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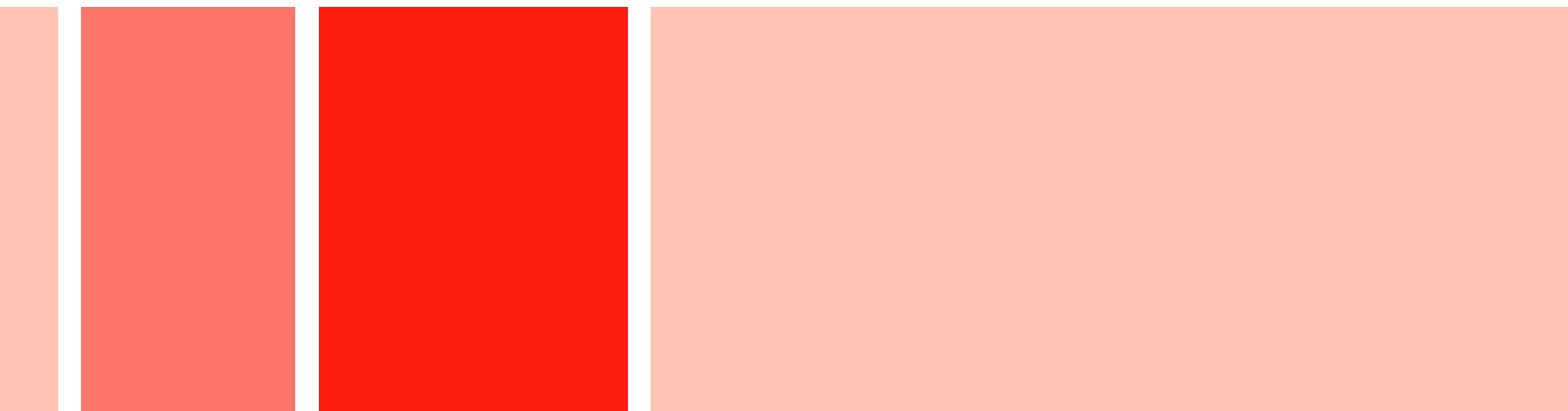


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Welsh Government

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Local Authority projects to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform, using Homelessness Grant funding:

Monitoring report, October 2011-September 2012
(periods 1 and 2)



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1 Introduction and background

- 1.1 This report presents findings from the first and second monitoring periods for local authority projects set up using Welsh Government Homelessness Grant funding to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform.
- 1.2 In October 2010, the UK government announced a public spending review and introduced their Welfare Reform Bill. The reforms include a significant number of changes to the way housing benefit is calculated and administered. Initial changes were introduced in April 2011 with a rolling programme intended to culminate in April 2013 with the introduction of universal credit. In order to mitigate the impact of the housing benefit changes upon tenancies, the Welsh Government made £1.4 million available for the period April 2011 to March 2013, to local authorities (LAs) for use in introducing a programme of approved work with landlords and tenants with the intention that tenancies can be sustained.
- 1.3 The Welsh Government encouraged LAs to look at their local circumstances and strategic priorities when applying for funding, taking into account the conditions of the grant as set out in 2.3 below. This resulted in a number of different models being approved. The models are based on tenant casework, working with landlords, raising awareness of the changes and bringing empty homes back into use.
- 1.4 The principal purpose of the grant is for LAs to prevent homelessness as a result of the changes to the housing benefit regime. The conditions of the grant specified that, in order to prevent homelessness, local authority projects should involve:
 - Identification of and work with vulnerable people to reduce the risk of tenancy breakdown and enable them to access housing.
 - Work with private landlords to sustain and increase access to affordable homes.
 - Work across departmental boundaries.
 - Work with external partners.
 - Adaptation of housing benefit team practices.
- 1.5 The Minister responsible for Housing and Regeneration is keen to understand the effects of the grant funding in allowing LAs to bring about innovative solutions to address the risks associated with housing benefit changes, and a monitoring and evaluation framework has been put in place. The framework has two elements:

(i) A monitoring system has been put in place whereby a small number of standardised quantitative data items and qualitative information are being collected by Welsh Government from all LAs. In respect of three, the six month periods between:

- October 2011 and March 2012.
- April 2012 and September 2012.
- October 2012 and March 2013.

This interim report provides an overview showing how all LAs have progressed during the first and second periods.

(ii) A set of evaluation case studies has been commissioned. The contract to undertake the work was awarded to a partnership of organisations that are part of the Housing Research Network within the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods (WISERD), and is being led by Shelter Cymru. The following seven local authority projects were selected for case studies:

- Partnership between three LAs, incorporating landlord-focused and casework-focused methods: Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.
- Casework-focused methods: Swansea and Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- Landlord-focused methods: Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly.
- Focus on bringing empty homes back into use: Carmarthenshire.

1.6 The case studies provide a more detailed interim process and impact evaluation of the above sample of projects, and present much more detail about their approaches, operation, management and impacts. The case studies commenced in May 2012. The final report of the case studies was published in conjunction with this monitoring report. This report provides an overview of the work of all LAs, and the case studies report provides a detailed examination of a sample of seven.

1.7 In addition, the Welsh Government has contributed £120,000 to a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) research programme aimed at measuring the social and demographic impact of housing benefit reform. Denbighshire, Cardiff and Rhondda Cynon Taf have been selected as pilot study areas for the programme. The research will involve some contact with local authority housing benefit officers. Initial findings of this work were published in the spring of 2012. Publication of further results from this study is awaited.

http://research.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd5/report_abstracts/rr_abstracts/rra_798.asp

1.8 A steering group has been set up to oversee the monitoring and evaluation work, and includes officers from the Welsh Government Homelessness Policy

Team and Knowledge and Analytical Services (KAS), and the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA).

2 Summary of Key Findings

- 2.1 The key points arising from the data collection exercise for periods 1 and 2 were as follows:
- 2.2 Workers were appointed by Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Conwy, Denbighshire, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan before October 2011. By March 2012, Anglesey, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot, Ceredigion, Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil had also taken on workers. Later appointments were made in Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Wrexham. Carmarthenshire, Monmouthshire, Newport, Pembrokeshire and Torfaen did not make appointments with the grant. It is understood that some work was also undertaken in Powys.
- 2.3 During period 1, nearly 1,000 private sector landlords (out of 15 LAs reporting) and more than 1,000 private sector tenants (out of 14 LAs reporting) had been provided with services and advice, for the first time. By the end of period 2, nearly 2,000 landlords (out of 16 LAs reporting) and over 4,000 tenants (out of 17 LAs reporting) had been provided with services and advice through these projects.
- 2.4 At 31 September 2012, the rate (per 1,000 population) of private sector tenants who were housing benefit recipients and eligible for local housing allowance (LHA) varied between 14 and 44 across LAs, and had changed little since 31 March 2012.
- 2.5 The proportion of tenants in receipt of transitional protection fell considerably in the six months from 31 March 2012 to 30 September 2012, when it ranged between 0% and 22%, amongst authorities reporting. The average rate of 29% at 31 March 2012, fell to 8% at 30 September 2012¹. This was to be expected as transitional protection was only intended to offer temporary relief (see footnote 5).
- 2.6 At 30 September 2012, amongst LAs who returned relevant data for both periods, 61% of tenants had rent levels which exceeded the local housing allowance, compared with 65% at 31 March 2012^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}.
- 2.7 The average rate of private sector tenancies where the landlord received direct housing benefit payments on tenants' behalf, was 26% across the 16 LAs who returned relevant data².

¹ The change in the average rate is calculated only for local authorities that reported these figures in both periods.

² The period 2 figure for Ceredigion, at 140%, was deemed to be an outlier and removed from the data for analysis.

- 2.8 In both six month periods, most authorities spent less than half of their annual DHP allocation. In period 1, only one-third of LAs reporting spent more than half of their annual allocation whilst less than a quarter of LAs did so for period 2.
- 2.9 The rate of homelessness cases³ where private sector rent arrears were identified as the main factor was low, at 5% or less in all LAs in period 1, and at 6% or less in all LAs in period 2.
- 2.10 Most authorities provided evidence of partnership working with people external to the organisation, principally with private sector landlords. Most commonly, this involved indirect support through landlord forums and distribution of information.
- 2.11 Nearly half of LAs reported that they were overcoming barriers to landlord and tenant engagement through direct contact with landlords, and many were offering tangible and material benefits to provide assistance and incentives to making properties available. Nearly a quarter were making direct contact with tenants, and some were working alongside support services to do this. Many authorities noted they were mediating between landlords and tenants.
- 2.12 Most also reported changes to housing benefit team practices in order to prevent homelessness, principally through closer liaison between housing benefit and housing options or homelessness teams, external organisations and landlords. Others reported changes in systems for identifying and supporting tenants most at risk of losing their homes, and changes to the targeting and administration of DHPs.
- 2.13 Many local authorities made the general comment that they anticipate the impact of housing benefit reform worsening over the next few years, and the number of people whose tenancies are at risk, to grow.

3 Appointment of project workers

- 3.1 Whilst all LAs submitted project proposals during the spring of 2011, Cardiff, and Powys did not claim any grant for either 2011-12 or 2012-13⁴. Three-quarters of authorities (16) appointed a project worker to take forward the work. In the remaining cases; Carmarthenshire, Monmouthshire, Newport, Pembrokeshire and Torfaen, an appointment was not involved. (See Appendix 1 for more detailed descriptions of project aims.) Amongst authorities making appointments, officers did not tend to take up the post until after June 2011. In Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Conwy, Denbighshire, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan, appointments were made before October 2011, the beginning of the first monitoring period. By March 2012 - the end of the first monitoring period - Anglesey, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Neath Port Talbot, Ceredigion,

³ Households which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

⁴ As of 5 March 2013.

Bridgend and Merthyr Tydfil had also taken on workers. In Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Wrexham, appointments were made between April and October 2012.

4 Monitoring system – Data collection returns

- 4.1 LAs were issued with monitoring data return forms at the end of March 2012 which sought details relating to the first period (1 October 2011 to 30 March 2012) and again in November 2012 for the second period (1 April 2012 to 30 September 2012). The data items included figures about households found to be homeless where rent arrears were a factor, housing benefit claimants, transitional protection, rent levels and landlords and tenants supported through their project.
- 4.2 Copies of the data collection return forms for periods 1 and 2 appear in Appendix 2.

Data coverage

- 4.3 Of the 22 LAs in Wales, 20 returned data collection forms for period 1, and 21 LAs returned data collection forms for period 2. No returns were received from Wrexham or Powys for period 1. For period 2, no return was received from Anglesey. Most authorities provided figures about the numbers of households found to be homeless where rent arrears were a factor, about the number of tenancies where the landlord was in receipt of direct housing benefit payments and about the amount of DWP Discretionary Housing Payment allocated to them and spent during this reporting period. Over three-quarters provided figures about transitional protection, rent levels and the number of landlords and tenants that had received support during the period.
- 4.4 Less than half of the authorities were able to provide information about whether tenants had remained in their tenancies, whether their rent levels had reduced, and whether this related to the payment of rent directly to landlords, and reported that because tenants do not always report rent changes to the local authority quickly, any data provided was unlikely to be up-to-date. No patterns could be drawn from the figures provided in period 1, and it was decided to remove these items from the form in period 2.

5 Findings

- 5.1 The paragraphs below present a summary of the data returned. Where appropriate, data from other sources have been included. More detailed information about the data and performance information provided by each authority appears in Appendix 1.

Landlords and tenants provided with services and advice throughout the projects

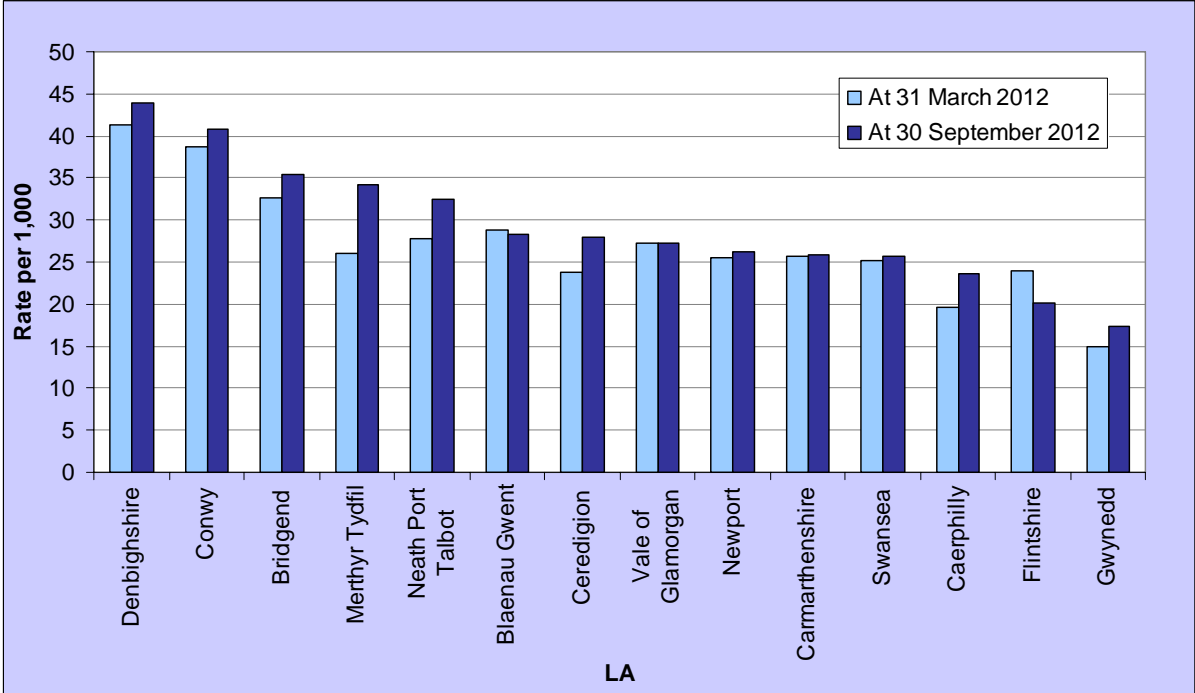
- 5.2 Throughout periods 1 and 2, all LAs provided private sector landlords and tenants with services and advice as part of the project. The types of services and advice could vary considerably between LAs, from personalised mail to phone or face-to-face contact, so it is not possible to make accurate comparisons between LAs here. However total figures for services and advice provided to landlords and tenants for all LAs who returned relevant data, helps to show the activity funded through this project since October 2011.
- 5.3 During period 1, nearly 1,000 private sector landlords (out of 15 LAs reporting) and more than 1,000 private sector tenants (out of 14 LAs reporting) had been provided with services and advice, for the first time. By the end of period 2, nearly 2,000 landlords (out of 16 LAs reporting) and over 4,000 tenants (out of 17 LAs reporting) had been provided with services and advice through these projects.

Tenants, housing benefit recipients and rent levels

- 5.4 Most LAs provided figures for the number of private sector tenants in receipt of housing benefit at the end of each reporting period. For period 2, each reported between 14 persons per 1,000⁵ (the lowest rate, reported in Monmouthshire) and 44 persons per 1,000 (the highest rate, reported in Denbighshire). These findings are similar to those from period 1, where between 15 persons per 1,000 (Gwynedd) and 41 persons per 1,000 (Denbighshire) were reported. Since period 1, Gwynedd's rate has increased to 17 persons per 1,000, whilst Denbighshire's rate remains the highest.
- 5.5 Chart 1 shows comparisons between periods 1 and 2 for the number of private sector tenants in receipt of housing benefit at the end of each period, for each LA that returned relevant data for both periods.

⁵ Rate per 1,000 population aged over 16, 2011 Census: Usual resident population by broad age group and local authority, Welsh Government:
<https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Census/2011/UsualResidentPopulation-by-BroadAgeGroup-LocalAuthority>.

Chart 1: Rate of private sector tenants in receipt of housing benefit per 1,000 adult population



Source: Welsh Government monitoring data collection, periods 1 and 2. Local Authorities reporting in both periods only

5.6 The rate of tenants who were in receipt of transitional protection (TP)⁶ at 30 September 2012, ranged between 0% in Rhondda Cynon Taf and 22% in Neath Port Talbot, averaging 8% amongst the 18 authorities reporting. This TP rate had fallen substantially since the end of period 1 (31 March 2012) when the proportion of tenants in receipt of TP ranged between 19% (Gwynedd) and 42% (Swansea)⁷. When comparing the rates across LAs who returned relevant data for both periods, the average rate of 8% in period 2 compared to 29% in period 1 is an indication of the general decrease of tenants in receipt of TP. This fall was to be expected, as transitional protection was only intended to offer temporary relief (see footnote 6).

5.7 At 30 September 2012 (period 2), the proportion of tenants for whom weekly rent exceeded the local housing allowance (LHA) rate ranged between 0% in Torfaen and Rhondda Cynon Taf and 96% in the Vale of Glamorgan, with an average of 61% amongst the 16 authorities reporting. At 31 March 2012 (period 1) the range was less, from 35% in Caerphilly to 80% in Denbighshire, averaging 65% amongst 14 authorities reporting. These figures are broadly in

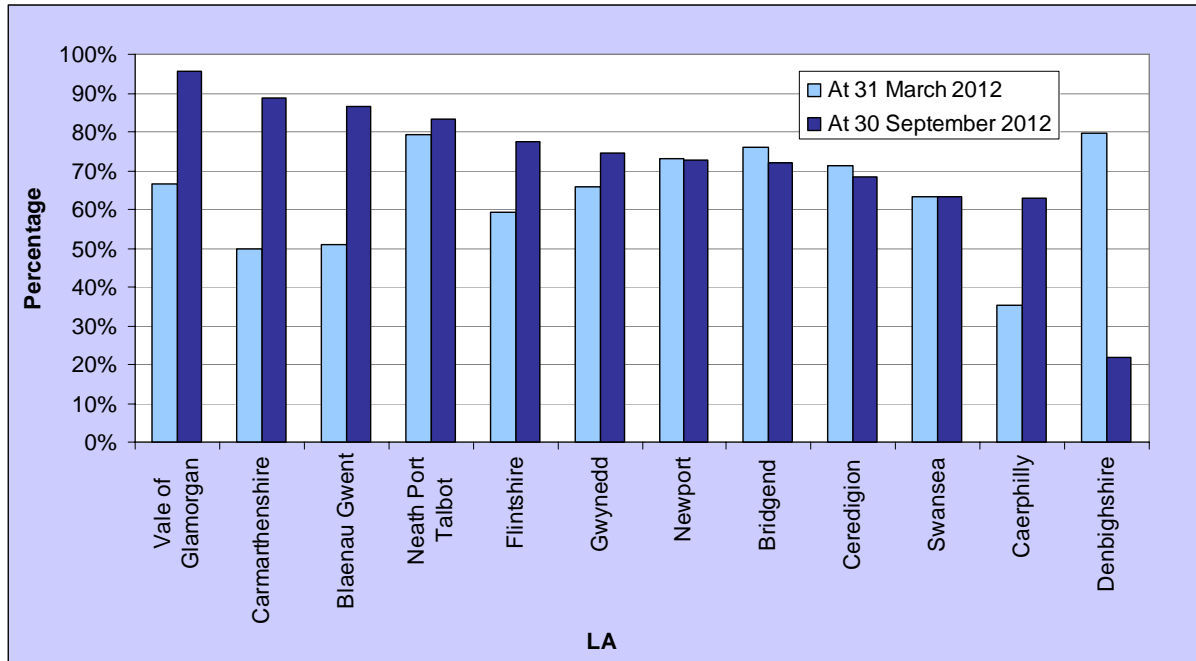
⁶ Transitional protection provided for tenants to receive a weekly top-up of housing benefit for a limited period of up to nine months, ending at the date for which their benefit was subject to annual review. It allowed tenants to continue at the current rate of benefit, allowing them time to adjust to their new benefit rate. When their claim was reviewed, the top-up was withdrawn. It was expected that the last top-ups would be withdrawn by December 2012.

⁷ The period 1 figure for Carmarthenshire at 3%, was deemed to be an outlier and removed from the data for analysis. The period 2 figure for that authority at 11%, showed a substantial increase which again ran contrary to the trend for all authorities, and supported the earlier decision to exclude their period 1 figure.

line with the findings of the DWP research (see paragraph 1.7 above) which found the rate to be just over two-thirds of claimants whose LHA would be less than their rent. Because LAs may not be notified about a rent change until a claimant's case is reviewed, it is possible that this information might be slightly out-of-date.

5.8 Chart 2 shows comparisons between periods 1 and 2 for the proportion of tenants for whom weekly rent exceeded the LHA rate at the end of each period, for each LA that returned relevant data for both periods.

Chart 2: Percentage of tenants with weekly rent exceeding LHA rate



Source: Welsh Government monitoring data collection, periods 1 and 2. Local Authorities reporting in both periods only

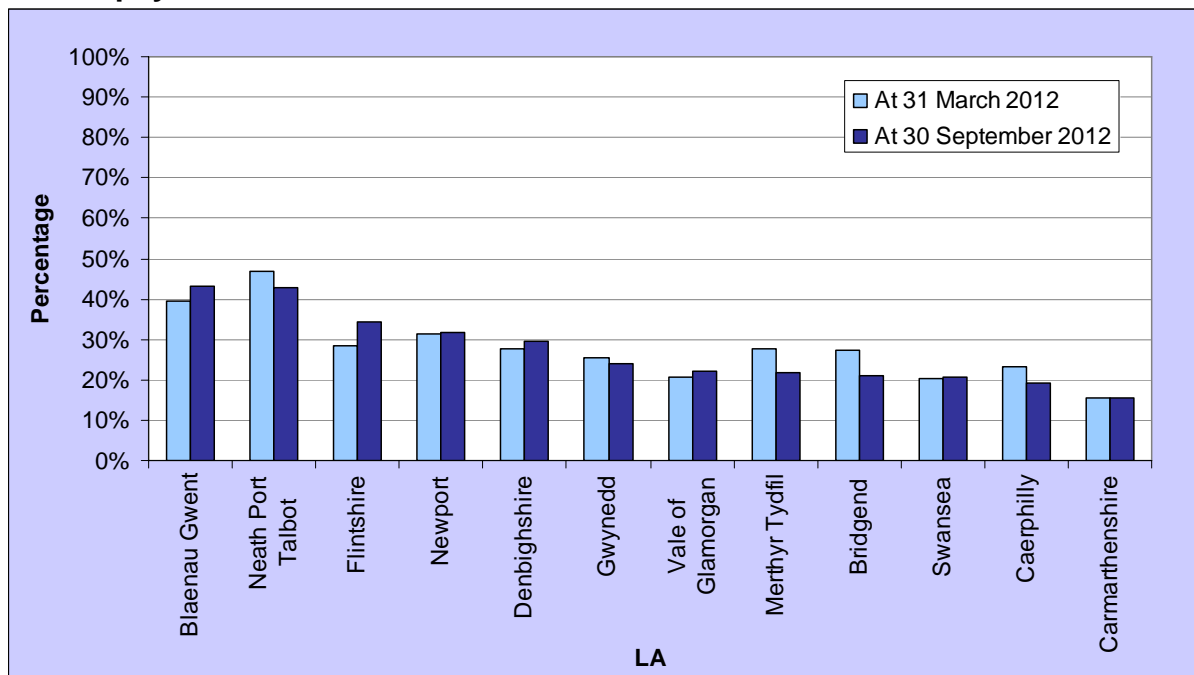
Direct payment of housing benefit to landlords

5.9 Authorities were asked to state the number of tenancies where the landlord was in receipt of direct housing benefit payments at 31 March 2012 and at 30 September 2012. The rate ranged between 16% (Carmarthenshire) and 47% (Neath Port Talbot) at 31 March 2012 (period 1). At 30 September 2012 (period 2), the rate ranged between 43% (Neath Port Talbot and Blaenau Gwent) and 16% (Carmarthenshire and Torfaen), with an average rate of 26% from 16 LAs who returned relevant data⁸.

5.10 Chart 3 shows comparisons between periods 1 and 2 for the percentage of tenancies where the landlord was in receipt of direct housing benefit payments at the end of each period, for each LA that returned relevant data for both periods.

⁸ The period 2 figure for Ceredigion at 140%, was deemed to be an outlier and removed from the data for analysis.

Chart 3: Percentage of tenancies with landlord in receipt of direct housing benefit payments



Source: Welsh Government monitoring data collection, periods 1 and 2. Local Authorities reporting in both periods only

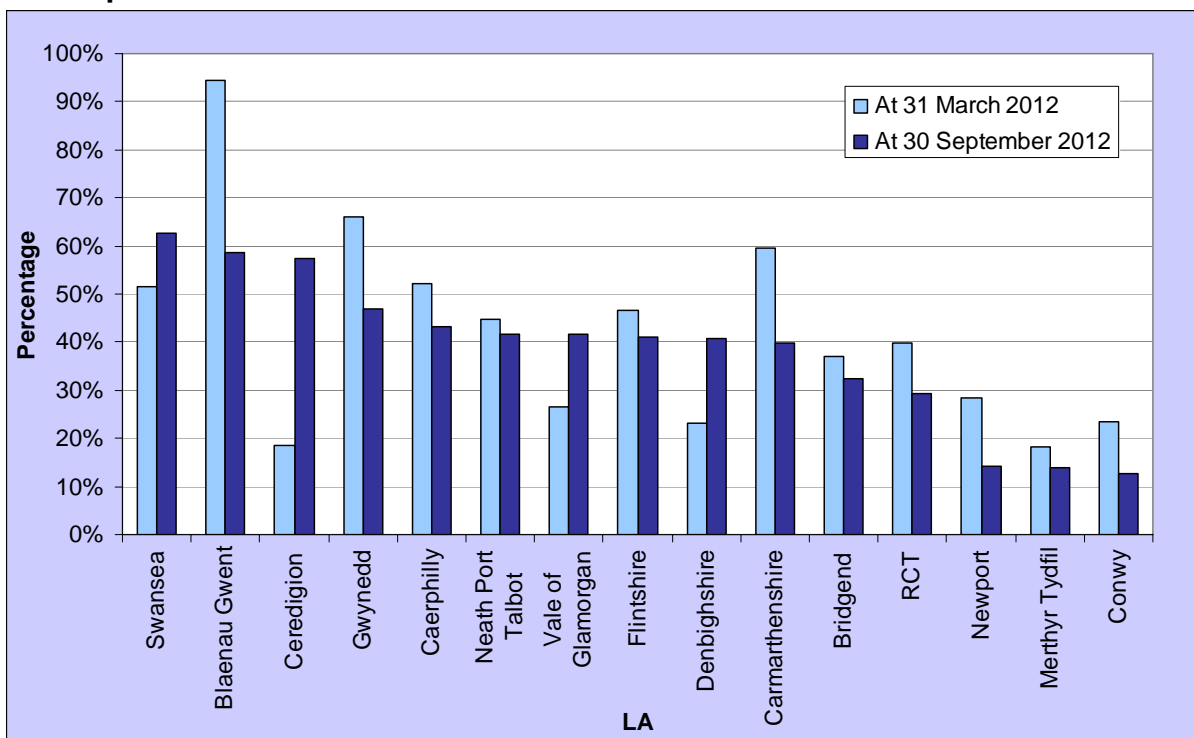
Discretionary Housing Payments

- 5.11 The amount of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) allocated to authorities for the full 2011-12 financial year, ranged between over £290,000 in Cardiff to just under £14,000 in Merthyr Tydfil. For the 2012-13 financial year, the amount allocated to authorities ranged between just over £340,000 in Newport to just over £32,000 in Merthyr Tydfil. Newport's allocation was significantly higher in period 2 than in period 1 (just under £50,000). Only Ceredigion was allocated less DHP in period 2 than in period 1 (around £120,000 compared with £220,000 in period 1). It is worth noting that although Cardiff could not provide this figure in their period 2 return, it is likely they would have been allocated the highest amount of DHP.
- 5.12 It was assumed that most authorities would spend at least half of their annual allocation during each six month period, the demand for DHPs increasing gradually from January 2012 as tenants' transitional protection came to an end. However in period 1, only one-third (six out of 18) of LAs reporting spent more than half of their annual allocation, whilst less than a quarter (four out of 19) of LAs did so for period 2. The lowest rate for period 2 was in Conwy, where only 13% of the annual DHP allocation was spent in the six months to 30 September 2012. Low rates of expenditure were also reported in Merthyr Tydfil, where 14% was spent (a decrease from the 18% spent in period 1 - the lowest proportion for this period) and Newport where 14% was also spent in period 2 (compared with 29% in period 1). In four authorities, the proportion of the DHP allocation spent in period 2 was higher than in period 1. Ceredigion's expenditure increased from 19% in period 1 to 58% in period 2. A considerable amount of DHP allocation was spent by Blaenau Gwent in period

1 (95%) which decreased to 59% in period 2, although this remains a large proportion in comparison to other authorities. It is important to continue to monitor the level of expenditure by LAs on Discretionary Housing Payments. It is within the power of authorities to spend money from other budgets, above the amount allocated by the DWP, but the monitoring data collected does not indicate that this power has been used, perhaps due to other pressures on local authority budgets.

5.13 Chart 4 shows comparisons between periods 1 and 2 for the percentage of annual DHP allocation spent at the end of each period, for each LA that returned relevant data for both periods.

Chart 4: Percentage of annual DHP allocation spent at the end of each six month period



Source: Welsh Government monitoring data collection, periods 1 and 2. Local Authorities reporting in both periods only

Homelessness due to private sector rent arrears

5.14 National Statistics published in June 2012⁹ in respect of period 1, showed that the proportion of homeless households¹⁰ where rent arrears on private sector dwellings were identified as the main cause of homelessness was very small, at less than 5% in all LAs. National Statistics published in December 2012, in respect of period 2, showed a similarly small proportion (6% or less in all LAs).

⁹ Homelessness Statistics, Welsh Government 2012: <http://www.statswales.wales.gov.uk/ReportFolders/reportFolders.aspx>

¹⁰ Households which were eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need.

Whilst rent arrears may not be the *main* cause of homelessness in many instances, it is useful to understand the extent to which it may be a factor behind households losing their homes. Please see Appendix 1 for more information on private sector rent arrears as a contributory factor in investigations of homelessness. It is important to note that the factors leading to a household becoming homeless may be complex, and even where rent arrears do not appear to be a contributory factor, financial pressures may underlie other more obvious reasons, such as relationship breakdown.

Qualitative information provided by local authorities

5.15 In addition to the data items sought, local authorities were asked to provide details about:

- how they had fostered partnership working with landlords and external organisations to prevent homelessness due to housing benefit reform;
- how they had used the funding to overcome barriers to landlord and tenant engagement; and
- how their housing benefit teams had adapted their practices in order to prevent homelessness.

Their responses to these questions are summarised in the paragraphs below.

Working with external partners

(Collected for period 1 only)

Private sector landlords

- 5.16 Seventeen local authorities (all responding) gave evidence of partnership working. Just over two-thirds of these (12), reported activities to engage private sector landlords. Attendance by the officer appointed through the grant at landlord forums was very common – about a third of authorities noted that they made presentations at forum meetings, or took part in running the forum meetings. One authority mentioned that landlords are consulted in the development of private rented sector strategy.
- 5.17 Other work with landlords as a group cited by four authorities, included producing information in the form of leaflets and web-based advice and promoting the Landlord Accreditation Wales Scheme (LAWS).
- 5.18 Sending information letters, being available as a point of contact, and providing direct support and advice were also popular examples of direct work with landlords. Three authorities mentioned that they negotiate with landlords individually about reducing their rents. One authority reported offering mediation to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants, and another uses their Section 180 grant to provide financial help to owners of empty properties to repair and refurbish them for rental to people in housing need.

Registered Social Landlords

- 5.19 Partnership work with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) was mentioned by two authorities. One noted its work with a housing association to develop shared accommodation, and another reported joint work with RSLs in producing and distributing information about housing benefit advice and support.

Other organisations

- 5.20 Two authorities were raising awareness of welfare reforms amongst statutory and voluntary care and support organisations.
- 5.21 Three authorities reported that they had used the funds to forge partnerships with other organisations: the Energy Savings Trust, a local Credit Union and the House Share Wales initiative.

Adaptation of housing benefit team practices to prevent homelessness

(Periods 1 and 2)

- 5.22 Over the two periods, 19 authorities provided information about how their housing benefit team practices had been adapted in order to prevent homelessness.

Closer working between teams

- 5.23 The most common way in which practices were adapted using the grant, was in closer working between housing benefit and housing options or homelessness teams (15 authorities). Most of these specifically noted changes in the referral systems and practices between housing benefit teams, housing options and homelessness teams. A typical example was where the housing benefit section refers all cases to the worker funded through the grant, where the tenant is more than eight weeks in arrears and is considered vulnerable, and the funded worker then takes direct action to contact the tenant to suggest options to help them to sustain the tenancy. One authority noted that the officer appointed through the grant was based in both housing and housing benefit teams. Three authorities mentioned specific joint work to target under-35s, one noted that joint visits are made to these claimants, and two others noted that people in this group are referred by housing benefit staff to the project worker for direct support.
- 5.24 The allocation and targeting of DHPs was mentioned by nearly half (eight) authorities as being done jointly by housing benefit and housing options or grant funded workers.

Changes to DHP administration

- 5.25 Fifteen authorities described changes to the way in which housing benefit teams administer DHPs. In addition to the eight mentioned above, which had developed a joint approach with housing options or homelessness teams, a further seven described other changes to DHP management. One noted that it is the grant-funded worker alone who processes DHP applications. Amongst these authorities, one noted that the funded worker provides support for tenants to plan how they will meet rent payments when DHP ends. Another authority noted that the Section 180 worker monitors DHPs to ensure that they are appropriately targeted. Further changes were in the form of pro-active promotion of the payments, the development and implementation of guidance for DHP award decisions (two authorities) and changes in use and targeting of payments (three authorities). It was noted how processes had been put in place to target tenants who had been identified as vulnerable, at risk of homelessness, or aged under 35. One authority mentioned that DHPs are used on a temporary basis whilst support organisations are engaged to help the household secure alternative affordable accommodation, and another noted that DHPs were used for deposits and rent in advance as well as short-term tenancy sustainment.

Closer working with other organisations

- 5.26 Four authorities mentioned that housing benefit staff were working more closely with other organisations and with landlords. One mentioned having developed a project with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to offer additional support services for housing benefit claimants, and three mentioned closer working between housing benefit staff and landlords. Six authorities mentioned improvements to the way housing benefit staff provide information and advice to tenants and landlords.

Overcoming barriers to landlord and tenant engagement

(Period 2 only)

- 5.27 For period 2, 19 authorities provided information about how they are using the funding to overcome barriers to landlord and tenant engagement.

Contact with landlords

- 5.28 Authorities noted that work undertaken to overcome barriers to landlord and tenant engagement mainly focused on contact with the landlord, with around half of the LAs (10) attending or organising landlord forums and nine acting as the contact point for landlords or directly approaching them to offer information and support. One authority noted their practice of making direct contact with new landlords to offer access to accreditation training, an invitation to landlord forum meetings and to make them aware of the support provided. Another

authority reported contacting landlords that had sent in a request for direct payment of rent.

- 5.29 Seven authorities mentioned offers of tangible and material benefits to landlords. These included the provision of grant to bring empty homes back into use for rent through the social lettings agency (one authority), the incentive of providing low level housing management on landlords' behalf (two authorities) the use of funds to assist with free sign-up and letting fees as well as help with costs associated with a rent guarantee scheme (one authority), allowing delayed repayment of grant (one authority), an offer of advertising (two authorities) and assistance with bonds (one authority).

Liaison between landlords and tenants

- 5.30 The project worker in seven authorities reported liaising or mediating between landlords and tenants.

Contact with tenants

- 5.31 Five authorities noted that they made contact with tenants, and most of these reported acting as a liaison between landlord and tenant. One mentioned offering a holistic support service of individual 'outreach' appointments for tenants.
- 5.32 Specific examples of work to engage tenants included directly contacting individuals that were likely to be affected by forthcoming changes and providing assistance with completion of DHP applications. One authority mentioned joint working with mental health and other support services to engage vulnerable tenants, and another noted that the use of individual door-knocking and texting was more effective than letters.

General comments from local authorities

- 5.33 Many local authorities made the general comment that they anticipate the impact of housing benefit reform worsening over the next few years, and the number of people whose tenancies are at risk, to grow. They noted a number of factors in support of this view. Tenants who are dependent on other benefits might in future see a reduction in their overall income due to other welfare reform changes. They may find that they have fully exploited opportunities to economise or borrow, or used up savings. Further, should they decide to move to cheaper accommodation, in some areas the amount of available smaller and more affordable accommodation is finite and limited and this option may not be possible.
- 5.34 The study commissioned by the DWP to monitor the impact of housing benefit reforms (noted on page five a), found that respondents to their survey who had a rent shortfall (two-thirds of housing benefit recipients) had taken a range of actions to supplement it, which included economising on items in their household budget, drawing on other benefits and borrowing money from family and friends.

Individual local authority performance

5.35 Local authorities were also asked to write a paragraph about their approach to and performance of their projects. These individual authority responses are summarised in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1: Summary of progress for each local authority in Wales at 30 September 2012

Anglesey

Anglesey did not submit a return for period 2, so this information applies to period 1 (up to 31 March 2012).

Project summary

Anglesey's project aimed to employ a worker to co-ordinate actions between partner organisations, to negotiate the reduction of rent levels with private sector landlords, to produce a newsletter for tenants and landlords and to facilitate meetings and forums to inform interested parties of changes to the welfare benefit system. This authority identified at the start of the project that performance would be monitored through figures for reduced rents, for cases where landlords had refused to reduce rents and for tenant eviction.

A worker was recruited in late November 2011.

Performance during the six months to 31 March 2012 (period 1)

A meeting with participating partners had been held to evaluate the project's effectiveness and performance and to share approaches. It was noted that it had been difficult to target landlords who had no contact with the authority, and many tenants refused support in the form of direct rent negotiations by the worker with landlords.

Information from the monitoring data return for the six months to 31 March 2012

The monitoring data return for the six months to 31 March 2012, showed that at the end of the period just less than a quarter (23%) of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and nearly four-fifths (78%) were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent nearly three-quarters of their DHP allocation for the year in this six month period, and noted that they had provided 270 landlords and 92 tenants with services and advice.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 (October 2011-March 2012) from the homelessness statistics return for Anglesey showed that less than 5¹¹ households within the authority were found to

¹¹ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

be homeless¹², where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were not identified as a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 (April to September 2012) from the homelessness statistics return for Anglesey, showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless¹², where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector. No monitoring data return was provided by this authority to show whether private sector rent arrears were a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Blaenau Gwent

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Blaenau Gwent is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

A Tenant Sustainability Officer (TSO) was employed to help residents sustain tenancies and mitigate the impact of welfare reform on them. This is being achieved through:

- TSO being responsible for administration of DHPs.
- Setting up a landlords' forum.
- Setting up referral systems with advice agencies.
- Internal referrals to schemes aiming to support a better quality of life and managing rental liability (e.g. supporting people and bond schemes).
- Devising promotional materials and caricature brand for the welfare changes.
- Purchasing a text service to enable customers to text for advice on the changes.

The officer was appointed in July 2011.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The authority reported that the new officer's work with DHPs had led to improved efficiencies, resulting in many applications being assessed within three working days. Prior to October 2011, DHPs took around 16-17 days to process. From April to September 2012, this had reduced to no more than 12 days.

¹² Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return showed that the percentage of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection fell from 25% in period 1 to 3% in period 2, whilst the proportion who were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate increased to 87%.

The authority spent nearly all (95%) of their DHP allocation for the financial year in period 1, and noted that they had provided 10 landlords and 73 tenants with services and advice during this period. In period 2 the authority spent 59% of their DHP allocation for the year, noting that they had provided 21 landlords and 139 tenants with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Blaenau Gwent, showed that less than five¹³ households within the authority were found to be homeless¹⁴, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 16 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Blaenau Gwent, showed that less than five¹¹ households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 28 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Bridgend

Project summary

This authority appointed a specialist debt advisor whose role was within both Housing Options and Housing Benefit teams, and intended to provide information events for professionals.

The officer was appointed in January 2012.

No details were provided about the authority's monitoring of performance during period 1 or 2.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

¹³ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

¹⁴ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, three-quarters (76%) of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent just over one-third (37%) of their DHP allocation for the year during this period, noting that due to transitional protection, housing benefit reductions would not take effect until January 2013 and their unspent allocation would be carried forward to the next financial year. Period 2 showed that 5% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and over two-thirds (72%) were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent just under a third (32.5%) of their DHP allocation for the year in period 2, noting that their allocation included £8,321 carried forward from 2011-12, making their allocation £118,999 for 2012-13.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Bridgend, showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless¹⁵, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in one investigation of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Bridgend, also showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in four investigations of homelessness during this period.

Caerphilly

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Caerphilly is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

This authority's approach was to appoint a Private Rented Sector Access and Advice co-ordinator to make contact with landlords to raise awareness of housing benefit changes through welfare reform, signpost affected tenants to sources of help and information and to provide an interface for the authority.

The co-ordinator was appointed in August 2011 and the role focused on the achievement of six key targets.

¹⁵ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The first target, to work with others to produce a directory of information and resources for homelessness prevention in order to better advise and signpost service users, was scheduled to be met in October 2012.

The second key target was to promote SmartMoney Credit Union direct payments to landlords and access to money management advice. This work was regarded as successful, having led to 14 new landlords using the SmartMoney facility and the credit union being linked in with DHP claims to assist with money management for tenants in the private rented sector.

The third target was to promote DHP spending. By 31 March, the authority reported that the DHP form and financial capability forms had been revised and DHP availability information had been provided to private rented sector landlords and Bond Scheme users.

The fourth target was to promote the Landlords Accreditation scheme. By 31 March, 48 new landlords had been identified and contacted and by 30 September 2012 a further 56 landlords had been identified and sent information on accreditation, the credit union partnership and invited to landlord meetings.

The fifth target had been to promote shared housing options. By 31 March, the authority had carried out a research exercise amongst landlords and prepared an information brochure about houseshare opportunities. Since then, Houseshare Wales has been promoted through the co-ordinator, who has also interviewed private landlords with lodgers and has collated information for other landlords on good practice.

The final target, to produce advice and guidance for tenants affected by welfare reform, had been the subject of some research.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 40% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and just over one third (35%) were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. In period 2, the percentage of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector receiving transitional protection had fallen to 17%, whilst a higher proportion (63%) were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate.

The authority spent just over half (52%) of their DHP allocation for the year during period 1 and noted that they had provided 64 landlords and 99 tenants with services and advice during this period. In period 2 the authority had spent 43% of their DHP allocation for the year, noting that they had provided 56 landlords and 98 tenants with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Caerphilly, showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless¹⁶ where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 164 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Caerphilly showed that less than five¹⁷ households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 13 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Cardiff

Project summary

This authority planned to appoint a specialist adviser to pro-actively mitigate the effects of housing benefit reform by liaising with landlords, contacting those adversely affected to ensure that they understand the impact of the changes and by providing debt advice. Assistance to secure accommodation was to be made through advice and a fund (£7,500 in 2011-12).

The Specialist Adviser was recruited in late September 2012 within the Housing Options Centre, working jointly with the Housing Benefit department.

Cardiff Council did not provide any performance information or data for periods 1 or 2 and noted that following an induction period for the specialist adviser, work on the project had not begun by the end of period 2. Up to the date of publication, this LA did not claim or receive the grant allocation.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for the six months to 31 March 2012, showed that the authority spent 43% of their DHP allocation for the year in this six month period. No data was provided for period 2.

Homelessness statistics

¹⁶ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

¹⁷ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Cardiff showed that less than five households within the authority were found to be homeless¹⁸, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in four investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Cardiff again showed that five¹⁹ households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in five investigations of homelessness during this period.

Carmarthenshire

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Carmarthenshire is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

This project was set up to identify potential rental properties and provide financial assistance, incentives and advice to owners of empty homes in order to bring into use otherwise redundant accommodation and to encourage owners and landlords to provide long-term and affordable private rented accommodation. All properties provided with financial assistance are managed by the LA's Social Letting Agency and rents are set at or below LHA levels.

The plan did not involve appointing a new worker.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

By the end of March 2012, 10 properties had been brought back into use and were being let and managed by the Council's Social Letting Agency.

For period 2 (1 April to 30 September 2012), performance was as follows:

- 15 additional, sustainable units of accommodation were made available in the private rented sector (target - 20);

¹⁸ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

¹⁹ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

- 8 landlords were assisted to bring affordable units of accommodation into the private rented sector (target -10);
- 60% of tenants who had been homeless or threatened with homelessness were housed (through the financial assistance) (target - 75%); and
- 8 additional units of accommodation were being managed through Carmarthenshire's Social Letting Agency as a result of assistance through funding (target -10).

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, only 3% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection (this figure was significantly lower than all other LAs and its accuracy was in doubt) and half (50%) were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. No information was provided about changes in rent levels or the provision of direct payments to landlords. The authority spent 60% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period, and noted that they had provided 180 landlords and 180 tenants with services and advice, through this project. In period 2 the proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector receiving transitional protection, increased to 11% whilst those being charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate rose to 89%. In this period the authority spent 40% of their DHP allocation for the year, 20% less than the amount spent in period 1. The authority noted that 130 landlords and 671 tenants had been provided with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Carmarthenshire, showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless²⁰, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in one investigation of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Carmarthenshire showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that other private sector related tenancy issues were identified as a contributory factor in 105 investigations of homelessness during this period.

²⁰ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

Ceredigion

Project summary

This project was set up to appoint a dedicated officer whose role would be to publicise the affects of the changes to all affected groups and provide targeted ideas and solutions for clients. They would also develop partnership agreements and toolkits to avoid the build up of arrears and advertise the current reforms and the future reforms to all interested parties. A worker was appointed in the autumn of 2011, whose role was:

- Negotiating rents with landlords.
- Making DHP applications with tenants affected by a reduction in Housing Benefit.
- Identifying under occupancy in Housing Association properties.
- Member of Tai Ceredigion's Welfare Reform working party (meets regularly).
- Attending Cantref's Surgeries throughout Ceredigion.
- Making each Housing Association aware of the Houseshare Wales website for under occupying tenants to advertise their spare room.
- Making contact with the Credit Union in Ceredigion and also putting each Housing Association in touch with them.
- Attending various events throughout the county to provide information on the changes.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

By the end of March 2012, there had been progress in presenting information to Landlord Forums, and landlord participation had been improved.

Progress for period 2 (to 30 September 2012) was reported by the LA to be as follows:

- No applications had been received from people who may have been homeless as a result of rental arrears from welfare reforms.
- Homelessness had been prevented in 120 cases by welfare reform advice and information.
- There was increased participation in the Landlord's Forum, and feedback had been received. A steering group had been initiated as a result of greater participation of private sector landlords, and further landlord forums were planned.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 29% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 71% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent just under one-fifth (19%) of their DHP allocation for the year during this period, and noted that they had provided 130 landlords and 90 tenants with services and advice during this period. In period 2, the proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector receiving transitional protection reduced to 9%. Also, 68% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate, indicating only a very small change since the first period. The authority increased their spending in period 2 to 58% of their DHP allocation for the year, noting that 120 tenants had been provided with services and advice during this period. No data was provided indicating the number of landlords who had received services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Ceredigion showed that less than five²¹ households within the authority were found to be homeless²², where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 10 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Ceredigion showed that less than five households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in one investigation of homelessness during this period.

Conwy

Project summary

This project was set up to appoint an officer to work with local landlords to assist them in maximising their opportunities with tenants claiming housing benefit. The project also developed a service to provide private sector landlords with advice and services to prevent homelessness resulting from welfare benefit change. A top priority for 2012-13 was to facilitate the creation of shared accommodation units, and a database of landlords and landlord forums was developed to aid communication.

²¹ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

²² Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

A worker was appointed to this post in September 2011.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

Conwy Council did not provide any performance information for period 1, but for period 2, noted the following information in addition to quantitative data submitted:

- One Landlord Forum had been held (target – 2).
- In all cases of advice or assistance, landlords had adopted due process in dealing with tenants (target - 85%).
- One landlord had been advised on house sharing.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 26% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection. The authority spent just under one-quarter (24%) of their DHP allocation for the year during this period and noted that they had provided 70 landlords with services and advice during this period. In period 2, the proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector who were receiving transitional protection dropped dramatically, to only 1%. Also, 75% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 13% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period, noting that they had provided 33 landlords with services and advice.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Conwy showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless²³, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were not identified as a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Conwy showed that two households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in two investigations of homelessness during this period.

²³ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

Denbighshire

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Denbighshire is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

This project involved the appointment of a co-ordinator to develop services for vulnerable tenants as a result of welfare benefit changes, to enhance services to landlords and work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to link relevant services. Workers in similar roles in Flintshire and Wrexham LAs would work as a team to share good practice and learning.

The project mainly involved co-ordinating and raising awareness, concerning all aspects of the welfare changes and not just housing benefit in isolation. The project has adopted a collaborative approach with other agencies as well as other LAs on the project (Flintshire and Wrexham).

A worker was appointed in September 2011.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

This authority reported the following key progress at 31 March:

- Training and awareness-raising for support workers was beginning to show results.
- Vulnerable clients were being referred for support early for support to be effective.
- A protocol for fast-tracking DHPs for under-35s was being implemented.

During period 2, the following additional progress was reported:

- 110 support workers had been provided with training sessions;
- open days/surgeries and roadshows had been held across the county with 204 attendees;
- engagement with landlords had been less successful. Despite presentations to landlord groups and landlords being sympathetic, the local private rented sector market remains buoyant, so landlords are not actively taking up the low level management service or advice and assistance role offered; and

- eight landlords were given advice and assistance as part of the project. Good links had been made with other agencies.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 36% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 80% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent just under one-quarter of their DHP allocation for the year during this period (23%), and noted that they had provided four landlords and 40 tenants with services and advice through this period. In contrast to period 1, period 2 data showed that only 8% of housing benefit recipients in the private sector were receiving transitional protection, whilst the proportion who were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate dropped to 22%. The authority spent a higher percentage of their DHP allocation for the year during the second period (41%), and noted that they had provided eight landlords and 19 tenants with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Denbighshire showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless²⁴, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 35 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Denbighshire showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in three investigations of homelessness during this period.

Flintshire

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Flintshire is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

This project involved the appointment of a co-ordinator Liaison Officer. The officer was appointed in early February 2012.

²⁴ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

The project offers a support service to landlords who rent to housing benefit claimants and encourages landlords to rent at LHA rates. It provides training to support and advice services in statutory and voluntary sectors who work with residents who may be affected by welfare reform. The training reduces their need to refer to specialist services.

The project has targeted vulnerable people affected by the change to LHA rates for under-35s, offered advice and assistance and signposted for further support needs to mitigate the risk of homelessness.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

During period 1, the council sponsored 13 private landlords to become accredited through the Landlord Accreditation Scheme, and a further 11 landlords were in contact with the Liaison Officer. Sixty internal and external support workers had received training about identifying vulnerable persons and the impact of welfare reform. Seventy five tenants at risk of homelessness due to housing benefit reform had been identified, 84% of whom were given advice on homelessness prevention.

During period 2 the following progress has been made:

Thirty seven landlords had received advice and assistance from the Liaison Officer and 100% positive feedback was received. One landlord even commented that he is now looking to purchase more properties in the county because of the service he received. Training on welfare reforms, tailored to the requirements of services, was delivered to 274 support or advice services.

One-to-one advice and guidance was given to 63 vulnerable clients. Initial assessments of need were conducted, and help given (such as a DHP application) with crisis situations to reduce the risk of homelessness. Referrals to appropriate services were then made and 100% positive feedback had been received from residents.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that 30% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 59% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 47% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period and noted that they had provided 24 landlords and 10 tenants with services and advice, through this period. The proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector who were receiving transitional protection decreased in period 2 to 7%, whilst the proportion who were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate increased to 77%. The authority spent 41% of their DHP allocation for the year, similar to the amount spent in period 1. During this period, the authority provided 37 landlords and 63 tenants with services and advice.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Flintshire showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless²⁵ where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were not identified as a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Flintshire showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in two investigations of homelessness during this period.

Gwynedd

Project summary

This project was set up to create a full-time post, funded partly through the grant and partly by the Council to provide a liaison role between the Council, landlords and tenants and to provide training for Council and partner-organisation staff in giving welfare reform advice. A percentage of the grant was to be used as a Landlord Incentive Fund to support collaboration with the private rented sector through, for example, a rent deposit scheme.

The approach has been from a housing benefit/homelessness prevention perspective by giving advice and support to clients and landlords about housing benefit claims, DHP, housing options, and moving on to more affordable accommodation with appropriate use of an incentive fund, debt advice services, and direct payment to landlords. The aim is to provide support and access to information and to link between a number of housing teams to provide advice about mitigating the effects of welfare reform.

The project officer was appointed in January 2012.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

During period 1, 11 payments from the incentive fund amounting to over £4,500 were made and the post holder formulated an action plan for development, with a system for recording payments and actions.

²⁵ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

In period 2, the project identified 49 cases of significant shortfall, with 33 contacts made and advice given. Of these, 21 resulted in additional housing benefit or DHP payments and nine Incentive Fund Payments were made totalling £3,995.

In relation to these referrals, 14 landlords and agents were contacted to provide advice and information. An additional 15 direct contacts were made with landlords and agents identified as having tenants in receipt of benefit, and information about LHA changes and welfare reform developments was provided. A further 11 agents were e-mailed to offer advice and support.

Presentation and networking activities were also undertaken with 11 partner agencies and support providers during this period.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 19% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 66% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent two-thirds of their DHP allocation for the year during this period (66%) and noted that they had provided two landlords and 20 tenants with services and advice, through this period. Period 2 data showed a decrease of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector who were receiving transitional protection (only 1%), whilst 75% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. During this period the authority spent nearly half of their DHP allocation for the year, noting that 29 landlords and 33 tenants were provided with services and advice.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Gwynedd showed that less than five²⁶ households within the authority were found to be homeless²⁷, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in nine investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Gwynedd showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in five¹¹ investigations of homelessness during this period.

²⁶ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

²⁷ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

Merthyr Tydfil

Project summary

The project was set up to appoint a Tenancy Sustainability and Homelessness Prevention Officer, to provide housing advice and support to individuals to find affordable and appropriate accommodation and to sustain tenancies.

The officer was appointed in November 2011.

The project has entailed closer collaborative working with all local authority departments and has been extremely successful in relation to co-operative working with the Housing Benefit Team where joint working has been able to identify and offer support to households who are experiencing tenancy or housing benefit issues.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

No performance information was provided for period 1. For period 2, it was noted that the appropriate advice, assistance and support has prevented some issues being problematic and alleviated issues relating to housing benefit which have resulted in tenancies being maintained.

The following performance figures were provided:

- no individuals had 'presented' as homeless due to being affected by changes in housing benefit;
- 13 tenancies were sustained at current accommodation address;
- in 6 cases, homelessness was prevented by finding alternative accommodation in the private rented sector;
- 11 individuals were referred to a specialised support service; and
- 5 landlords were worked with to develop affordable accommodation for single persons within the local authority area.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 36% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection. The authority did not supply information regarding the proportion of tenants for whom the weekly rate exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 18% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period, and noted that they had provided three landlords and 25 tenants with services and advice through this period. Period 2 data showed that the proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector who were receiving transitional protection, reduced to 13%. The authority also supplied information regarding the proportion of tenants for whom the weekly rate exceeded the LHA rate for this period, which was remarkably high (92%). The

authority spent 14% of their DHP allocation for the year during period 2, noting that they had provided five landlords and 32 tenants with services and advice.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Merthyr Tydfil showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless²⁸, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in five investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Merthyr Tydfil also showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in two investigations of homelessness during this period.

Monmouthshire

Project summary

Monmouthshire and Torfaen established a joint action plan to raise awareness amongst the authorities' customers of welfare benefit reform, and to advise them about housing options, through working with key partners and other stakeholders. The plan did not involve appointing a new worker.

Through the joint action plan, Monmouthshire and Torfaen's approach identified four areas for improvement:

- supporting people through the welfare change;
- maximising uptake of the private rented market;
- working with key partners; and
- information and communication.

Within this approach a number of smaller projects were set up.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

Monmouthshire Council did not provide any performance information for period 1. For period 2, it was noted that regular quarterly monitoring meetings are co-ordinated where the action plan is updated and reviewed, and regular development meetings

²⁸ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

are co-ordinated with the nominated RSL delivering a shared housing scheme. Feedback questionnaires are collected at landlord forums and landlord accreditation sessions.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The authority did not provide details for the monitoring data return in period 1, apart from figures for investigations of homelessness, shown below. For period 2, data showed that 11% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection. No data was provided regarding the proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector for whom weekly rent exceeded the LHA rate. The authority did provide data regarding the amount of DHP allocation for the year spent during this period, which was over half (54%). No data was returned providing information about the number of landlords and tenants who were provided with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Monmouthshire showed that less than five²⁹ households within the authority were found to be homeless³⁰, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in two investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Monmouthshire showed that less than five households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in one investigation of homelessness during this period.

Neath Port Talbot

Project summary

This project was set up to provide a dedicated post to improve the housing advice provided by other agencies, to work directly with vulnerable tenants affected by the housing benefit changes, to support the Social Lettings Agency in its work to sustain tenancies, and to develop guidance and training for housing benefit staff.

An officer was appointed to the role in November 2011.

²⁹ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

³⁰ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

The approach involved was integrating the grant-funded post with the core retention work of the Housing Options Service. The post holder received relevant training on homelessness and gaps in the knowledge of Housing Options Officers was also addressed. The scope of the role of the post holder is wide ranging from individual casework to contributing to the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan. Presentations and a workshop have been delivered in a variety of settings.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

A multi-agency group was established, consisting of representatives from the Housing Options Service, Social Lettings Agency, Housing Benefit Section, Supporting People Team and the Welfare Rights Service, to oversee the project and monitor progress. Incentives, such as small grants administered via the Social Lettings Agency, were offered to private sector landlords in return for them achieving accreditation status.

The work of the post holder was developed in line with the principles of systems thinking, and has involved:

- placing the expert on the front line of the service;
- sharing knowledge with the Housing Options Officers;
- collecting client feedback on an on-going basis as part of our commitment to the principles of system review;
- providing what the client needs in a timely fashion;
- a multi-agency group established to monitor and direct the work of the post holder has reviewed the action plan quarterly; and
- the post holder delivered 22 presentations to other groups and agencies during period 2, and developed a series of fact sheets.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 30% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 79% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 45% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period and noted that they had provided 56 landlords and 66 tenants with services and advice, through this period. Period 2 data was similar to the first period, showing that 22% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 83% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 42% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period, noting that they had provided 74 landlords and 95 tenants with services and advice, an increase from the first period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Neath Port Talbot showed that less than five³¹ households within the authority were found to be homeless³², where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 19 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Neath Port Talbot showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority also showed that private sector rent arrears were not identified as a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Newport

Project summary

The focus of this project was to develop sustainable accommodation options through the provision of small improvement grants and other incentives to landlords, such as free lettings and sign-ups, the in-house rent guarantee scheme and free access to specialist services such as surveying and legal work. These incentives are provided to encourage them to rent their properties via the lettings agency at affordable rents and to prospective tenants in receipt of housing benefit. The project also aimed to develop flat-sharing and spare room letting schemes. The plan did not involve appointing a new worker.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

In period 1, two flat share units had been commissioned by the authority. Of 31 dwellings managed by Charter Options in management, 45% had been let to potentially homeless households. There were 242 people aged under 35 registered for shared accommodation. One minor repairs grant had been issued.

By the end of period 2, the number of flat share units that had been set up equated to 14. During the period, 256 people under the age of 35 had registered for shared accommodation. Also, 17 properties had either been let or were ready to let with 30% of these properties let to potentially homeless households. In addition, there were 39 properties either in management or waiting to go into management. Legal costs associated with loans for minor repair grants made by the lettings agency, were making small loans expensive for potential owners, and none were issued during the period.

³¹ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

³² Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

In addition, expertise was built during the period in relation to guiding landlords on lodger schemes and managing shared accommodation.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 29% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 73% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 29% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period and noted that they had provided 59 landlords and 357 tenants with services and advice through this period. Period 2 data showed that the proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector, who were receiving transitional protection, had decreased to 10%, whilst 73% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate, consistent with period 1. In this period, the authority spent 14% of their DHP allocation for the year, a lower proportion than in period 1. The authority noted that they had provided 72 landlords and 508 tenants with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Newport showed that less than five³³ households within the authority were found to be homeless³⁴, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 32 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Newport showed that 15 households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 17 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Pembrokeshire

Project summary

This local authority planned to use the monies to give advice and assistance to the private sector to help sustain their tenancies, through training for staff, provision of information to landlords, financial top-ups and bond and rent advance payments to assist tenants to move to more affordable accommodation. The plan did not involve appointing a new worker.

³³ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

³⁴ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

During period 2, the focus was on mitigating the impact of future changes to the housing benefit system by ensuring staff are up-to-date on who will be affected and by how much, supporting households to remain or create sustainable tenancies, and helping households access advice and information.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

During period 1, mediation training was provided for 10 staff members, and debt training for eight staff members. Fourteen bonds had been provided under the Assisted Tenancy Bond Scheme and 45 customers had been assisted with LHA issues under the Travel Warrant Scheme.

For period 2, the authority noted that 12 people had been assisted through the Assisted Tenancy Scheme, 25 people had been provided with a travel warrant to attend the Support Agency Office for advice and assistance, 15 people had been assisted via a Prevention Fund aimed at sustaining tenancies, and 10 social and private tenants had been provided with low level tenancy support. A newsletter had been prepared to inform social housing tenants about the affects of changes and training was planned for early 2013.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 71% of private sector housing benefit claimants in Pembrokeshire were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 29% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period and noted that they had provided no landlords and 16 tenants with services and advice through this period. No data was provided with regards to levels of transitional protection. The authority did not provide details for the monitoring data return in period 2, apart from figures for investigations of homelessness, shown below. They also noted that 43 tenants had been provided with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Pembrokeshire showed that less than five³⁵ households within the authority were found to be homeless³⁶, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in one investigation of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Pembrokeshire showed that less than five households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data

³⁵ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

³⁶ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 49 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Powys

Project summary

This project was set up to second an experienced benefits officer to act as liaison officer for tenants and landlords, and to supplement the Discretionary Housing payments fund over and above expected government contribution.

The authority did not claim any funding or run a project and provided no performance information or data for period 1. In period 2, the only figures provided were those indicating the percentage of DHP allocation for the year spent in the second period (33%).

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Powys showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless³⁷, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. No monitoring data return was provided by this authority to show whether private sector rent arrears were a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Powys showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. No monitoring data return was provided by this authority to show whether private sector rent arrears were a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Rhondda Cynon Taf

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

This project was set up to fund an Advice Worker/Coordinator to liaise jointly with the Housing Benefit Department and the Housing Advice Centre, to provide advice for

³⁷ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

clients affected by the benefit changes both in the social and private sector, as well as supporting landlords to help mitigate the impact of changes on the private rented sector. The co-ordinator was appointed on 31 May 2012.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The authority provided no performance information for period 1. For period 2, it was reported that the 211 clients supported (see below) had each been paid up to three home visits. The authority had assisted 100% of people referred and met a target of 85% in respect of the prevention of homelessness.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The authority spent 40% of their DHP allocation for the year during period 1. No other information from the six months up to 31 March 2012 was supplied. Period 2 data shows that 0% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 0% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 29% of their DHP allocation for the year during period 2, a decrease from the amount spent in the first period. The authority noted that 38 landlords and 211 tenants had been provided with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Rhondda Cynon Taf showed that less than five³⁸ within the authority were found to be homeless³⁹, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. No monitoring data return was provided by this authority to show whether private sector rent arrears were a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Rhondda Cynon Taf showed that less than five⁴⁰ households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in one investigation of homelessness during this period.

Swansea

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Swansea is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published

³⁸ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

³⁹ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

⁴⁰ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

This project was set up to fund a new post to work with and provide a point of contact for tenants housed in the private sector, both through the Bond Board (currently approximately 200 tenancies) and non-Bond Board tenants, to prevent households from becoming homeless through early interventions before a crisis situation. The role also included negotiating for lower rents with landlords and assisting tenants in securing alternative cheaper housing.

An officer was appointed to the post in September 2011.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

At the end of period 1, it was reported that 59 tenants had been referred and accepted during the period (against an annual target of 150). Eight tenants did not have to leave their homes as a result of benefit changes, and a further six were found alternative suitable housing in the private sector as a result of the post holder. Three landlords reduced their rent to the new levels. The authority acknowledged that many of these targets were not on track for a full year's performance, but noted that uptake of the service was very low at the time as many of the impacts hadn't hit the households as of yet. Consequently, they expected more requests for assistance in the future.

In period 2, 40 more tenants were referred and accepted, making a total of 99 against the annual target of 150 total. An additional 33 tenants did not have to leave their homes as a result of benefit reductions, making a total of 41 against the annual target of 75. Eleven further tenants found alternative suitable housing in the private rented sector, making a total of 17 against the annual target of 25. Also, an additional seven landlords reduced their rent, making a total of 10 against an annual target of 75. It was noted that difficulty in obtaining consent to approach landlords, and an inability to monitor "tacit" acceptance of a lower rent may have contributed to this.

Over the two periods it was anticipated that of the 150 referrals made, 50 would be given service beyond mere advice. In fact, 72 of the 99 received this level of service.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 42% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection. There were 63% that were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent just over half their DHP allocation for the year during this period (52%) and noted that they had provided 12 landlords and 34 tenants with services and advice throughout this period. Period 2 data shows that only 13% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection, a large decrease from the first period. Consistent with period 1 data, 63% were

charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. In period 2, the authority spent 63% of their DHP allocation for the year, noting that they had provided 37 landlords and seven tenants with services and advice during this period. The authority commented that they believe many tenants have had transitional protection for most of the reporting period. They also believe short-term measures such as DHP has contributed to tenants maintaining their tenancies.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Swansea showed that eight households within the authority were found to be homeless⁴¹, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 34 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Swansea showed that 14 households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 15 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Torfaen

Project summary

Monmouthshire and Torfaen established a joint action plan to raise awareness amongst the authorities' customers of welfare benefit reform, and to advise customers about housing options through working with key partners and other stakeholders. The plan did not involve appointing a new worker.

The project includes a number of initiatives, the main one being delivering the first shared accommodation scheme exclusively to people under 35 who require assistance with housing. The scheme also provides support and assistance to residents to find work or work-related training. The other initiative which has made significant progress is the Gateway Credit Union initiative to engage with private tenants to set up jam jar accounts.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

In period 1, the authority undertook a mapping exercise to identify affected claimants in the private rented sector including identification of any difficult to reach groups. A targeted mailshot and publicity campaign was then launched to advise claimants of the changes and availability of DHP. The authority also began awareness sessions and presentations for wider stakeholders and landlords.

⁴¹ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

For period 2, it was noted that regular quarterly monitoring meetings were co-ordinated where the action plan is updated and reviewed, and regular development meetings were co-ordinated with the nominated RSL delivering the shared housing scheme. Feedback questionnaires were collected at landlord forums and landlord accreditation sessions.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The authority did not provide details for the monitoring data return in period 1. Period 2 data showed that at the end of the period, 15% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and none were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 47% of their DHP allocation for the year during this period, and noted that they had provided 400 landlords and 350 tenants with services and advice throughout this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Torfaen showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless⁴², where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were not identified as a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Torfaen showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were not identified as a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Vale of Glamorgan

Project summary

This project was set up to appoint a tenancy and benefits support co-ordinator, to liaise with tenants of all tenures to inform and guide through the changes to benefits. The officer was appointed in September 2011.

In period 2, the authority reported that the role had involved directly contacting those initially affected by the under 35 restriction and those faced with significant reduction in housing benefit, to prevent tenants getting to the stage where they are presenting as homeless. The role also involved work with the homelessness section and a housing association leasing scheme to help those unable to stay in their properties due to the shortfall. Landlords were given a point of contact to raise concerns linked

⁴² Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

to the welfare reform changes, which has been used to negotiate rents and look at other options available to their tenants.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

For period 1, the authority noted that the new post holder has been proactively contacting those affected in the private rented sector via telephone, letter and face-to-face to advise on benefit changes and to promote housing options such as the negotiation of lower rents with landlords, access to alternative properties via bond schemes, payment of DHP to allow for budget adjustment or move into cheaper accommodation and referral to the Housing Advice Team. Contact was made with those under the age of 35 due to be affected in June 2012. Five client contacts were completed positively.

For period 2, it was noted that all under-35s affected, and those subject to the 30th percentile and non-dependent deductions had been contacted several times to offer advice and assistance by telephone, face-to-face and by post. DHPs had been awarded. Budgeting advice had been given and referrals to CAB were made where necessary. Assistance and advice from the liaison officer was advertised at events and in publications and presentations were made to a number of supporting groups about welfare reform changes and advice points.

The liaison officer left the post in July 2012, after which a part-time officer was appointed to continue their work.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The monitoring data return for period 1 showed that at the end of the period, 37% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection and 67% were charged rent that exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent just over a quarter of its DHP allocation for the year during this period (26%) and noted that they had provided 10 landlords and 35 tenants with services and advice through this project. Period 2 data showed a reduction in the proportion of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector who were receiving transitional protection (only 2%). The proportion of tenants for whom weekly rent exceeded the LHA rate increased to 96%, the highest percentage out of all the LAs. The authority spent 42% of its DHP allocation for the year in this period. The authority noted that they had provided 55 landlords and 374 tenants with services and advice in period 2, a huge increase from the first period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Vale of Glamorgan showed that less than five⁴³ households within the authority were found to be

⁴³ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

homeless⁴⁴, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in six investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Vale of Glamorgan showed that less than five households within the authority were found to be homeless⁴⁵, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in 10 investigations of homelessness during this period.

Wrexham

The project to mitigate the impact of housing benefit reform in Wrexham is one of seven projects which were made the subject of a detailed case study, also published on the Welsh Government website. Please follow this link to Welsh Government housing research for the case studies report.

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/research/housing/?lang=en>

Project summary

This project was set up to appoint a co-ordinator to develop the welfare benefit changes services. The role involved enhancing services to landlords, work in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies to link services, and ensuring that the private rented sector remains and develops into an affordable housing option for local residents.

The co-ordinator was appointed in May 2012. In period 2, the role had involved developing relationships with third sector organisations and landlords to raise awareness of welfare reform changes, providing a direct contact point with landlords to resolve any issues or concerns and directly contacting tenants affected by the welfare reform changes (move to shared room rate) to provide advice and support. Appropriate material was developed to be used for customers and staff training.

Performance reported by the LA for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

No performance information was provided for period 1. For period 2, the authority noted that the number of landlords who let to tenants in receipt of housing benefit had been maintained, and that information, guidance or support had been provided

⁴⁴ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

⁴⁵ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

for 181 people. It was also noted that use of the liaison officer has helped see an improvement in housing benefit processing times despite a significant work increase.

Information from the monitoring data return for the 12 months to 30 September 2012

The authority did not provide details for the monitoring data return in period 1. Period 2 data showed that 5% of housing benefit recipients in the private rented sector were receiving transitional protection. No data was provided for the proportion of tenants for whom weekly rent exceeded the LHA rate. The authority spent 27% of their DHP allocation for the year and noted that 85 landlords and 400 tenants had been provided with services and advice during this period.

Homelessness statistics

Data for period 1 from the homelessness statistics return for Wrexham showed that less than five⁴⁶ households within the authority were found to be homeless⁴⁷ due to rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. No monitoring data return was provided by this authority to show whether private sector rent arrears were a contributory factor in any investigations of homelessness during this period.

Data for period 2 from the homelessness statistics return for Wrexham showed that no households within the authority were found to be homeless, where the main reason was rent arrears on a private sector tenancy. The monitoring data return from this authority showed that private sector rent arrears were identified as a contributory factor in six investigations of homelessness during this period.

⁴⁶ Could be any number up to four. Actual figures are suppressed from National Statistics due to the risk of identification of individuals or disclosure of facts about them.

⁴⁷ Household which following assessment, was found to be eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the period, where the main reason for the loss of the last settled home was due to rent arrears on a private sector dwelling.

Appendix 2: Copies of data collection return forms

Homelessness Grant Programme: Collection of Data and Monitoring Information

Reporting period 1st October 2011 - 31st March 2012

This form collects data and monitoring information for the evaluation of the S180 Homelessness grant

This sheet is the main data collection form. There is also a technical guidance sheet explaining how the form should be used. The technical guidance can be accessed using the hyperlink on the right.

[Go to Technical Guidance](#)

Guidance on interpretation of questions is available as a separate Q&A document. Please contact Kate Mulready if you don't think you have the latest version.

[Email Kate Mulready](#)

The box on the right shows the proportion of data entry cells that contain data. Please do not submit your form unless this cell shows a figure of 100%.

0%

Local Authority

Please enter the name of your authority

Please provide contact details for your authority below. This will help us to direct any queries to the correct contact.

Form completed by/Main contact for data queries:

Name		✘
Telephone number		✘
E-Mail address		✘

Quantitative Measures		Comments	
1.1	Number of households to which the homeless duty was owed during the reporting period who are homeless due to rent arrears (private sector tenancies). Definition as for Table 5, item 7 (iii), total (g), Quarterly Homelessness Return (total for two quarters).	✘	
1.2	Number of homeless households, where the investigation revealed that rent arrears were part of the reason for homelessness (private sector tenancies). Definition as for Table 2, total column (h), rows 1, 2 and 3, Quarterly Homelessness Return (total for two quarters).	✘	
1.3	Number of tenants in private sector rented dwellings for which Local Housing Allowance is payable and housing benefit is paid.	(i) Total tenants at the last day of the reporting period.	✘
		(ii) Tenants for whom transitional protection was in place at the last day of the reporting period.	✘
		(iii) Where weekly rent exceeded LHA. At the end of the reporting period.	✘
		Proportion of tenants for whom weekly rent exceeded LHA.	
		(iv) Where the tenant did not move home during the reporting period.	✘
		(v) Where the tenant did not move home and where weekly rent payments were reduced during the reporting period.	✘
	The proportion of tenants who did not move, whose weekly rent payments were reduced during the reporting period.		
	(vi) Where the tenant did not move home during the reporting period, and where weekly rent payments were reduced and the landlord began receiving direct housing benefit payments during the reporting period.	✘	
	The proportion of cases where the tenant did not move home and weekly rent payments were reduced where the landlord began receiving direct housing benefit payments during the reporting period.		
1.4	The total amount of Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Discretionary Housing Payment allocated to this Local Authority for the financial year.	✘	
	The amount of DWP Discretionary Housing Payment allocation that was spent during the reporting period.	✘	
	The percentage of DWP Discretionary Housing Payment allocation that was spent during the reporting period. (Equals the amount spent during the period as a percentage of half the allocation for the financial year.)		
1.5	Number of private sector landlords provided with services and advice through this project during this reporting period, for the first time.	✘	
1.6	The number of private sector tenants provided with services and advice through this project during this reporting period, for the first time.	✘	

Qualitative measures

2.1	How have you used this funding to work with external partners, including landlords, in preventing homelessness due to housing benefit reform? (650 character limit applies - approximately 100 words)	✘
2.2	How has your housing benefit team adapted its practices to prevent homelessness?(650 character limit applies - approximately 100 words)	✘

Further performance details

3	Please use the box below to provide further performance information about your project. Please use the evaluation approach you identified in Part 11 (iii) in your bid. Quantifiable measures must be included. Figures and other evidence must be related to this reporting period only. (400 word limit applies)	✘
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Please save a copy of this spreadsheet for your own records and return it by attaching it to an email to Kate Mulready by 20th April 2012

[Email Kate Mulready](#)

Version 10 -16/03/2012



Homelessness Grant Programmes: Collection of Data and Monitoring Information

Reporting period 2 - 1st April - 30th September 2012

This form collects data and monitoring information for the evaluation of the S180 Homelessness grant

This sheet is the main data collection form. There is also a technical guidance sheet explaining how the form should be used. The technical guidance can be accessed using the hyperlink on the right.

[Go to Technical Guidance](#)

Guidance on interpretation of questions is available as a separate Q&A document. Please contact Kate Mulready if you don't think you have the latest version.

[Email Kate Mulready](mailto:kate.mulready@llywodraeth.cymru)

The box on the right shows the proportion of data entry cells that contain data. Please do not submit your form unless this cell shows a figure of 100%

0%

Local Authority
Please enter the name of your authority

Please provide contact details for your authority below. This will help us to direct any queries to the correct contact.

Form completed by/Main contact for data queries:

Name		JE
Telephone number		JE
E-Mail address		JE

Quantitative Measures		Comments
1.1	Number of all homeless households for which decisions were taken (not including households which were not homeless, or which were ineligible) where the investigation revealed that rent arrears were part of the reason for homelessness (private sector tenancies).	JE
1.2	Number of tenants in private sector rented dwellings for which Local Housing Allowance is payable and housing benefit is paid.	(i) Total tenants at the last day of the reporting period.
		(ii) Tenants for whom transitional protection was in place at the last day of the reporting period.
		(iii) Where weekly rent exceeded LHA. At the end of the reporting period.
		Proportion of tenants for whom weekly rent exceeded LHA.
		(iv) Number of tenancies where the landlord was in receipt of direct housing benefit payments at 31/03/2012.
		(v) Number of tenancies where the landlord was in receipt of direct housing benefit payments at 30/09/2012.
	The rate of tenancies where the landlord received direct payment of housing benefit payments at 30/09/2012.	
1.3	The total amount of Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Discretionary Housing Payment allocated to this Local Authority for the financial year 2012-13.	JE
	The amount of DWP Discretionary Housing Payment allocation that was spent during the reporting period.	JE
	The percentage of DWP Discretionary Housing Payment allocation that was spent during the reporting period. (Equals the amount spent during the period as a percentage of half the allocation for the financial year.)	
1.4	Number of private sector landlords provided with services and advice through this project during this reporting period, for the first time. (Landlords receiving personalised mail or contact only. Do not include generic publicity or events).	JE
1.6	The number of private sector tenants provided with services and advice through this project during this reporting period, for the first time. (Tenants receiving personalised mail or contact only. Do not include generic publicity or events).	JE

Qualitative measures	
2.1	How have you used this funding to overcome barriers to landlord and tenant engagement? (650 character limit applies - approximately 100 words)
2.2	How has your housing benefit team adapted its practices to prevent homelessness? (650 character limit applies)

Further details	
3.1	Please use the box below to briefly summarise the approach of your project and its principal elements during this period. (650 character limit applies)
3.2	Please use the box below to provide further performance information about your project. Please use the evaluation approach you identified in Part 11 (iii) in your bid and identify any changes. Quantifiable measures must be included. Figures and other evidence must be related to this reporting period only. (1950 character limit applies)

Please save a copy of this spreadsheet for your own records and return it by attaching it to an email to Kate Mulready by Friday 30th November 2012

[Email Kate Mulready](mailto:kate.mulready@llywodraeth.cymru)

Version 12 - 08/11/2012



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government