are sensitive towards and able to cater to the need of all genders. This will be considered during the implementation of the Homelessness Plan.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT - RACE

Some people experience discrimination because their appearance is different.

Many respondents to the consultation on the Ten Year Homelessness Plan thought that certain minority ethnic groups deserved special mention because of their cultural and linguistic needs and the difficulties that these caused with regards to accessing the help that they need. Gypsy Travellers, and Sikhs in particular were mentioned.

Also, refugees in some dispersal areas have reported experiencing racially motivated attacks where accommodation service providers have not been sensitive to known tensions within the host community.

The influx of migrant workers is having an impact on homelessness because of the increased demand on private sector rented accommodation. Migrant workers also are vulnerable to experiencing homelessness because they are not entitled to any public funded assistance if they lose their jobs and their homes. Some of the implications of Welsh Assembly Government policies will impact on the needs of migrant workers, such as driving up standards of accommodation in the private rented sector.

Action

Services that provide advice about housing options need to be sensitive towards the needs of people from different races. There is a need to dispel some of the myths and stereotypes surrounding values and beliefs of different races, such as the myth that people of a certain race are more likely to have stronger family values and look after their older generations. People from minority ethnic backgrounds become homeless for the same reasons as people from any background.

Although the Welsh Assembly Government acknowledges that the issue of destitution through no recourse to public funds is an issue, it does not have any powers to develop policy in this area and has to abide by the policy developed by UK Government.

Local delivery partners will need to ensure that their services are sensitive towards and able to cater to the needs of all races. This will be considered during the implementation of the Homelessness Plan.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT - RELIGION AND BELIEF

There is a general lack of baseline data on which to draw conclusions about the impact of homelessness on people of different religions and beliefs.

Housemark are undertaking some work around Hate Crime, which will be a useful source of information on how housing and homelessness impacts on religion. The outcomes of this will need to be considered during the review of the Equality Impact Assessment.

Religion can be a cause of homelessness where people leave accommodation that they feel does not respect their religious beliefs. This is especially the case where accommodation includes shared kitchen facilities.

Conflict could occur between different religious groups if accommodation services were not sensitive to their needs and did not consider potential for conflict when placing in accommodation. Some Muslims have reported an increase in the amount discrimination that they have been experiencing as a result of recent terrorist attacks.

Religion can affect accessibility of services. Services are often not sensitive to religious observances, which can become more important to people the older they get.

Action

There is a need for religious tolerance to allow for diversity. Services need to be sensitive towards the needs of all people who have religious beliefs. Stereotypes need to be addressed and myths dispelled. There is a need for greater awareness of religious sensitivities in order to make services more accessible to everyone.

Information gathering and analysis of monitoring data collected for each of the equalities strands needs to be improved. This needs to be built into any systems developed for monitoring service provision.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT - SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Anecdotal evidence of difficulties in accessing services due to discrimination or lack of awareness of issues surrounding sexuality is borne out by research completed by Stonewall Cymru and Triangle Wales (Grwp Gwalia) about the experiences of LGBT

people accessing housing services. This is further evidenced by work completed by the All Wales LGBT Housing Helpline managed by Gwalia that continues to receive telephone calls from LGBT individuals experiencing housing crisis.

The level of discrimination, bullying and hate crimes experienced by lesbian, gay and bisexual people can be a root cause of homelessness. Can also be a cause of homelessness where this causes conflict between families and friends.

Services are not sensitive towards, or set up to cater for, the needs of lesbian gay or bisexual people. When approaching local authorities or other housing related service providers for assistance with homelessness, people are asked to say why they are becoming homeless. Where the cause of homelessness is because of sexual orientation, this mean having to having to reveal something about themselves which they wish to keep private to complete strangers. This can be a huge barrier for accessing services and the response of some service providers is to deny access to services, such as gender specific services, because of sexual orientation. Where there is a reluctance to reveal sexual orientation, there is a difficult for service providers to be able to adequately access the needs of service users and shape the service response to be able to cater for those needs.

Action

There is a general lack of understanding or recognition of the issues relating to the accommodation needs and rights of same sex couples, such as tenancy rights. This needs to be addressed.

The Welsh Assembly Government, through it's homelessness plan, will promote the development and delivery of services which are sensitive towards and able to cater for the needs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

ACTION PLAN

A key priority for the Homelessness Plan is to ensure that everyone can access the services they need, in accordance with their needs, to help them to address their housing needs and the underlying difficulties.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with its delivery partners during the implementation of the Ten Year Homelessness Plan, to promote the development and delivery of services which are sensitive towards and able to cater for the needs of all groups that may be disadvantaged due to age, disability, gender, transgender, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with its delivery partners to develop systems for information gathering and analysing monitoring data relating to each of the equalities strands, as part of its service monitoring systems, to identify any potential issues that place some groups at a disadvantage with regards to accessing services.

The Homelessness Plan includes reference to the statutory duty that is placed on public services to undertake equality impact assessments of their services. The Housing Directorate within the Welsh Assembly Government will encourage the providers of services funded through its homelessness and supporting people grant programmes to undertake equality impact assessments of their services. Application forms for new bids for projects to be funded through homelessness and supporting people grant programmes will also be amended to include a question on how the project will impact on equalities.

For services to be accessible, information needs to be made available in a variety of accessible formats, including Braille, audio tape, the provision of British Sign Language Interpretation, and in plain English for people who may have difficulty understanding because of a learning disability. The Homelessness Plan highlights the need for a variety of communication techniques to be used when delivering services and information about services so that they can be made widely accessible and available.

If we are to ensure equality of access to service, then there needs to be increased awareness, for both those delivering services and those that need to access services, which can help public bodies understand their obligations and at the same time make it easier for the people they serve to ensure they are treated fairly. There is a need for greater awareness of, as well as sensitivity towards, all groups that may be disadvantaged due to age, disability, gender, transgender, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation, order to make services more accessible to everyone. Raising awareness is another key theme of the Homelessness Plan.

The recently released Health and Homelessness Standards will seek to address issues around improving access to healthcare services for all homeless people, including people with mental and/or physical health problems and people being discharged from hospital. All services have to comply with Disability Discrimination Act and ensure that services are accessible to people with a mental health problem, learning or physical disability, sensory impairment, or combination of these.

The National Housing Strategy and subsequent action plans from that will seek to address issues surrounding the supply of and access to accommodation for all groups. This will also be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

A series of action plans will be developed, in partnership with delivery agents, to prioritise the activities that will be undertaken to deliver against the Homelessness Plan's objectives. There will be a 2 year rolling programme of action planning, highlighting small number of key actions to deliver against the Ten Year Homelessness Plan, which will commence in the autumn of 2009. The detail on how to deliver against the Ten Year Homelessness Plan, including the actions in this Equality Impact Assessment, will be a key consideration of this action planning process. These Action Plans will also be subject to Equality Impact Assessments.

REVIEW

Date for review: June 2010

Appendix A - STRATEGIC AIMS AND BROADER VISION

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS WHEREVER POSSIBLE

Prevention should be the primary aim of all strategies and service planning to tackle homelessness. We want to ensure that everyone can access the help they need, when they need it, to find sustainable solutions to their housing difficulties and the underlying causes of these. There is a need to raise awareness of the services that are available, how and when these can be accessed, as well as how they can help to avoid future homelessness.

A range of good quality, effective, easily accessible and widely publicised housing and related services are needed. These need to work together, focussing on early identification and intervention and advising of all available housing options. This requires a reinforced focus on the assessment of needs when people approach services for housing assistance. This should be used as the basis for personal housing planning with a pathway to securing stable housing circumstances and addressing related needs and behaviours.

WORKING ACROSS ORGANISATIONAL AND POLICY BOUNDARIES

Statutory, private and voluntary sector service staff, at service planning a delivery levels, within and across service areas, all need to work together if we are to achieve our objectives. A list of related policy areas is included as Appendix A. Each of these policy areas are interdependent and mutually benefit from the early identification and intervention which can prevent the deterioration of the underlying issues. Effective information sharing protocols and referral mechanisms are essential to ensure that each can play a role in supporting the others to achieve their objectives.

The Welsh Assembly Government will provide a lead in setting the long term strategic direction for services, which will focus on outcomes, whilst facilitating, encouraging and supporting a partnership approach towards delivering the Homelessness Plan. This will allow delivery partners the opportunity to take greater responsibility for defining the means of achieving our objectives.

The Welsh Assembly Government will work with its delivery partners to ensure that systems, processes and mechanisms used for gathering information on need and performance management are useful and accurate for planning purposes. The Welsh Assembly Government will also encourage the development and promotion of good practice, ensuring systems are in place to enable the identification and dissemination of what works so that everyone can learn from each other.

Effective homelessness planning is essential to ensure services minimise the risk of homelessness. Local authorities are required to incorporate this planning into their housing strategies, and their partners are expected to work with them to identify needs and plan the delivery of services. Local authorities and their partners need to effectively plan to meet the needs of individuals and households at risk of homelessness. This needs to be evidenced through local strategic planning documents relating to relevant service areas.

A broad and diverse range of partners need to be involved in local planning, from Local Health Boards, Youth Offending Teams and employment services to Third sector providers and the private rented sector. Housing Associations have a particular responsibility to work with local authorities in tackling homelessness, as a major provider of social housing and a broad range of related services. Through the allocation and management of housing, as providers of temporary accommodation, partners in social lettings agencies and a range of other opportunities, Housing Associations have the capacity and responsibility to play a major role in supporting local authorities to prevent and alleviate homelessness. This challenge needs to be one of their core aims.

PLACING THE SERVICE USER AT THE CENTRE OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Homeless people have a diverse range of needs, characteristics and experiences, so a one size fits all approach will not suffice. Services need to be responsive to and designed around the varying needs of the people who use them.

Services should be provided to counter the factors that are placing individuals or households at risk of homelessness before they reach crisis point. There is already a level of awareness and understanding of these, which include:

- Abusive and non-abusive breakdown of relationships
- Lack of security of tenure for carers and others living with friends or relatives, as well as some private rented sector tenants
- Poor housing conditions and/or overcrowding.
- Financial hardship that leads to evictions for rent arrears or repossessions for mortgage arrears.
- Lack of capability to sustain their accommodation, because of issues such as mental or physical illness of disability, substance misuse and young or old age.
- Entering or being discharged from prison, care, hospital or armed forces.

A variety of communication and engagement techniques, [sensitive to the language and cultural needs of service users](#), need to be developed so that services are approachable and inclusive. Services should be empowering, allowing everyone to have choice, self-determination and control, giving homeless people maximum self-sufficiency and support to help themselves.

Service users need to be enabled to play a role in contributing to the planning, design and monitoring of homeless services. Services must actively encourage and support service user participation, engaging meaningfully with their service users so that their needs are at the heart of service delivery, and their views and experiences shape the way that services are designed.

ENSURING SOCIAL INCLUSION AND EQUALITY OF ACCESS TO SERVICES

The Welsh Assembly Government has a vision of a fair and just Wales where everyone can live free from poverty, discrimination, fear or abuse. We will work with the new Single Equality Body to promote equality across all our policies, including delivery of this Plan. ~~The approach we are taking is that this equalities approach must be mainstreamed through the Plan, rather than bolted on.~~ [A central theme of the Plan is to promote equality of access to services for everyone in accordance with their needs, and for](#)

services to be designed around and able to cater for the needs of all groups. However, in taking forward the actions necessary to implement the Plan we will give particular focus to sections of society who are likely to be disadvantaged on grounds of ~~race, religion, age, sexuality, gender and disability~~ age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

It is a statutory requirement for public authorities to proactively work to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. An equality impact assessment has been undertaken to ensure that this Plan does not adversely affect or discriminate against any equality group and to consider how the policy may help to further develop equality. Raising awareness amongst the people who use, as well as the people who provide, services, can help public bodies understand their obligations and at the same time make it easier for the people they serve to ensure they are treated fairly

MAKING THE BEST USE OF RESOURCES

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. Local authorities have a role to play, along with their delivery partners and the Welsh Assembly Government, in making the best use of existing resources. We must invest in those services which can demonstrate their effectiveness in contributing towards the achievement of strategic priorities.. Investment through spend to save initiatives will also be needed to refocus our resources effectively. Local authorities, along with their delivery partners and the Assembly Government, will need to consider the level of investment needed to deliver required services. In a finite resource environment, duplication must be cut to ensure that best strategic match.

APPENDIX B - PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS FROM DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic Abuse is recognised as being a significant cause of homelessness. It can have an adverse impact on family health and wellbeing, and is also a major factor in child protection cases. The effects of living with domestic abuse for children in particular can be linked to poor educational achievement, social exclusion and juvenile crime, substance misuse, mental health problems and homelessness.

The Welsh Assembly Government's vision was set down in the *All Wales National Strategy: Tackling Domestic Abuse – a Joint-Agency Approach*, which was published in March 2005. The principles that underpin the strategy include protection and support for victims, perpetrator accountability and prevention. The strategy provides an important framework for the development of local action, and emphasises the need for joint-agency working in order to share information and best practise.

As a means of preventing homelessness, schemes that make properties more secure are widely recognised as an appropriate way to enhance the personal safety of the victim and support those who wish to remain in their homes. Where it is not safe to remain in the home, there are refuges operating or in development in every local authority across Wales, providing crisis accommodation and support services to people who have experienced domestic abuse. Floating support services also help to meet the housing and support needs of people who have experienced domestic abuse.

What we want to achieve

We want all people experiencing, or in fear of, domestic abuse, to have access to wide ranging advice and support services which enable them to live in their homes safely and free for fear. We want the first choice for people who have experienced domestic abuse to be to remain in their own homes. Where necessary we want the further development of services that can make it safe for them to do so. We also recognise the need for all people at risk of abuse to be able to access suitable emergency accommodation to protect them from harm and support them to move on to a more secure home environment as soon as possible.

We want to see improving multi-agency working, effective information sharing protocols, as well as training for front line homelessness staff. We also want to see improved access to services that can cater for the needs of perpetrators, children and young people, people with disabilities, ~~men,~~ people of all genders, older people experiencing physical or other types of abuse, people in rural Wales, people who do not speak English or Welsh, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, as well as people whose mental health or substance misuse difficulties necessitate a high level of support.