



Quality Streets

A local housing strategy
for Blaenau Gwent
2007 - 2012



FOREWORD



I am pleased to introduce the Local Housing Strategy for Blaenau Gwent. The intention of the document is to identify the strategic priorities for all types and tenures of housing in the forthcoming years and is written on behalf of the housing partners with a stake in housing within Blaenau Gwent.

We currently face substantial challenges in housing. Affordability had historically not been an issue within Blaenau Gwent, however pressures on the local housing market through the 'heating up' of the South East Wales market and the inward buy to let investment are two factors that has resulted in huge house price rises within Blaenau Gwent.

Achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012 is a challenge faced by all social landlords operating in Wales. The standard is one that is right and proper for all tenants to expect in today's society and social landlords should do everything in their power to get the investment into the properties that tenants deserve.

The recognition of people's changing aspirations is key in developing housing that is fit for modern need. Supporting people in their homes and maintaining their independence is a priority for this strategy and the Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy, adopted by the Authority in November 2006. Older people no longer view bedsit accommodation in sheltered housing as acceptable and why should they. Partnerships within Blaenau Gwent should be improving current sheltered schemes, seeking new build extra care accommodation and bungalow provision but also maximise the opportunities offered through telecare and assistive technology.

The title 'Quality Streets' represents a consensual view from partners involved in the development of this strategy that people living in Blaenau Gwent should expect quality when considering housing. In April of this year the Authority held its first session of Evidence Days for all representatives from organisations with a 'stake' in housing to be involved in mapping the strategic priorities and identifying the gaps in our knowledge with regards to housing. It was encouraging to see the level of participation from all sectors of the housing world i.e. registered social landlords, developers, the voluntary sector, the

Welsh Assembly Government, the local authority and its neighbouring authorities, and most importantly tenants and residents of Blaenau Gwent.

Finally I think it important to recognise the benefits of good quality housing are far reaching with regards to regeneration, health and well being and economic prosperity. It is also important to accept housing markets has no respect for administrative boundaries and the impact from the neighbouring areas and that of the M4 corridor cannot be underestimated when implementing local policies and priorities.

I hope you find the information contained within this strategy reflects the current housing situation and key priorities for Blaenau Gwent. The strategy is a fluid document in which information and evidence should build over its lifetime.

I would thank all partners involved in the evidence day sessions and the Blaenau Gwent Strategic Housing Forum for their support and contribution in delivering this key document for the area.

COUNCILLOR STEVE THOMAS
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HOUSING

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INTRODUCTION

The following document presents the strategic priorities for housing within Blaenau Gwent. The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) is integral to the Community Planning process and focuses on housing aims of the community at large and not just those of the Local Authority.

The overall aim of our Local Housing Strategy is to: -

'provide a strategic framework to ensure that everyone in Blaenau Gwent has the scope and choice to attain a home that is decent, affordable and is situated in a healthy and safe environment.'

It aims to set in context the key housing objectives across tenure for the Blaenau Gwent County Borough area for the period 2007- 2012, together with an action planning framework for the achievement of those objectives. The LHS has regard for national and regional housing objectives when establishing local ones, advocating effective local partnerships and regional working.

THE VISION FOR HOUSING IN BLAENAU GWENT

The vision for housing in Blaenau Gwent takes its direction from the National Housing Strategy (2001) 'Better Homes for People in Wales'

'Ensure everyone in Wales has the opportunity to live in good quality affordable homes and to be able to choose where they live and whether buying or renting is best for themselves and their families'.

The Vision for Blaenau Gwent is:

'that housing in all its forms meets the needs and aspirations of the people of Blaenau Gwent and further to this Blaenau Gwent is a place where people want and can afford to live'

Production of the Local Housing Strategy

This document was assimilated from a robust evidence base and in consultation with key stakeholders. Housing Market Assessments at both a local and regional level have given an understanding of the mechanics of the regional and local housing market and the levels of market and affordable housing needed within the respective areas. In-depth qualitative work has been undertaken with key groups i.e. older people, gypsies and travellers, young people, supported housing users and the homeless. The identification of the housing needs specific to these groups supplies a platform for housing prioritisation in these areas and a basis for the development of accommodation strategies to feed into existing strategic partnerships representing these groups. The Local Housing Market Assessment has also given an understanding of the underlying issues that exists from home dwellers in the area.

Evidence Days

In May 2007 Blaenau Gwent held its first session of Evidence Days. The two day event reported the content of the evidence base to stakeholders. The days gave attendees the opportunity to highlight areas for prioritisation and also identify gaps in the current housing knowledge within Blaenau Gwent. Priorities identified from the day have been subsumed into the main body of the Local Housing Strategy.

Blaenau Gwent Strategic Housing Forum

There is an acceptance from all partners concerned with housing and developing housing services of the need to develop a robust strategic planning and commissioning body to prioritise strategic objectives, nurture effective partnership working, problem solve and work to push housing up the political agenda. It was proposed during the Evidence Day process that a Strategic Housing Forum be established to work locally and contribute regionally to the housing agenda.

The structure of the Forum is yet to be agreed but it is proposed that a two tiered approach be adopted with an overarching commissioning group made up of strategic bodies and a provider group and associated task and finish groups.

The Operational Plan is the delivery element of the LHS. It is crucial that this is developed with SMART principles in mind. The monitoring and evaluation of the Operational Plan will be a key role for the Forum. The effectiveness of the strategy will be based on the robustness of the monitoring arrangements. It is critical that the membership of the Forum is made of senior representatives that can take delegated decisions on behalf of their organisation in order that the Forum has credibility.

Further to this it is proposed that the Operational Plan is subject to the Local Authorities Scrutiny Process as part of the Strategic Housing Function's performance management framework and mini service review process. The benefits of this approach will be to raise the profile of the LHS and the partners involved with it and to add transparency to the decisions made by the Forum.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

It is considered that the LHS does not require an associated Strategic Environmental Assessment, however, the planning process has had regard for this matter in the production of the Local Development Plan (LDP). Housing Services have worked closely with planning colleagues to ensure that the formulation of the LDP has enlightened the production of the LHS.

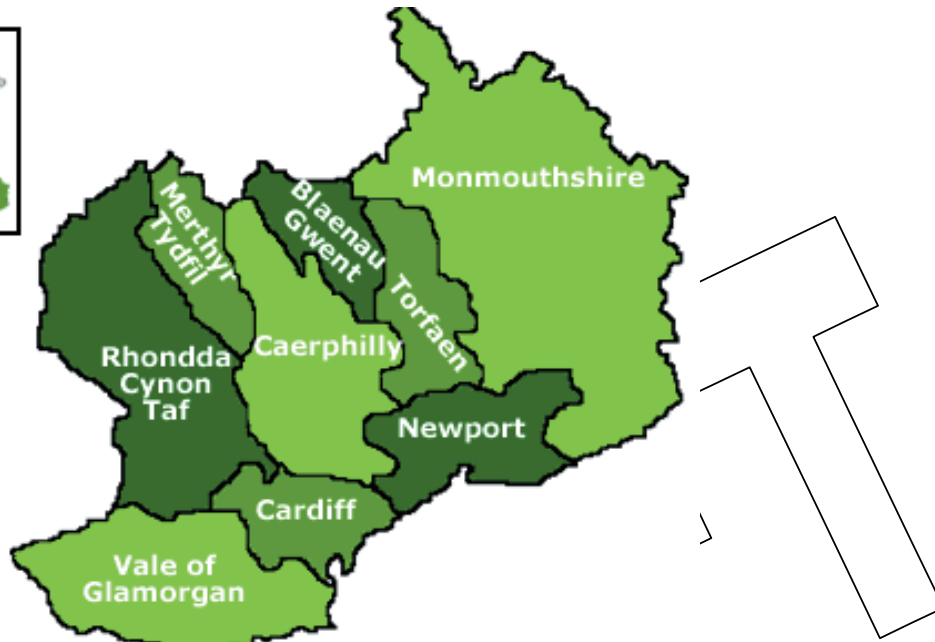
The impact of new housing development on the environment could be substantial, the LDP acknowledges this and these will be addressed in Blaenau Gwent's' Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report.

The Local Housing Strategy will be published on the Council's website and can be supplied in various formats on request, such as large print, Braille, a taped version or if you need a translation into a different language. Please email Anthony Rowson – Housing Policy Manager at anthony.rowson@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk or telephone 01495 355666 if you require any of the above formats.

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Blaenau Gwent - Setting the Scene

Blaenau Gwent is located in South East Wales sharing its borders to the north with Powys, to the east with Monmouthshire and Torfaen County Borough and to the west and south with Caerphilly County Borough. The main population centres are Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, Abertillery, Nantyglo and Blaina and Brynmawr.



The total population at the 2001 census was 70,064 with households totaling 29,586. However, the mid year estimates at 2005 put the population of the borough at 68,400.

Household types in Blaenau Gwent and Wales 2001 Census

Household Type	Blaenau Gwent	Wales
Single Person	30.11%	29.15%
Single Pensioner	16.41%	15.46%
Couple with dependent children	20.88%	20.83%
Couple no dependent children	15.40%	16.94%
Lone parent households	8.96%	7.28%

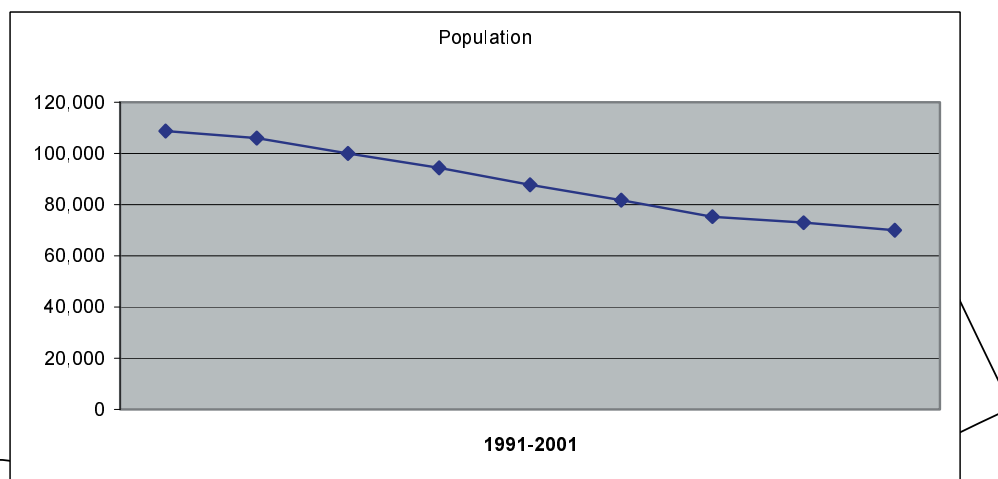
Profile of Population of Blaenau Gwent and Wales 2001 Census

Age Range	Blaenau Gwent	Wales
Percentage of population aged 0 - 9	12.53%	12.17%
Percentage of population aged 10 - 15	8.77%	8.06%
Percentage of population aged 16 - 24	10.02%	10.89%
Percentage of population aged 25 - 44	27.19%	26.6%
Percentage of population aged 45 - 59	19.31%	19.62%
Percentage of population aged 60 - 75	14.09%	14.37%
Percentage of population aged 75+	8.09%	8.29%
Median age of population	39.1	39

These figures indicate an ageing population many of which are single pensioner households. Blaenau Gwent also has the second highest proportion of lone parents in Wales.

The population of Blaenau Gwent has been in decline since 1921. This loss of population was caused mainly by the decline of the coal and steel industries, leading to movements out of the Borough for people to find employment elsewhere. The latest major closure to hit Blaenau Gwent was in 2002 when the Ebbw Vale Steelworks closed.

The Unitary Development Plan aimed to stem this decline and projected that population decline would be halted by 2006 and that by 2011 there would be an increase in population. Although population loss is being stemmed the population is lower than forecast by the Unitary Development Plan.



The latest mid-year estimate for the population of Blaenau Gwent is 68,400 (2005 Mid Year Estimate) down from 70,064 in 2001, which shows that Blaenau Gwent is continuing to lose population.

One of the main problems with net outward migration is that it tends to be biased towards those people most mobile and economically active such as those falling into the younger age groups. The problem with this is that both the active labour market and the disposable income that is likely to be spent in the community declines. This leaves an older and less mobile population structure, which is more dependent on the provision of social services and health facilities within the area and thus tends to be beyond the capacity of the local community to support such services.

Current Situation:

- Underlying population decline
- Losses of 200 per annum as a result of Natural Change
- Net out migration in the 0-45 age group
- An ageing population structure
- High proportion of houses built pre 1919
- High proportion of private houses in poor state of repair
- High vacancy rate

The Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement (MIPPS) suggests that the latest Assembly Government National and Sub National Household Projections for Wales should form the starting point for assessing housing requirements. Within each region local planning authorities are required to work together collaboratively, and with appropriate stakeholders as necessary, to apportion to each authority the Assembly Government's household projections, or agree their own regional policy-based projections.

In accordance with the MIPPS the Authority, as part of the South East Wales Regional Planning Group (SEWPG) has agreed to apportion the Assembly Government's National and Sub National Household Projections for Wales (2006), for South East Wales.

The National and Sub National Population Projections for Wales (2005) indicate that there are likely to be a number of significant changes in the profile of the population of Wales and South East Wales for the period up to 2023. The projection forecast that:

- Wales's population will increase by approximately 6% over the next 20 years, reaching 3 million by 2009.
- The population of South East Wales is projected to increase by 7.8% in the next 20 years, a rise of 110,000 in the population.
- The population of people aged between 25 and 44 is set to increase by 6.2 % in South east Wales.
- There will be an increase in the number of people aged 45 and above across Wales, with the largest increase in the oldest age group – 75 and over, reflecting improvements to life expectancy.

The National and Sub National Household Projections for Wales (2006) reflect these projected changes in the population. The projection identifies that:

- The total number of households is projected to increase by 20% to 1,478,500.
- The number of Households in South East Wales will increase by 22%.
- In general the average household size is expected to continue to fall from 2.34 persons to 2.09.

House Prices

The average house price in Blaenau Gwent is £91,895 (Land Registry House Price Index March 2007). At the time of our last Local Housing Strategy the average house price in Blaenau Gwent was £50,585 (Land Registry Oct-Dec 2003). This represents an increase of 81.7% in just under four years.

In January 2007 the Halifax reported that Blaenau Gwent had achieved the second highest price rise in the last five i.e. 160%. The average house price reported at this time was approximately £107,000.

The surveys encapsulate the relatively new phenomena of lack of affordability within the Blaenau Gwent housing market. The following average income data illustrates the large disparity that exists between current house prices and maximum mortgage thresholds allowed by current average income levels.

Employment and Income

At the 2001 Census Blaenau Gwent had a significantly smaller proportion of its working age population in employment and engaged in higher managerial and professional occupations than the all Wales average. Blaenau Gwent also had a higher proportion of its population in the routine occupations (process and plant and elementary occupation groups) than the Wales average. The proportion of unemployed people who have never worked (10.8%) or were long term unemployed (32.3%) were both higher than the all Wales average of 8.95% and 31.26% respectively.

As can be seen from the table below median earnings in Blaenau Gwent are considerably lower than the rest of Wales and Great Britain.

Earnings by workplace (2006)			
	Blaenau Gwent (Pounds)	Wales (Pounds)	Great Britain (Pounds)
Gross weekly pay			
Full-time workers	380.9	402.5	448.6
Male full-time workers	413.3	440.8	489.4
Female full-time workers	299.5	352.0	387.1
Hourly pay			
Full-time workers	9.37	10.06	11.24
Male full-time workers	10.66	10.69	11.88
Female full-time workers	7.85	9.31	10.26

Source: ONS annual survey of hours and earnings – workplace analysis

Note: Median earnings in pounds for employees working in the area.

The house price index and the average income levels result in excluding some of the community from homeownership. Intervention in the housing market through the introduction of intermediate products will allow low earning families and first time buyers to access good quality housing. The median annual gross pay of £18,343 is used within the authority's Supplementary Planning Guidance to calculate an affordable sale price of an average terraced house delivered through the planning process.

Heritage of Blaenau Gwent - Landscape and Environment

Former heavy industry in the borough namely coal, iron and steel inevitably impacted heavily on the quality of available land. Reclamation and landscaping of these sites in recent times has provided more space for developments, however, the physical geography of the borough (three deeply incised parallel valleys, with development concentrated into relative small areas along the valley floors) means there is a shortage of land for new developments.

Housing estates situated on mountainsides have experienced low demand in the past with sometimes limited public transport links isolating residents from the facilities of the towns on the floors of the valley. There is a need for greater integration of housing developments with facilities and services of the main town centers.

Health and Well Being

It is readily accepted that a safe and comfortable home contributes to a person's health & well being. Evidence is mixed however on the level of impact housing can have with regards to this. A recent study (The Housing Corporations 'Good Housing And Good Health?' June 2006) concluded that housing improvements are likely to lead to mental health improvements, however a programme of redevelopment itself can have detrimental impacts on health, particularly for those who are vulnerable in terms of age and health. It also recognised that housing does not operate in isolation to deliver benefits, other service providers have an important role to play and the wider neighborhood context including factors such as unemployment, educational attainment, the level of anti-social behaviour, fear of crime, etc, may well be of greater importance in determining health.

Overcrowded housing conditions can adversely affect a person's health and well being. Respiratory diseases and an increased risk of accidents are particular health factors of overcrowding. Overcrowding is also linked to physical, social and emotional development in children and also to educational attainment. This can potentially impact on their future employment opportunities, in turn affecting income and consequently their housing outcomes.

Fuel poverty has been recognized as one of the key factors affecting health inequalities and is influenced by many factors, including income, hard to heat properties, inefficient heating systems and poor insulation. Some of the measures used to address fuel poverty are outlined later in this document promoting energy efficiency.

Blaenau Gwent has one of the worst overall health profiles in Wales compared to the average. Many of the reasons are historic and underlying. However, health is being improved in the borough with many initiatives taking place to promote healthier living.

The 2001 Census showed significantly higher rates of long-term limiting illness, high perceptions of poor health and high rates of unpaid care provision in Blaenau Gwent, when compared with Wales.

- 28.25% of the population considered that they had a long-term limiting illness (Wales 23.2%)
- 16.4% of the population described their health as “not good” (Wales 12.4%).
- 12.4% of the population provide unpaid care to family, friends and neighbours, with 3.7% providing unpaid care for 50 hours each week (Wales 3.08%).

The 1998 Welsh Health Survey found that 28% of adults in the borough aged 18-64 reported respiratory diseases, the third highest rate in Wales. The survey also found that 25% of adult's aged 18-64 reported having heart disease, the highest of all Welsh local authorities.

The Healthier Future Partnership Board and Co-ordinating Group have been established in response to the Healthier Future Strategy. A part of their mandate is to raise awareness and identify barriers to healthy living. A key objective of the Healthier Future Strategy is to enable the most vulnerable persons to continue to live at home in safety and comfort. The provision of appropriate disabled adaptations and minor works assistance in people's homes will help to reduce hospital admissions/ delayed transfers of care.

An effective partnership approach to project delivery has resulted in successful initiatives that have focused on areas of potential social exclusion and deprivation and contributed to community cohesion. Some of the key actions are, to promote the availability of leisure services to homeless young people and young people on council estates, to help reduce anti-social behaviour on council estates by providing diversionary activities for young people, to investigate the feasibility to develop a leisure activity programme for young people aged 16/17 and care leavers under 21 that are receiving support from NCH Network and to provide leisure information/activity sessions, including mobile library services at Arosfa Homeless Unit to promote well being for young people.

The Mental Health Strategic Planning Group and the Mental Health Promotion Sub Group, are currently formulating an action plan to include researching tenancy failure caused by mental health problems, the need for suitable appropriate temporary accommodation for homeless people experiencing mental health problems and the need for floating support to help people with mental health problems maintain their tenancies.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLES

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POLICY CONTEXT

Countrywide Policy Context

Our Local Housing Strategy embraces the ethos set within the national policy context. Consistency within housing policy is key to attaining national objectives. The Welsh Assembly Government has set out its national strategic agenda in '*Wales: a better country*'. This identifies four strategic priorities: -

- Helping more people into jobs
- Improving health and well-being
- Developing strong and safe communities
- Creating better jobs and skills

Additionally it emphasises the importance of equality of opportunity and sustainable development, which need to be built into every aspect of policy.

A Winning Wales is the Welsh Assembly Government's Strategy for transforming the economy of Wales, while promoting sustainable development. It is an action-orientated strategy drawn up to deliver economic prosperity in Wales. It recognises the contribution that improved housing can make towards helping create sustainable communities, achievable by implementing *Better Homes for People in Wales – A National Housing Strategy for Wales*.

The Welsh Assembly Government's vision for housing in Wales is: -

'We want everyone in Wales to have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing; to be able to choose where they live and decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families.'

This focuses in particular on: -

Improving Quality

Promoting Affordability and Choice

Tackling Homelessness

Meeting the Housing Requirements of Disadvantaged People

STRATEGIC HOUSING FUNCTION

It is accepted that in order to undertake and plan effective strategic housing objectives there needs to be a robust and capable strategic housing function within the Local Authority.

The Welsh Assembly Government have recognised the importance of a strong strategic housing function and their commissioned review of local service delivery in Wales by Sir Jeremy Beecham '*Beyond Boundaries - Citizen-centred Local Services for Wales*' highlighted the need for capacity building within strategic housing functions: -

'Capacity constraints have been made more acute by new roles which place greater demands on individuals than traditional leadership and managerial roles. For example, the strategic housing role is very different from the traditional housing service provider function which district councils fulfilled prior to re-organisation. This role now includes:

- Visioning of housing and community outcomes;
- Effective engagement of communities and partners;
- Delivering services, which achieve health, sustainability and other outcomes;
- Responding flexibly to housing need;
- Implementing complex new financing models.'

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council has recognized the importance of the strategic housing function and the regeneration, social care and community sustainability benefits that targeting resources to this area will bring. There is an acceptance that the capacity of the function requires further strengthening in order to maximize housing opportunities brought forward from planning policy and the Welsh Assembly Government.

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales (2002) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Assembly Government.

National Planning Policy Guidance in respect of housing provision is contained in the Ministerial Interim Planning Policy Statement (MIPPS) 01/2006, TAN 1 Joint Housing Land Availability Studies and TAN 2: Planning and Affordable Housing.

This new policy advice introduced a number of new requirements for planning in terms of how the authority identifies its housing requirement and how the authority deals with affordable housing.

Guidance is provided on the preparation of Joint Housing Land Availability Studies (JHLAS). The purpose of these studies is to:

- Monitor the provision of market and affordable housing;
- Provide an agreed statement of residential land availability for development planning and control purposes; and;
- Set out the need for action in situations where an insufficient supply is identified.

The guidance requires local planning authorities to:

- Ensure that sufficient land is genuinely available to provide a **5 year supply** of land for housing. This must be judged against the strategy contained in the development plan.
- Have regard to the requirement to prepare and provide timely housing land supply figures to satisfy the requirements of the Wales Programme for Improvement Core Planning Indicator P9 Housing Land Supply.
- Include an affordable housing target in the development plan which is derived from the local housing assessment
- Indicate how the target will be achieved using the identified policy approaches
- Monitor the provision of affordable housing against the target (via the Local Development Plan Annual Monitoring Report) and where necessary take action to ensure that the target is met.

Local Planning authorities are required to promote:

- Mixed tenure communities;
- Development that is easily accessible by public transport, cycling and walking;

- Mixed use development so communities have good access to employment, retail and other services;
- Attractive landscapes around dwellings, with usable open space and regard for biodiversity and nature conservation;
- Greater emphasis on quality, good design and the creation of safe places for people;
- The most efficient use of land;
- Well designed living environments, where appropriate at increased densities;
- Construction of housing with low environmental impact that especially maximizes energy efficiency and minimises the use of energy from fossil fuel sources, using renewable energy technology where appropriate; and
- 'Barrier free' housing developments, for example built to Lifetime Homes Standards.

Regional Policy Context

It is accepted that housing has a spatial dimension and housing markets do not respect administrative boundaries. The Housing Market within Blaenau Gwent should be considered in regional context based on the influences of the Housing Markets in the neighbouring Authorities e.g. the Heads of the Valley region and the M4 corridor i.e. Cardiff and Newport.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough and its partners are committed to working within a framework of collaboration on a cross-boundary basis to help develop housing services within the South East Wales region.

Blaenau Gwent share good practice and promotes joint working through the All Wales Strategic Housing Officers Network, the All Wales Homelessness Officers Network and the Supporting People Information Network.

Housing Services supports the principles of cross-boundary working outlined in Sir Jeremy Beecham's review: -

'The aim must be to make local and regional partnership working more routine, by creating systems which fit together and are not sealed into silos, with compatible timescales and funding arrangements, matching strategic priorities and consistent operational objectives.' *Beyond Boundaries Citizen-Centred Local Services for Wales*

The Welsh Assembly Government's *'Making the Connections: Delivering Better Services for Wales'* recognises that joint working is vital to deliver public services of top quality and the 20 year vision *'People, Places, Futures – The Wales Spatial Plan'* requires that collaborative work is undertaken which should reflect and reconcile both the spatial aspects of existing regional and local strategies and the objectives of the plan. The South East Wales Spatial Plan focuses on a number of geographical areas in need of regeneration activity. Key themes, relative to housing, derived from spatial planning processes in Wales include:-

- Affordability and supply
- Housing quality and achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard
- Homelessness
- Site regeneration and empty homes

- Private rented sector condition and energy efficiency

These themes are consistent across the Heads of the Valleys region and form the basis for local and sub regional strategic prioritisation.

The *Heads of the Valleys Project* is a wide-ranging regeneration partnership bringing together the Welsh Assembly Government with five local authorities (Rhondda Cynon Taf, Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau-Gwent and Torfaen) with other organisations from across the public, private and voluntary sectors. *'Turning Heads... A Strategy for the Heads of the Valleys 2020'* launched on 15 June 2006, sets out the vision and priorities for the programme. The strategy recognises that although the housing stock in the Heads of the Valleys area is not of significantly worse quality than elsewhere in Wales, there is a lack of variety in terms of private dwellings, and a high reliance on council housing, which is in need of renewal to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

The Wales Spatial Plan identifies the Valleys as areas that need to be strengthened as desirable places to live, work and visit – combining a wider mix of types of housing and good access to jobs and services – in distinctive communities set in an attractive environment. The aim is to maximise the potential of the A465 corridor. Ebbw Vale is one of the two main towns listed where investment will be targeted to drive regeneration in the Heads of the Valleys area. 'Turning Heads' sees the Heads of the Valleys Programme as offering a once-in-a-generation chance to change the area for better by capitalising on its unique potential and links to the wider region. Housing is one area where opportunities exist and inaction is not seen to be an option.

Blaenau Gwent is wholly subsumed within the Heads of the Valleys region. The region has been defined as a housing market within the regional planning process.

As members of the South East Wales Regional Housing Forum since its formation in October 2003, the Authority actively participates in regional working. The South East Wales Regional Housing Forum was established: -

"To provide the main focus for the discussion of regional housing themes and priorities in order to raise the profile of key issues with both the Welsh Assembly Government and other relevant stakeholders. To promote awareness of the strategic housing role and to ensure essential links are made with other services and policy areas that both impact upon, and are affected by, housing issues."

The following Councils are part of the Forum: Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Merthyr, Monmouthshire, Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Torfaen and Vale of Glamorgan.

The forum has worked jointly to attain a regional housing market study as it is recognised that housing markets do not easily fit within the administrative boundaries of local government, and there is therefore a need for a greater emphasis to be placed upon regional (and sub-regional) partnerships within South-East Wales in relation to strategic and policy development.

Findings from the Study included:-

Five types of housing market area (HMA) were identified within the region:

- Heads of the Valleys HMA
- Mid Valleys HMA
- North of M4 Corridor HMA
- Three Urban Based HMAs (around and south of M4):
 Bridgend / Porthcawl
 Greater Cardiff
 Greater Newport
- Rural Monmouthshire HMA

The study estimated a need for almost 18,000 additional affordable homes over a five-year planning period; an annual requirement of approximately 3,600 extra affordable homes, with a high proportion of this required in the Cardiff HMA.

However, there was evidence of unmet need for affordable housing in each of the HMAs identified in the study: -

Local Authority	Net Annual Need in LA	% Of Total Need In SEWRHF Area
Blaenau Gwent	129	3.6%
Bridgend	205	5.8%
Caerphilly	202	5.7
Cardiff	1644	46.5
Merthyr	83	2.3
Monmouthshire	244	6.9
Newport	273	7.7
RCT	324	9.2
Torfaen	180	5.1
Vale Of Glamorgan	252	7.1
Total Annual Need For SEWRHF Area	3536	

The need for an on-going process of data capture (and improvement in quality), analysis, interpretation and projection, using information to “plan, monitor and manage” housing rather than “predict and provide”.

A further Locality Report was developed as part of the study process to consider local market dynamics in Blaenau Gwent.

Findings from this study included:-

- Continued growth in the M4 corridor and the investment in the Heads of The Valleys region means it is essential to monitor the rate of change within both HMAs - 1) the north within the Heads of the Valleys market area and 2) the south within the Mid Valleys market area.
- The need for creation of a mix of open market and affordable housing development as a result of rising house prices, Buy to Let investment and changing commuting patterns, particularly for single people.
- The development of a wider range of new housing to create diversity in housing stock to enable households to exercise choice and help address out migration.
- The need to for the council to work in partnership with other local authorities, which have similar market, types within their localities.
- The need to work in partnership with the Heads of the Valleys Directorate to enable new development and meet the needs of the local population.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are also part of the South East Wales Regional Homelessness Forum with Monmouthshire, Newport, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Caerphilly and Torfaen. The forum allows the sharing of good practice in the provision of services for alleviating homelessness and promotes joint working initiatives.

Local Policy Context

The establishment of an appropriately resourced Strategic Housing Function and effective Strategic Housing Forum is recognised as critical to the development of a robust local policy framework and Community Planning framework for housing within Blaenau Gwent.

The Community Plan published in 2005 states the overarching aim for housing in Blaenau Gwent is:

“To ensure that quality affordable accommodation is available in sustainable communities for all residents.”

Further to this, ‘that the regeneration benefits linked to housing development are maximised through harnessing employment, training, supply chain and economic activity opportunities.’ and ‘that housing opportunities in Blaenau Gwent meet the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community.’

The Community Planning development process is currently being undertaken. The strategic priorities emerging from the Strategic Housing Forum will feed directly into the process adding transparency to the prioritisation process and make the necessary linkages from a community planning purpose with regeneration, social care and inclusion and health.

Key Partnerships

The relationship between the Authority in its strategic housing function and the registered social landlords that operate within Blaenau Gwent cannot be underestimated. The symbiotic nature of the relationship necessitates the requirement to develop mutually beneficial policies and procedures for consistency and transparency in both housing development and housing management functions. The production of Community Housing Agreements will deliver such benefits.

Strategic Planning for Accommodation Needs of Vulnerable People

A number of Planning Groups for vulnerable people have emerged in the last few years to delivering a strategic approach to service delivery for key groups within the Community. The identification of accommodation requirements and operational planning to satisfy housing need is a key theme within the emerging strategies underpinning the local housing strategy for the area

The accommodation subgroups developed to plan for housing need for vulnerable parts of the community link to the Local Strategic Housing Forum to create a joined up approach to strategic planning for accommodation needs throughout the County Borough

The Living Independently in the 21st Century Group

The group focuses on the service planning for older people and takes it direction for the Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy that was adopted by the Authority in November 2006. The Strategy advocates giving older people the necessary support in order that they may live independently either in their own homes through the utilisation of assistive technology or telecare or in a supported setting such as Extracare Sheltered Housing. The strategy moves away from the reliance on residential care. A tripartite bid for Social Housing Grant to the Welsh Assembly Government involving Social Care, Housing and the Local Health Board was successful in Mar 2007. A 40-50 unit Extra Care scheme is planned for completion in 2009.

Housing priorities for this group will be developed as part of an Elderly Persons Accommodation Task and Finish group. The priorities will be fed into the Strategic Housing Forum for consideration.

The Learning Disabilities Strategic Planning Group (LDSPG)

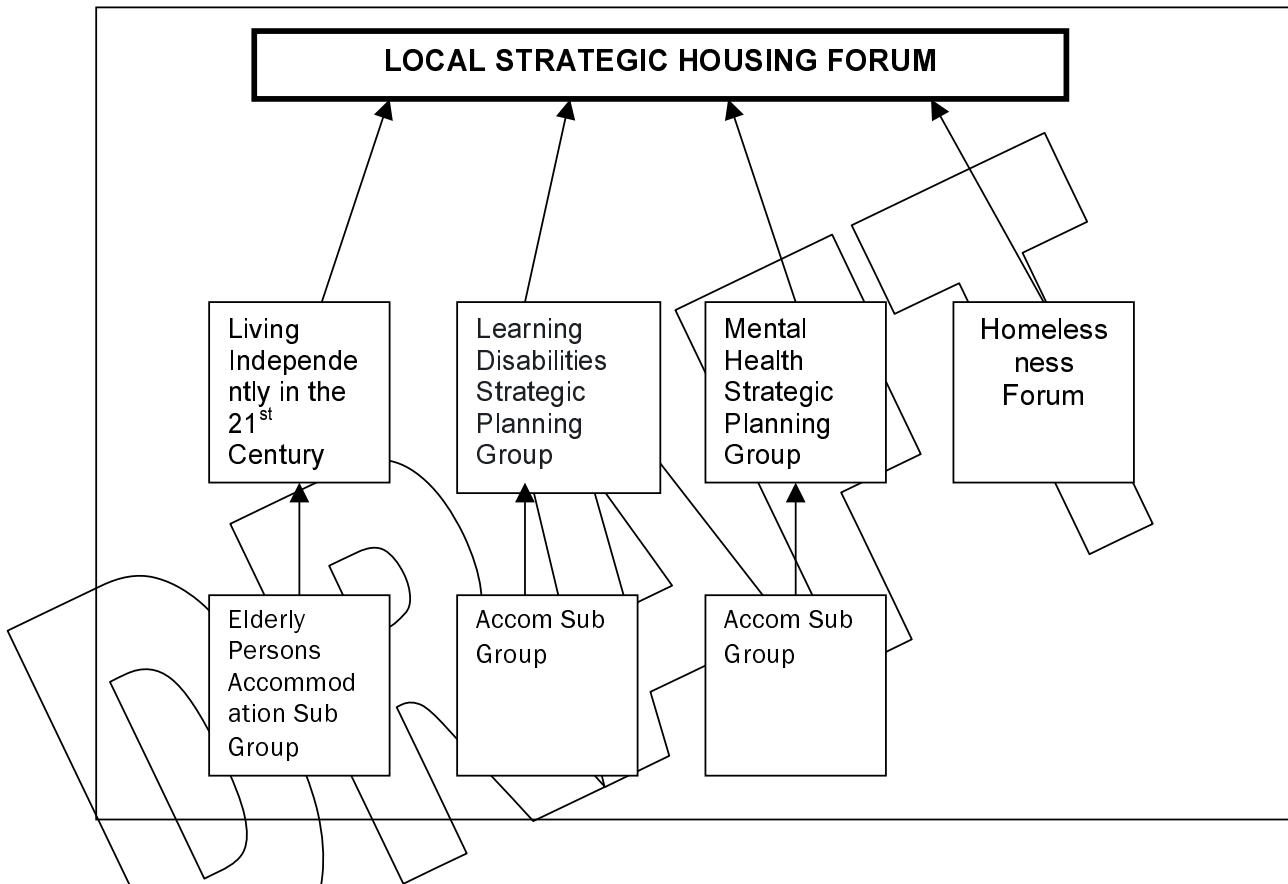
The LDSPG was established in 2005 and from it an accommodation sub group was formed to identify the accommodation priorities for this group through the development of an Accommodation Strategy. The Strategy is nearing completion and key priorities will be used to inform the Strategic Housing Forum and help shape services development.

The Mental Health Strategic Planning Group

The Mental Health Planning Group was established to plan services and strategic priorities for people with mental issues. The group is relatively new and currently

developing its strategy. An accommodation sub group has been established to identify housing need and establish priorities which as with the other sub groups will feed into the Strategic Housing Forum following agreement by the overarching Mental Health commissioning group

The following details the strategic planning framework for accommodation needs for the vulnerable in Blaenau Gwent. The role of Supporting People will be integral to delivering the 'supporting element' of any scheme.



Local Strategic Planning Framework

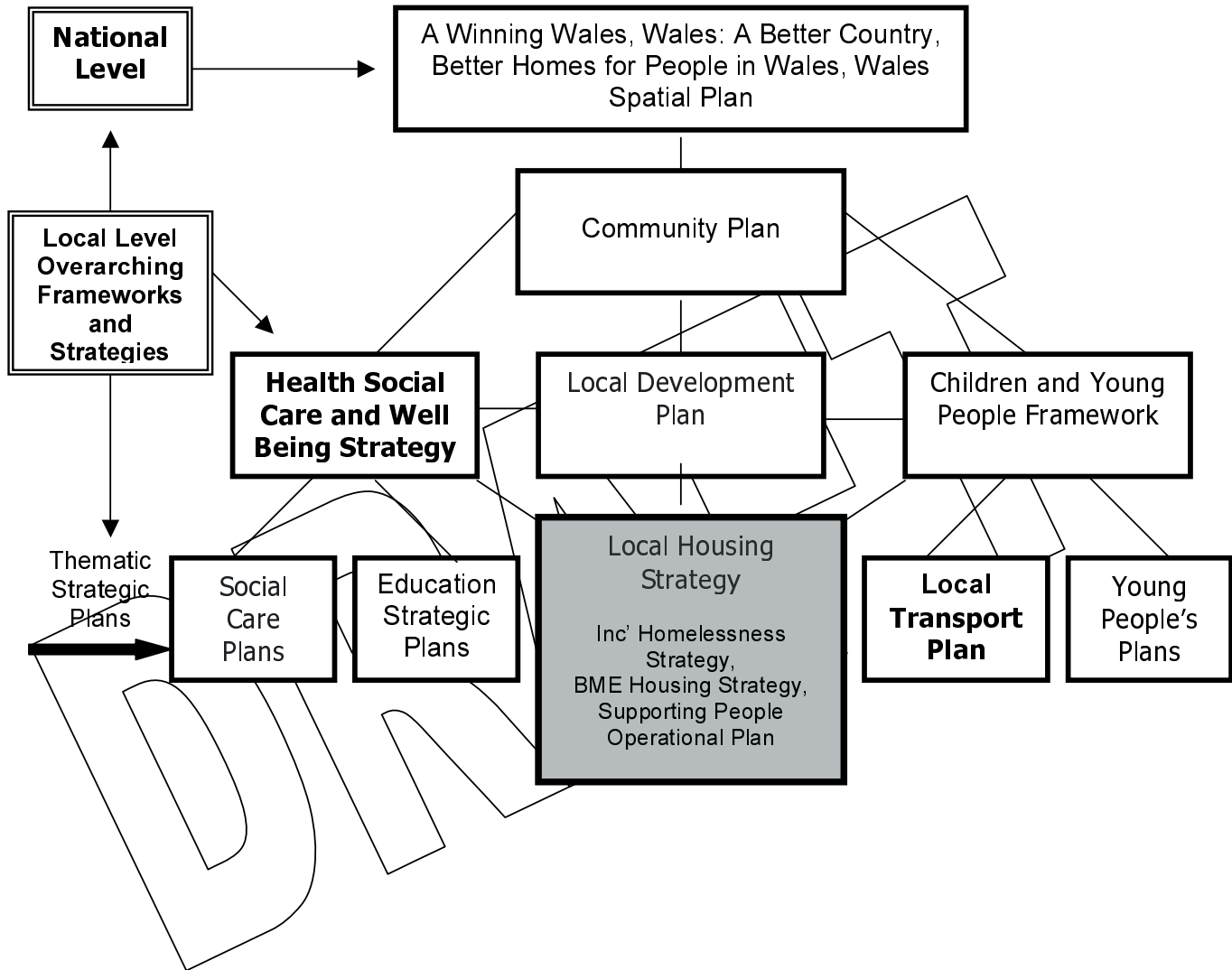
Blaenau Gwent recognises the impact that a range of good quality housing options can have on helping to create sustainable and healthy communities.

One of the Community Plan's seven key action areas reflects the national housing priorities: -

'To ensure that quality affordable accommodation is available in sustainable communities for all residents.'

The Housing Strategy subsumes the Homelessness Strategy and Black and Minority Ethnic Strategy and Supporting People Operational Plan. It links directly to the authority's Community Plan.

Interface with other pivotal strategic plans.

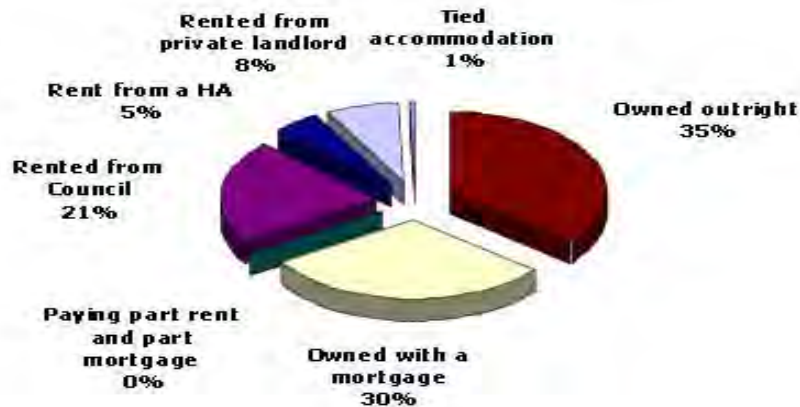


THE LOCAL HOUSING SYSTEM

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THE LOCAL HOUSING SYSTEM

The dominant form of housing in Blaenau Gwent is owner occupation. Just under two thirds of all properties across Blaenau Gwent are owned outright or owned with a mortgage, with a small number (less than 1%) part owned through shared ownership in addition. Around a quarter of the stock is rented from social landlords with the remaining 8% renting from a private landlord or in tied accommodation. Terraced housing makes up the majority of the stock (60%), with smaller proportions of detached and semi-detached housing and flat/maisonettes.



Blaenau Gwent Housing Services commissioned Opinion Research Services (ORS) to undertake a Local Housing Market Assessment in 2006. This assessment provides some of the evidence base for this Local Housing Strategy, the authority's housing policies (including affordable housing policies in the development plans), and identifies levels of housing need and demand. The assessment meets the requirement of Planning Policy Wales Technical Advice Note 2 and Circular 13/97 to determine appropriate affordable housing targets to assist in addressing identified local housing need through the planning process.

Some of the main findings of the assessment were:-

- The vast majority (89%) of households were satisfied with their current home, and 79% stated that they had no problems with the condition of their property. However, Council tenants were more likely to be dissatisfied with their home and to report that they had at least one problem.
- 810 households (2.9%) are currently living in technically overcrowded housing, but almost a sixth of households considered their current home to be too small. Whilst 72% of households technically under occupy their property, only 5% said that they currently had too many rooms.
- In the second quarter of 2000, 90% of all completed property sales were priced at less than £80,000 – this figure was below 60% of all sales in 2005. Over the same period, the number of houses selling for over £100,000 has risen from almost zero to more than 20% of the total.
- 4,811 (17.0%) of established households in Blaenau Gwent are currently living in unsuitable housing, of which 364 need to move within the area to resolve there.

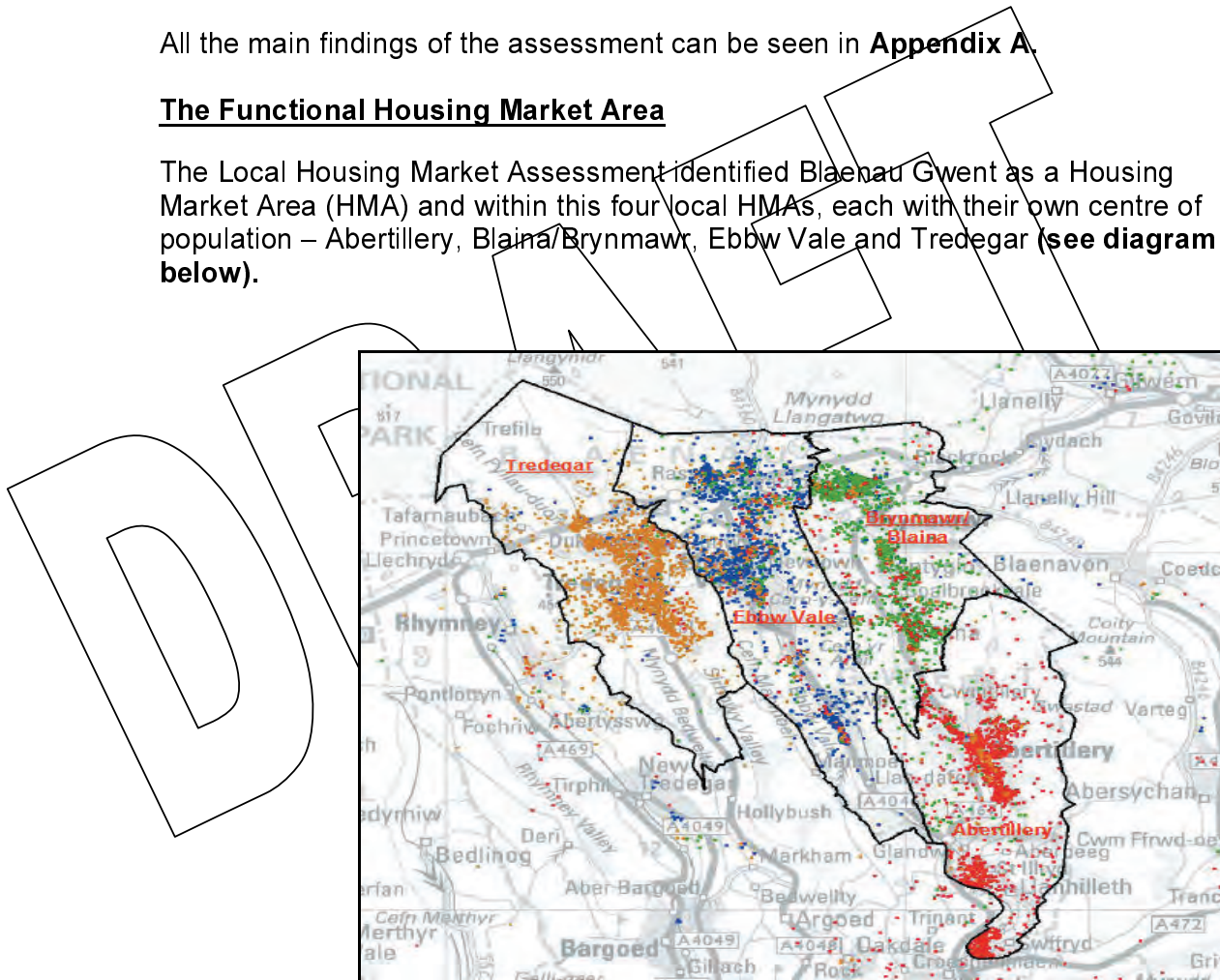
- Housing problems and cannot afford to buy or rent market housing – they are in housing need.
- The ORS housing market model identifies an overall 5year net requirement for 1,269 additional dwellings. The net requirement is attributable to a net gain of 1,372 households through migration offset against a slight indigenous decline in households.
- The balance of housing requirements is for 18% social housing, 16% intermediate housing and 66% market housing. This balance is determined on the basis of affordability, assuming that the relationship between house prices and income remains constant.

A significant proportion of households with dependent children are currently in unsuitable housing – including 25.4% of single parents and 48.1% of groups of adults with dependent children.

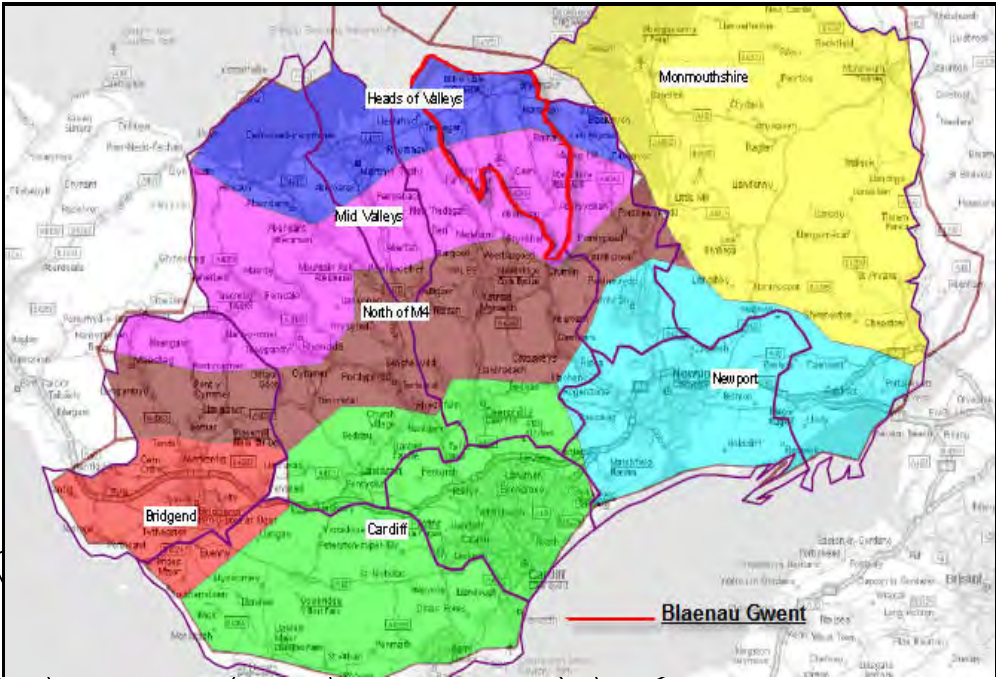
All the main findings of the assessment can be seen in **Appendix A**.

The Functional Housing Market Area

The Local Housing Market Assessment identified Blaenau Gwent as a Housing Market Area (HMA) and within this four local HMAs, each with their own centre of population – Abertillery, Blaenau/Brynmaur, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar (see diagram below).



A study in 2005 into HMAs in South East Wales, commissioned by the South East Wales Regional Housing Forum, undertaken by Cambridge University concluded that Blaenau Gwent was effectively part of two regional HMAs the north within the Heads of the Valleys market area and the south within the Mid Valleys market area (see diagram below). Housing policies therefore need to have regard for influences from and impacts on neighbouring HMAs sometimes within different local authority regions.



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TACKLING INEQUALITY

Tackling Inequality

Equalities Scheme

It is acknowledged that discrimination and injustice can occur through many ways and Housing Services adhere to the Authority's Race Equality Scheme, which is reviewed in a three-year cycle, the next being due by May 2008. Also from the 1st of April 2007 the Authority entered into a service level agreement with the Valleys Race Equality Council (VALREC) to help provide a level of expertise on Race issues that to date the authority has been lacking.

Equality Impact Awareness Training

Heads of Service and other senior officers within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council are in the process of receiving Equalities Impact Assessment training in response to the equalities agenda. The training aims to increase knowledge of the equalities agenda and will enable the authority to impact assess all of its policies, procedures and functions. Under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 Local Authorities are required to identify all of the functions, policies, plans and strategies which have a race equality dimension and to carry out an impact assessment against these.

The aim of Equality Impact Assessments is to find out whether services are meeting the requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act and are appropriately taking into account the needs and concerns of people from different racial groups, women and men, and people with disabilities.

Where gaps and adverse impact are found, action plans will be developed and included in the annual service plans and work programmes. Where there is insufficient data available about the impact of the service on specific groups, the first stage will be to establish monitoring and feedback mechanisms to obtain it on a regular basis.

Further training on equality impact assessments, concerned with pan equalities and not solely race, is planned in the near future, facilitated by Tai Pawb.

Equalities Champion

In September 2003, Councillor Jennifer Morgan was appointed as the Authority's Equalities Champion and has since played a keen role in driving forward Equalities across the board at a political level.

Welsh Language

On the 13th January 2006 the Welsh Language Board gave formal approval to the Authority's Welsh Language Scheme that states it will treat the English and Welsh languages equally. It gives the public the right to choose which language to use in their dealings with them and recognises that members of the public can express their views and needs better in

their preferred language. Housing services adheres to the scheme and non-welsh speaking staff are encouraged to learn the language by means of numerous free courses operated throughout the borough. The 2001 census highlighted 9.3 % of the population of the borough being able to speak Welsh, significantly more than the 1991 census figure of 2.2 % speaking Welsh. ELWA's Learning and Labour Market Intelligence Survey of June 2005 puts the figure of welsh speakers in the borough at 16%.

Tackling Racial Harassment

The authority has set up a Multi-Agency Diversity Forum which will look to address Race Hate Crime in the area. The membership comprises The Council, Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board, Heddlu Gwent Police, GAVO, Safer Blaenau Gwent. It is hoped that this group can establish answers to any Race Hate issues that arise in Blaenau Gwent

The Black and Minority Ethnic Population.

The BME population can be described as persons from an ethnic minority community, including Gypsies and Travelers and migrant workers.

The Population of Blaenau Gwent by Ethnic Background as at the 2001 Census:-

Ethnic Group	Number
White British	68,813
Irish	173
Other White	497
Mixed Black Caribbean	70
Mixed Black African	24
Mixed Asian	59
Mixed Other	31
Indian	105
Pakistani	72
Bangladeshi	24
Other Asian	21
Black Caribbean	12
Black African	41
Other Black	6
Chinese	83
Other ethnic group	33

Local Authorities must meet their obligations under the Race Relations Act 1976, the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 and the Housing Act 1996.

The Welsh Assembly Government have produced a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Housing Action Plan for Wales (2002). The aims of the Plan are:

“To ensure that clear directives and targets are set for social landlords and other providers of housing, to ensure that discrimination and disadvantage is eliminated across Black, Minority Ethnic communities living in Wales.”

One of the actions from the plan was for “social landlords to have an individual BME Housing Strategy linked to the overarching Local Housing Strategy for the local authority area; or be a partner to a regional and/or multi-agency BME Housing Strategy linked to the overarching Local Housing Strategy/ies.”

Blaenau Gwent Housing Services worked in partnership with four other local authorities and six RSLs, all working in the south east Wales area, to produce a BME Housing Strategy in December 2004. The strategy and its associated action plan was formally adopted by Blaeanu Gwent County Borough Council early in 2006. The action plan has been reviewed for inclusion within the operational plan of the LHS and will be subject to the same monitoring and evaluation, overseen by the Strategic Housing Forum.

Housing Services have been members of Tai Pawb (an all Wales organisation set up to promote race equality and social justice in housing) since May 2006. The action plan has been reviewed in conjunction with Tai Pawb.

Housing Services staff, local members and tenants representatives received race awareness training as part of the BME Housing Strategy Action Plan. It is now recognized that there is need for refresher training on this subject to take into consideration emerging issues.

As part of the Local Housing Market Assessment, a separate assessment of the needs of specific household groups, including BME groups, was undertaken in partnership with Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen councils. Subject areas addressed in relation to the BME population included:-

- Socio-economic background
- Housing Tenure
- Housing Issues
- Housing support and information
- Additional support and information requirements
- Future changes and the impact upon local housing for the BME population.

Some of the main findings from the Assessment were:-

The BME population of the sub-region was generally younger with far fewer people of retirement age. The ethnic minority population is more likely to be living alone, which probably reflects its relative youth. A significant percentage of the BME population in Newport was born locally, highlighting that it is a more established community.

There is concern that limited information is available on the housing system and concern that information, which is available, is not in the necessary languages. Language line is seen as a useful tool. Reportedly, current services need to be more effectively explained and Local Authorities need to recognize the wide range of support needs which the BME population has.

Anticipated future changes include services, which are more relevant to the BME population, an increase in the elderly BME population, and associated support services, and an increasing presence of BME families.

The authority is, in the near future, facilitating training in equality impact assessments.

Our Goals –Tackling Inequality

- Undertake an equality impact assessment of the Local Housing Strategy and to incorporate all strategies, policies and procedures into the equality impact assessment process
- Review current information dissemination practices to ensure that they do not discriminate against, and are appropriate to, the BME community.
- Provide Equality and Diversity training for all staff on a regular basis and review the impact of such training on service delivery
- Actively address incidents of racial harassment on council estates
- Provide staff training in how to provide culturally sensitive support to victims of racial harassment
- Review how information about the racial harassment policy is disseminated within the community
- Review current consultation and engagement mechanisms to ensure that they do not discriminate against the inclusion of BME people
- Review current publicity material to ensure it is comprehensive and accessible

The Accommodation Needs of Gypsies and Travellers

The Welsh Assembly Government are working to promote equality of opportunity for all sections of Welsh society and are committed to ensuring that all minority and disadvantaged groups are protected and treated fairly.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is required to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers as part of the review of housing needs in the borough and make proposals to meet identified needs. As part of the Local Housing Market Assessment, a separate assessment of the needs of specific household groups, including Gypsies and Travelers, was undertaken in partnership with Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen county borough councils. The assessment looked at housing issues for Gypsies and Travelers in bricks and mortar accommodation, on local authority caravan sites and on private sites.

Some of the main findings from the Assessment were:-

Gypsies and Travellers living in bricks and mortar accommodation tend to be owner-occupiers of terraced housing and are slightly more satisfied with their current accommodation than the overall population. Consequently, Gypsies and Travellers have less desire to move to alternative accommodation. The health of this part of the Gypsy and traveler population is relatively poor.

Generally, the conditions on local authority sites are much better. At Local Authority sites there is greater provision of street lighting, roads are well kept, and individuals have access to a water supply. Obviously there are exceptions to this general trend, with some Gypsies and Travellers on Local Authority sites having limited access to wash facilities, and several people on the private site having limited access to wash facilities, and several people on the private site having excellent conditions. At all sites there is concern that children and elderly living in caravans must go outside in order to use washing facilities. This is a particular issue on the private site, where the amenities block is in a state of disrepair.

Discrimination was raised as a concern by those living on the private authorised site. Discrimination was thought to result from a lack of understanding by many people in Local Authorities and on misconceptions.

Cwmcrachen Caravan Site is situated in Nant-y-glo. There are a total of 24 pitches at Cwmcrachen consisting of 17 permanent and 7 temporary/transit pitches. Each permanent pitch has an amenity block. The site is managed by Blaenau Gwent C.B.C. within the Environment Department and has been established since 1965.

The Pat Niner Report 'Accommodation Needs of Gypsy-Travellers in Wales' (2006), commissioned by WAG, made 28 recommendations for local authorities and the WAG. Funding was recommended for refurbishment of sites and the Welsh Assembly Government have established an all Wales grant of £3 million. The Authority has submitted a bid to enable the upgrade of all amenity blocks at Cwmcrachen. The Welsh Assembly Government has announced it will develop a model site license agreement setting out rights and responsibilities of both the landlord and the licensee in plain and easy-to-understand language. Also, to inform the report, a physical condition survey was undertaken of 19 Local Authority Gypsy-

Traveller sites between 31st May and 17th June 2005. The condition survey at Cwmcrachen Caravan Site did not consider it to be overcrowded and found the general quality of the pitch surfaces across the site to be very good.

An Accommodation Assessment of gypsies and travellers at Cwmcrachen is currently being completed by the Authority.

The total numbers of Gypsies & Travellers living in the borough are not recorded, there was no category included for such purposes in the 2001 census. There is the possibility that the 2011 census will include a new category for Gypsies & Travellers.

There is currently no means by which the number of gypsies & travellers living in bricks and mortar in the borough can be identified. Although during household interviews for the Local Housing Market Assessment, 21 people identified themselves as being gypsies or travellers.

Awaiting details of Gypsy and Traveller Count

There is no separate ethnic monitoring classification on the housing application form for gypsies & travellers, and there may be reluctance for applicants to identify themselves in this way, should one be introduced.

The average length of tenancy at Cwmcrachen Site since 1/4/00 is one and a quarter years. In this period a total of 51 tenancies have commenced. There are 15 current tenancies: -

Tenancies at Cwmcrachen since 1/4/00			
<i>Year</i>	<i>Tenancies started</i>	<i>Tenancies ended</i>	<i>Average Length of ended tenancies - months</i>
2000	6	1	3
2001	6	3	7
2002	1	2	20
2003	5	2	12
2004	3	6	19
2005	11	10	20
2006	2	6	20
2007 to 31 st march	2	5	10

Of the 15 tenancies currently 'live' the average duration, thus far, is 16 months.

Of the 51 tenancies since 1/4/00, 30 were moves originating from within the site itself, 8 were registered No Fixed Abode, 6 were from bricks and mortar, 4 from caravan sites outside the borough and 3 from non specified accommodation from outside the borough.

There have been 12 allocations of council housing to residents at Cwmcrachen in the last 10 years.

At present 3 of the tenants on the site are registered on the authority's housing waiting list.

It is recognised that more information is required on Gypsy & Traveller accommodation needs in the Borough and this is addressed in the operational plan.

Our Goals- Services for Gypsies & Travellers

- To further research the housing needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Blaenau Gwent
- To ensure residents at Cwmcrachen Caravan Site have modern facilities on their pitch
- To ensure there is adequate provision of pitches for gypsies and travellers in the borough
- To actively work to deter incidences of discrimination against gypsies and travellers
- To regularly monitor waiting list information for gypsies and travellers to identify trends
- To finalise the Accommodation Needs Assessment of Gypsies and Travellers in the borough.

Migrant Workers

The numbers of people leaving their country of origin to find employment in Wales is increasing. The accession of ten new states to the European Union in 2004 raised the rate of increase.

Traditionally there has been a low number of migrant workers either living or working in Blaenau Gwent and as already stated there is a small established BME population in the borough.

The number of National Insurance Number Registrations in respect of non-UK Nationals in 2005/06 in Blaenau Gwent was 210. The country of origin with the largest representation was Poland with over 50% of registrants.

The possibility that these official numbers do not reflect the total numbers of migrant workers in Blaenau Gwent and the probability that the rate of increase will continue means that there is a real need for the development of public services to have the capacity for dealing with issues associated with minority non-UK nationals. A recent report by Joseph Rowntree Foundation (*'Migrants' lives beyond the workplace: the experiences of Central and Eastern Europeans in the UK - 2007'*) found that a growing number of migrants are intending to stay permanently in the UK.

Blaenau Gwent Multi-Agency Diversity Forum has been established (led by Blaenau Gwent Community Safety Partnership) and will be a key body to progress joined up

working in ensuring all services including housing are fully accessible and responsive to the needs of migrant workers.

A recent Migrant Workers Conference held in Blaenau Gwent organised by BG Community Safety Partnership and VALREC (The Valleys Race Equality Council) debated the implications for public services in areas such as housing, education and employment.

Employment agencies are seen as vital points of contact, targeting these agencies with advice and information on housing which could be greatly beneficial for migrant workers.

In a recent national report '*Crossing borders-Responding to the local challenges of migrant workers – Jan 2007*' by the Audit Commission, it was found that most migrant workers are young without dependents. Other conclusions were:-

Local authorities need to take a leading role in coordinating local responses...

- A wide range of issues can emerge, linked to employment, housing, communications, entitlements, education, law enforcement and local nuisance.
- Many public bodies are involved in responding, and they need to work jointly.
- They also need to work alongside those who often have the best links to migrant workers: voluntary and faith organisations, and employers and landlords.

...and developing locally tailored responses to locally specific issues.

- Understanding how local populations are changing by analysing national and local sources of data and intelligence.
- Balancing enforcement of regulations with encouragement for employers and landlords to improve standards.
- Addressing language, advice and information issues.
- Minimising local tensions by dispelling myths, responding swiftly to emerging problems and maintaining contingency plans. Modifying services to meet the diverse needs of a changing population.

Information on the professions of migrant workers in the borough is anecdotal and suggest most are low skill jobs with factory work and care home workers being the main.

With the future development of 'The Works' site in Ebbw Vale to include a hospital and the construction industry skills shortage at a time of potential mass demand with authorities striving to meet the WHQS by 2012 there is potential for increasing representation of migrant workers in the borough.

The majority of migrant workers attain housing as part of their contract of employment and there is a need to ensure that there are no instances of housing migrant workers in unsuitable conditions, e.g. overcrowded in Houses in Multiple Occupation, within the borough.

Loss of employment can lead to homelessness if accommodation is tied to employment and homelessness services need to be accessible to assist and advise this client group.

A good supply of affordable housing in the borough will help to ensure that migrant workers are not reliant on tied accommodation or private sector provision.

Housing services will take an active role in the Blaenau Gwent Multi-Agency Diversity Forum and work closely with private sector housing colleagues to ensure issues faced by migrant workers in relation to their accommodation are addressed.

Merthyr CBCs 'Welcome Pack' for migrant workers with information on housing/homelessness, emergency services, NHS, South Wales Police, etc all translated into 5 different languages is recognized as a recent example of good practice in this area.

Our Goals- Migrant Workers

- Ensure that migrant workers within the borough are housed in good quality accommodation free from overcrowding
- Take an active role within Blaenau Gwent Multi-Agency Diversity Forum to provide joined up services to migrant workers
- Work with partner organizations within Blaenau Gwent Multi-Agency Diversity Forum to research the feasibility of developing a welcome pack for migrant workers which includes housing advice and information

Asylum Seekers and Refugees

There have been no instances of referrals to Blaenau Gwent of asylum seekers and there is no special provision for refugees or asylum seekers within the borough. Should there be any referrals in the future from dispersal arrangements Blaenau Gwent will help accommodate them accordingly. In the meantime the situation will be regularly monitored and evaluated.

Our Goals- Asylum Seekers and Refugees

- To monitor on a regular basis asylum seeker data to determine the need for appropriate services and accommodation to be developed.

Ethnic Monitoring Systems

It is important that within our monitoring systems, ethnicity is recorded. An action note – ‘Equality Monitoring for social housing in Wales’ produced by the Commission for Racial Equality in Nov 2006 states:

‘Incorporating ethnicity into monitoring is an essential tool for achieving racial equality. Without this, it would be difficult to establish the nature or extent of inequalities, the areas where action is most needed, and whether the measures aimed at reducing inequality are succeeding.

Monitoring consists of four stages:

Developing a system of collecting, recording and maintaining information about racial and ethnic background;
 Activating the system;
 Analyzing the data; and
 Acting on the findings.’

At present there is limited knowledge of the numbers of black and minority ethnic people accessing housing services in the borough.

The housing application form uses the following categories and format for monitoring purposes.

ASIAN (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Sri Lankan)	
CARIBBEAN	
AFRICAN	
SOUTH EAST ASIAN (Chinese, Vietnamese, Malaysian, Thai)	
BRITISH / EUROPEAN	
OTHER	

BLACK	
WHITE	
MIXED	
OTHER	

QUESTION REFUSED	
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There are currently 2552 people on the housing waiting list. The ethnicity of people on the list is as follows: -

- Asian 5 (2 Other 1 Mixed 1 DK 1 No Answer)
- Caribbean 0
- African 1 (1 Black)
- South East Asian (1 Other)
- British/European 2349 (1 Mixed 1 Black)
- Other 5 (4 white 1 mixed)
- No Answer 96
- DK 95

These numbers are proportionate to the BME population as a whole in the borough. Further analysis of the waiting list will be undertaken as part of the operational plan to ascertain any trends common to BME applicants.

RSL’s and Ethnic Monitoring

Our partner RSL's have their own BME Housing Strategy and monitoring systems in place.

Community Safety

Blaenau Gwent Housing Services partner other services and agencies on the Community Safety Partnership. Anti-social behaviour on and around council estates in the borough is recorded and includes a category for racial harassment.

Homelessness/Housing Advice

Currently decisions on homelessness applications are subject to WAG data collection requirements, which have regard for ethnicity. These are for official homelessness presentations; there is no current system for recording ethnicity for general housing enquiries that do not lead to a homelessness presentation.

Assessing Housing Needs

The 'Local Housing Market Assessment: Needs of Specific Housing Groups' has given consideration to the housing needs of BME groups including Gypsies and Travelers. The authority has also undertaken an accommodation assessment of the Gypsies and Travelers at Cwmcrachen Caravan Site.

Our Goals- Ethnic Monitoring

- To establish a robust ethnic monitoring system cross-cutting all housing services. *(as per 'Equality Monitoring for social housing in Wales – Action Note from CRE Wales- Nov 2006)*
- To regularly review acquired monitoring data to identify trends and issues.
- To amend and develop services in light of identified trends to ensure inequality is challenged

LAND USE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

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Land Use Planning Framework

The Local Authority in Blaenau Gwent is responsible in conjunction with officers of the Welsh Assembly Government for undertaking an annual land availability study to identify land available for housing development as part of the forward planning process.

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) adopted by the Authority in 2006 identifies all land that is currently allocated for housing development purposes. The Land Availability study uses the UDP and current planning permissions to establish the residential development supply over the next five years

The following tables outlines the projected supply of houses on large and small sites within Blaenau Gwent and the residual requirement for housing identified with the current UDP to identify

	Residential Supply over next five years	UDP Residual Requirement 2006 - 2011
Large Sites	Planning Policy awaited from D.E.I.N.	544
Small Sites (those under 10 units of housing)	Planning Policy awaited from D.E.I.N.	224

The Planning Policy Unit of the Authority is currently developing a Local Development Plan in line with Welsh Assembly Guidelines.

A Joined Up Approach

Planning Policy provides the mechanisms for delivering objectives emanating for the Local Housing Strategy. Technical Advice Note 1 issued from the Welsh Assembly Government ensures a five year land supply for new housing development and Technical Advice Note 2 for the delivery of affordable housing. Recognising the mutual benefits and shared objectives of the two specialisms will aid housing delivery in both the market and affordable housing sectors.

The authority has produced Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) providing guidance on how affordable housing is to be delivered on new residential schemes, of 30 dwellings and over, through the planning process.

Specific objectives of the SPG are to:

- Provide a clear definition of what constitutes affordable housing;
- Increase the provision of homes at rent levels affordable to households on lower income levels;
- Increase the provision of homes for sale at prices affordable to households on lower incomes and first time buyers;
- Provide a mix of house types, sizes and tenures to meet affordable and market housing requirements; and
- Introduce a requirement to facilitate the development of affordable housing without the use of public subsidy, in most case. This may entail cross-

subsidising the affordable housing using profits from the development of market housing on a given site. The viability of this approach should be assisted through reduced land values. .

- The relation ship between housing and planning is galvanizing through the joint commissioning of key tolls such as standard 106 agreements, an affordablehousing toolkit for the area and SPG and Local Development Plan production.

The Local Development Plan

Planning Policy Officers are currently commencing the LDP Options Process. Housing and the Local Housing Strategy are a key element in LDP production process

Our Goals – Land Use Planning Framework

- Through the LDP planning process coordinate a objectives
- Continue with candidate site process for the LDP
- Commence the Options process for the LDP
- Set out a settlement strategy for areas of strategic importance within Blaenau Gwent
- Consider the appropriateness of current affordable housing thresholds
- Set affordable housing target based on evidence base
- Set up out clear policy criteria against which applications for unallocated land can be considered
- Consider policies for affordable housing in areas where need has been identified, including rural areas where exception sites will be considered
- Commence monitoring arrangements for housing land take up

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

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Affordable Housing

Our Aim

Our aim is deliver affordable housing solutions in line with identified need
To ensure that all social rented units meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

Intervention in the Housing Market

The Local Housing Market Assessments provide the evidence base to support policies to deliver affordable housing through the planning system and for Social Housing Grant bids. TAN2 requires new housing developments to incorporate a reasonable mix and balance of house types and size to cater for a range of housing needs and contribute to the development of sustainable communities. For affordable housing it is now considered important for the authority to have an appreciation of the demand for different dwelling sizes and types of housing in relation to supply, so that they are well informed in negotiating with the required appropriate mix of dwellings on new developments. Local planning authorities are required to include an affordable housing target in the Local Development Plan

It has been identified in previous chapters of the change in the housing market within Blaenau Gwent. The incompatibility of income levels and house prices has excluded low earning families and first time buyers from home ownership. In response to the high prices the social rented sector is under pressure with void levels within the sector at an all time low. The need to intervene within the housing market has never been more critical in Blaenau Gwent to enable both social rented and intermediate housing solutions.

New Housing Requirement & Affordability

The Local Housing Market Assessment deals in depth with affordability issues in Blaenau Gwent . These are the key findings in relation to affordable housing:-

- The assessment identified that almost 34% of the housing requirement represents a need for some form of affordable housing provision – but allowing for a continuing supply of housing within the existing stock, differential shortfalls in the market and affordable housing sectors indicate that almost 433 units of the expected shortfall represent an anticipated need for additional affordable housing, including at least 233 homes for social rent.

- Of the 3,459 households identified as being in housing need (and unable to afford market housing), only a very small proportion (5.8%) could afford any more than the costs associated with social rent. Nevertheless, as there is very little existing supply of intermediate housing (and none identified by the assessment as likely to be vacated over the period), this constitutes a far more significant proportion of the net affordable housing requirement (200 of the 433 affordable units identified) – these being nominated exclusively by 2bed homes.

The table below from the LHMA identifies the gross requirement for housing over the next 5 years in terms of housing type and size, and then details the overall net requirement and the net requirement on an annualised basis.

Housing Requirement	Type of Housing			
	Market	Intermediate	Social	All Sectors
Gross Requirement				
1 bedroom	391	-	1,948	2,339
2 bedrooms	1,963	200	997	3,160
3 bedrooms	3,254	-	296	3,550
4+ bedrooms	544	-	19	563
Total	6,152	200	3,259	9,611
Net Requirement				
1 bedroom	165	-	1,284	1,450
2 bedrooms	721	200	(246)	675
3 bedrooms	(152)	-	(824)	(976)
4+ bedrooms	102	-	18	120
Total	836	200	233	1,269
Net Requirement (Annualised)				
1 bedroom	33	-	257	290
2 bedrooms	144	40	(49)	135
3 bedrooms	(30)	-	(165)	(195)
4+ bedrooms	20	-	4	24
Total	167	40	47	254

The affordable sale price of an average terraced house in the borough has been calculated at £67,579 using a median annual Gross Pay of £18,343.

A	Median Annual Gross Pay for Full Time Employee	£18,343
B	Maximum Mortgage for Single Person(3.5* A)	£64,200
C	Affordable Property Price (B *100/95)	£67,579
D	Average Price of House	£95,000
E	Affordability Gap (D - C)	£27,421
	% Sale Price Reduction Needed (E / D %)	28%

Housing Associations - Working in Partnership

Housing associations have access to Social Housing Grant from the Welsh Assembly Government this enables properties to be constructed and rented or sold at below market value, making them more affordable.

Blaenau Gwent has strong relationships with the housing associations working in the borough - United Welsh, Linc Cymru (formerly Glamorgan & Gwent), Melin Homes(formerly Gwerin and Eastern Valley) and Aelwydd.

Housing Association stock in Blaenau Gwent at 31st March 2006:-

United Welsh H.A.	693
Linc Cymru	538
Melin Homes	226
Aelwydd	14

The Associations zoned to develop in the borough are United Welsh, Melin Homes and Gwerin. Housing Associations also have a duty to ensure their homes meet the Welsh Assembly Governments Welsh Housing Quality Standard. The objective of a decent home for all, irrespective of ability to pay, has long been a central tenet of housing policy in the UK.

The three developing housing associations are each part of different housing association consortia:-

United Welsh – Integrate
Gwerin – Genus
Linc Cymru - Syniad

Housing Associations have played an important part in the development of our Local Housing Strategy and will have a vital role in the Strategic Housing Forum to ensure the objectives of the strategy and associated operational plan are achieved. A key function for housing associations will be delivering affordable housing in partnership with the authority.

Intermediate Sector

Intermediate housing is designed to cater for households that can afford to pay more than a social sector rent, but still cannot afford to buy on the open market. Whilst Blaenau Gwent is a comparatively affordable borough to buy a home, the rate of increase in house prices is still higher than many areas in Wales.

HomeBuy (A Welsh Assembly Government backed scheme) helps to provide affordable housing in the borough. Eligible first time buyers, unable to afford purchasing a property outright off the open market, can have 30% of the purchase price paid by means of a loan from United Welsh Housing Association.

No repayments are required on the loan but it has to be re-paid when the property is sold. The loan may be paid back at any time, but not before the first 12 months of occupation.

The Local Housing Market Assessment addresses the need for low cost home ownership in more detail.

Neutral Tenure

The Welsh Assembly Government is advocating a tenure neutral policy i.e. Local Authorities do not have specify at the time of social housing grant submission what tenure each unit shall be but rather allocate the units on a needs basis at the time of occupation. This policy allows for flexibility in an ever changing housing market.

Regional Affordable Housing Enablers

The lack of affordable housing is recognized as a national issue. The need to work cross-boundary on common issues such as this has been recognized by the South East Wales Regional Housing Forum and a proposal has been made to introduce two regional affordable housing enablers with commitment for match funding from member authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government . Blaenau Gwent will directly benefit from a dedicated worker whose remit will be to help enable affordable homes in the Heads of the Valley region.

Our Goals – Affordable Housing

- To strengthen the Strategic Housing Function to enable additional affordable housing schemes / initiatives
- To develop an affordable housing policy for Blaenau Gwent
- To nurture existing partnerships between the Strategic Housing function of the Local Authority and the registered social landlord sector to maximise affordable housing provision in both social rented and intermediate tenures
- Utilise the neutral tenure policy
- To use planning policy to maximise affordable housing in both tenures using standardised section 106 agreements
- To invest in software to assess viability of schemes coming forward with regards to affordable housing provision
- To seek innovative approaches to delivering affordable housing through utilisation of land values and cross subsidy
- To maximise social housing grant for affordable housing provision
- Seek further investment from Heads of Valleys project and similar schemes
- To standardise Homebuy throughout Blaenau Gwent through a centralised approach to nominations
- To harness the regeneration opportunities resulting from new build affordable schemes through the use of social clauses.
- To maximise the potential for affordable housing delivery through the utilisation of Regional Affordable Housing Enablers.

“All local authorities in Wales must quantify the extent of the repair and improvement liabilities of their council housing stock, and produce plans to demonstrate that their stock will be regenerated by 2012.”

In May 2002 the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 3wa issues to all Councils, further to this it was rolled out to all registered social landlords in ????

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard in its broadest terms states that properties that meet the standard are:

- In a good state of repairs
- Safe and Secure
- Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated
- Contain up to date kitchens and bathrooms
- Well managed
- As far as possible suit the specific requirements of the household (e.g. specific disabilities)

The role of tenants as part of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard process cannot be underestimated particularly in Local Authorities where stock transfer has been identified as the only option for delivering the necessary improvements.

Social and Economic Development Opportunities

Meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard will mean large-scale improvement works with the potential for development of construction skills training opportunities. Regional working via the HOV Forum could bring collaboration in procurement to maximize efficiency and savings to further improve communities.

The Local Position

All social landlords operating within Blaenau Gwent area committed to meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Housing Stock

In 2005 commissioned a survey to quantify the level of investment needed to bring its 6500 stock up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012 and maintain it for a thirty-year period. Savills of London was appointed for this purpose and reported the results of this to the Authority's Executive Committee in March of 2007.

The report concluded that that was an investment requirement of approximately one hundred million pounds needed within the first five years to reach WHQS and a total of three hundred and ninety six million over a thirty-year period.

The Welsh Assembly Government requires local authorities to produce a business plan of how the investment over the thirty-year period can be achieved. The Authority commissioned Tribal as a consultant to produce a financial appraisal.

Tribal considered the options of the Authority retaining the stock and raising the investment through prudential borrowing or transferring the stock to a new not for profit registered social landlord, taking into account the income, expenditure projected by the Authority and stock condition survey over a thirty year period e.g.

Income - Rents revenue, Right To Buy receipts, Major Repairs Allowance

Spending - Management costs, maintenance costs, planned maintenance, debt charges, subsidy

The financial appraisal concluded that retention of the housing stock was not viable due to the increase in rents needed to pay back the borrowing. Further to this the Housing Revenue account was not sustainable at current levels and would go into deficit at year seventeen of the thirty-year business plan. Large scale voluntary transfer, the report concluded, would allow the required investment to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012 and maintain the standard over a thirty year period furthermore that the housing revenue account could also be sustained over this period.

In June 2007 the Council took the decision to start the pre ballot process allowing tenants to vote on transferring the council housing stock to achieve the necessary investment in their homes.

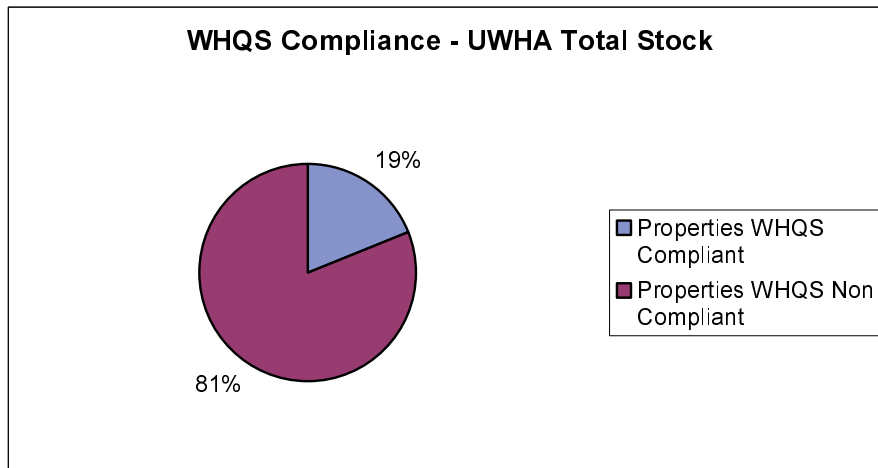
The Authority has worked with its Tenant Compact Group, a group of tenants representing their communities and interfacing with the Authority on matters affecting all tenants on a regular basis. The contribution the group has made to the process has been invaluable. The pre-ballot process will focus on tenant involvement and communication.

Housing Associations and the Welsh Housing Quality Standard

United Welsh Housing Association (UWHA)

UWHA currently manage 696 homes in Blaenau Gwent comprise general needs social rented and supported living units.

The 2006/07 Business Plan reported the aim to meet WHQS by 2012. The following pie chart illustrates the current WHQS compliance



UWHA currently have 2,492 non-compliant properties. The organisation is committed to meeting WHQS and commented: 'placing the non compliant elements into work programmes to be completed by the end 2012. The majority of the requirements will become compliant with the replacement of kitchens; bathrooms, central heating and window & doors in future planned maintenance programmes. Many of the property failures are minor'

UWHA have completed the WHQS assessments and programme of works has been developed. The approximate cost for compliance with WHQS is approximately £13.5m. A significant proportion of this work has been identified in the planned programme for 2007 – 2012. The additional cost of WHQS over the existing planned programme is circa £5.5m.

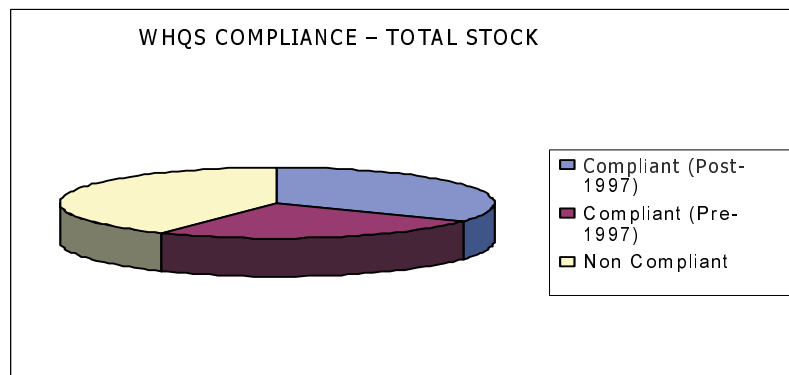
Melin Homes

Melin Homes is a newly emerged registered social landlord, created from the amalgamation of Gwerin Homes and Eastern Valley Housing Association. It currently has 230 rented homes in Blaenau Gwent.

Melin Stock Compliance 2007

Current combined reports from the original organisations indicate that approximately 1723 properties or 69% of Melin stock has been surveyed for WHQS compliance.

Works carried out by both organisations pre-merger has enabled Melin Homes to report 1474 properties or 59% comply with WHQS (subject to exclusions).



Melin Homes - WHQS Works Programme 2007 to 2012

The following information has been derived from combined planned database projections and may change in future years as a result of stock condition and WHQS compliance survey results.

Works only relate to WHQS compliance and do not include planned replacements and cyclical decoration.

	5 Yr Cost	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Bathrooms/Showers	£ 968,001	£ 396,589	£158,700	£ 19,635	£203,587	£189,490
Windows/Cladding	£ 216,940	N/A	£ 22,020	£ 84,720	£ 64,000	£ 46,200
Ext.Works	£ 392,733	£ 44,841	£ 68,595	£171,855	£ 75,157	£ 32,285
Kitchens	£ 2,865,729	£ 309,911	£866,477	£674,060	£670,875	£344,406
Heating/Boilers	£ 2,261,899	£ 94,362	£453,545	£648,192	£554,450	£511,350
Elec. Upgrade	£ 687,558	£ 118,991	£ 29,187	£151,534	£158,926	£228,920
5 Year Total	£ 7,392,860					

Linc Cymru

At this time there are no results for WHQS compliance to include in the Strategy

Our Goals – Welsh Housing Quality Standard

- To ensure that all social rented units meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012.
- To commence the pre ballot process to stock transfer with regards to WHQS and council housing stock including delivering an effective communication strategy to tenants within council houses.
- To put tenants at the heart of the Local Authority stock transfer process
- To maximise the regeneration benefits that the increased investment brought into the area in meeting WHQS will bring i.e. local

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PRIVATE SECTOR

THE PRIVATE SECTOR

The importance of the private rented sector in providing a viable and effective contribution towards meeting housing need in the borough cannot be over estimated.

The Distribution of Private Sector Dwellings by Building Type for the SubAreas (%)

(Source Blaenau Gwent – Private Sector House Condition Survey 1998)

Sub Area	Dwellings Estimated	Terraced %	Semi-detached %	Detached %	Purpose built flat %	Non Res. & flats %
Abertillery	6238	82	7	5	2	3
Brynmawr	3894	66	17	11	3	4
Blaina & Nantyglo						
Ebbw Vale	6974	64	19	13	2	2
Tredegar	4649	60	23	9	6	2
Total	21755	69	16	9	3	3

Conditions within the private rented sector stock have not been surveyed since 1998. At that time it was found that out of a total of 1750 dwellings 19% were unfit for human habitation with the main reason being dampness and disrepair.

Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England & Wales) Order 2002 made significant changes to the housing grants/assistance regime that had existed previously:

- It introduced a new general power enabling local housing authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal.
- It repealed the detailed legislative provisions in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 regarding Renovation Grants, Common Parts Grants, HMO Grants, Group Repair and Home Repair Assistance.
- It repealed the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 relating to loans given to local housing authorities for housing renewal.
- It streamlined the provisions governing the declaration and operation of renewal areas. It made minor changes to the provisions in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), but the system for providing mandatory DFGs remained largely unchanged.

The principal limitation on the use of the new general power to give assistance was that it must be used in accordance with a policy that has been adopted and publicised.

The Blaenau Gwent Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2003 outlined the Authority's new policy making financial assistance available in accordance with the new Order. This Policy will took effect on 1st July 2003.

The Policy re-examined the evidence base relating to the County Borough's demographic profile, housing conditions and deprivation statistics and, identified the following key priorities:

- To regenerate the most deprived areas in the community;
- To enable the most vulnerable persons to continue to live at home in safety and comfort;
- To reduce the levels of unfitness and disrepair;
- To ensure that all private tenants live in safe, well-managed properties;
- To effectively deal with empty properties.

In February 2004, the Council approved a rolling three-year capital programme against the backdrop of changes in local government finance, which, amongst other things, saw the introduction of the prudential borrowing regime. In deciding where best to utilise its limited capital expenditure, the Council assessed its priorities and contractual commitments in relation to the strategic objectives contained in the Blaenau Gwent Community Plan. At the same time, there were changes in Local Government Housing Finance, by the Welsh Assembly Government, which, amongst other things, resulted in the discontinuation of Category B Supplementary Credit Approvals for strategic schemes (which, in Blaenau Gwent, was being utilised to fund successful private sector housing initiatives such as minor repairs for elderly persons, bringing empty properties back into use and improvements in the privately rented sector). The combined effect of the above changes was a significant cutback in the availability of capital resources to underpin the Blaenau Gwent Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

Below is a brief overview of the financial assistance still available for private sector housing:

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

This service has continued under the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996, as amended. The Council continues to ensure that DFGs are given the highest priority and has continuously ensured that the necessary capital resources are available to meet this statutory duty.

A statutory maximum grant of £30,000 is available to fund works to facilitate access and to enable a disabled person to move freely into and around their dwelling and to enjoy the facilities and amenities in it.

Minor Adaptations

Delivered in partnership with Blaenau Gwent Care & Repair, this form of assistance is aimed at enabling disabled residents to remain living independently in their own homes by providing small-scale adaptations, fixtures and fittings. The types of works undertaken are: Internal Handrails, External Handrails, Key safes, Grab rails, Ramps to aid access to reduce the risk of falls and slips, small works to enable easier access, Assistive Technology and the Installation of additional electric sockets. Funding and Assessment are via the Authority's Social Services Department.

Home Insulation (Council Tax Rebate) Scheme

In April 2007, the Authority entered into partnership with British Gas to introduce a new home insulation scheme for the private sector. The scheme offers competitively priced subsidised home insulation measures, including 100% grants for those on qualifying state benefits, with the added value of a free Benefit Health Check and a free Home Energy Efficiency Assessment. Able-To-Pay clients will also receive a one-off £100 rebate on their Council Tax by taking part in this scheme.

Group Repair Schemes (in Renewal Areas)

Participants may be owner-occupiers or landlords and grants of 75-100% are available depending on individual circumstances. The purpose of a Group Repair Scheme is to secure the external fabric of a group or terrace of properties so that they are in reasonable repair on completion of works. Group Repair Schemes are currently only undertaken in the Six Bells Renewal Area.

Renovation Assistance (in Renewal Areas)

Due to the funding restrictions outlined above, Renovation Assistance is currently only available in the Six Bells Renewal Area. The purpose of this form of means-tested grant is to assist owner-occupiers with internal and external works to achieve a sustainable level of fitness and to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. The maximum grant currently available is £27,500.

Relocation Assistance (in Renewal Areas)

Due to the funding restrictions outlined above, Relocation Assistance is currently only available in the Six Bells Renewal Area. The purpose is to assist persons whose homes are being compulsory purchased in Renewal Areas and who wish to acquire a replacement home. It helps in bridging the gap between the cost of a replacement home and the amount of money which the applicant can reasonably afford taking into account any compensation which may be received for the loss of the home. The maximum level of assistance is £10,000.

Review of Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy.

A policy review is to take place in Summer/Autumn 2007 in light of capital funding availability, new intelligence data, such as the Blaenau Gwent Local Housing Market

Assessment, and new corporate initiatives, such as the Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy.

In addition to overhauling the current forms of financial assistance, the Authority will consider whether it can utilise its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England & Wales) Order 2002 to introduce and sustain new initiatives, such as:

Living Independently Repair Grants – to assist elderly and vulnerable disabled persons to continue to live independently in their own homes.

An Empty Property Initiative - a review of funding opportunities and the new powers under the Housing Act 2004, to effectively deal with empty dwellings and to facilitate affordable housings schemes.

Disabled Persons Relocation Grants. – to assist disabled persons to relocate to more suitable accommodation where their current dwelling is not easily or economically adaptable.

Loans/Equity Release Scheme – to develop alternative financial assistance packages to assist home-owners fund repairs and improvements. The outcome of Welsh Assembly Government funded research will inform this policy initiative.

A New Renewal Area – the Authority will reflect on the success of the Six Bells Scheme and consider whether to undertake a Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989, with a view to declaring a second Renewal Area elsewhere in Blaenau Gwent.

The Authority is also commissioning a Local Private Sector House Condition Survey for completion by April 2008.

Area Renewal

Blaenau Gwent Currently has one Renewal Area, in the Six Bells ward. Prior to declaration, in October 2003, a Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment was undertaken which included a broad range of survey work, including:

- Socio-Economic Study.
- Housing Condition Survey.
- Six Bells Enhancement Report.
- Six Bells Remembered – a community vision for sustainable future.
- Public Meetings
- Questionnaire Survey.

Amongst other things, the Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment concluded that: living conditions in Six Bells were generally very poor and that the worst concentration of poor condition housing was located in the western part of the village. There were a number of derelict/vacant dwellings and other buildings that needed to be dealt with.

Living and environmental conditions could be improved by the declaration of a Renewal Area and the Action Plan outlined in the report:

Having identified these issues, the Council developed a Regeneration Strategy for the village with the following objectives:

- To increase confidence in the village, both for residents and outsiders.
- To improve the physical fabric of the existing housing stock.
- To provide new types of housing appropriate to the local needs.
- To remove vacant, derelict and unwanted buildings.
- To encourage private sector investment.
- To improve the condition of the retail core and present a better public image of Six Bells.
- To improve the physical community links between the western and eastern parts of Six Bells.
- To increase employment opportunities for the population of Six Bells.
- To ensure a high quality of environment.
- To ensure that a sufficient mix of community and recreational facilities are suitably located within the village, with adequate provision for growth and development.

To actively involve the local community in identifying and implementing opportunities within the village, addressing the key issues and problems that the local residents have highlighted.

To take account of all available funding sources and target staff and financial resources to achieve the greatest impact.

Below is a brief summary of schemes undertaken to date:

Dwelling-houses

Group Repair Schemes and Renovation Assistance have been, and continue to be targeted at properties that are unfit for human habitation, contain significant hazards or in a state of substantial disrepair. To date, 39 properties have been improved and a further 25-30 will be completed in 2007/8.

Community Safety & Environmental Improvement.

Traffic calming measures and the provision of off-street car parking have improved pedestrian and road user safety. Work has commenced on the Arail Street/Griffin Street One Way System with the acquisition and demolition of two properties from Linc Cymru to increase the width of the connecting roadway between the two streets. Completion of the scheme should take place in 2008 or 2009 following the completion of the fourth Group Repair Scheme and the Community Link Bridge in Griffin Street.

Off-street parking improvements are also proposed following the completion of the second Group Repair Scheme in Arail Street, which has included the demolition of 10 properties for this purpose.

An off-street car parking scheme has also been completed at the bottom of Alexandra Road, which involved the acquisition and demolition of three properties. This has relieved congestion around the small retail businesses in this area.

The Community Bridge, which will link Alexandra Road and Griffin Street, across the Ebbw Fach river, is due for completion in Autumn 2007.

Two demolition schemes in Bridge Street have been completed with the effect of removing dangerous and derelict buildings and improving pedestrian access to the Six Bells Community Centre and vehicular access to Hafodvan Terrace.

Partnerships

The Authority has set up an inter-departmental officer working group that works closely with a host of partners, including local ward members, Communities First and Linc Cymru. Local residents are consulted on a regular basis, as appropriate, in relation to individual projects and prior to each Group Repair Scheme.

Local residents are also kept informed about progress via the Communities First Newsletter and regular written communication, as necessary.

Employment.

Local contractors have been employed to carry out works under Group Repair Schemes and individual Renovation Assistance in addition to demolition, clearance, landscaping, and car parking projects.

Due to the annual funding cycle, via Specific Capital Grant from the Welsh Assembly Government, it has been very difficult to plan long-term projects although the Authority has completed, and is committed to, a number of large-scale projects, such as Group Repair Schemes which span more than one financial year.

Empty Properties in the Private Sector

Empty Property Initiative

Historically, up to 2004, the Authority has had tremendous success in dealing with empty properties, mainly through Renovation/Conversion Grant assistance and Slum Clearance/Demolition Schemes, and this work continues in the Six Bells Renewal Area. Nevertheless, the Authority acknowledges the need to review funding opportunities and the new powers under the Housing Act 2004, i.e. Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs), Enforced Sale and compulsory purchase powers, to effectively deal with empty dwellings across the County Borough and to facilitate affordable housings schemes in light of recent changes in the local housing market.

The Authority acknowledges that empty homes are a waste. They can cause nuisance and environmental problems by being the focus for increased levels of crime, including drug abuse. Empty homes make no sense to the public, neighbours, those in need of homes and, in most cases, become costly to the owners and the local authority. Empty space above commercial units is also a wasted resource, particularly in town centres, where, if appropriate, void spaces above shops and offices can be easily converted into residential units to meet a local housing need.

Empty properties represent a significant loss of Council Tax revenue for the Authority.

In properly dealing with empty dwellings the Authority can help address Blaenau Gwent's current and projected housing needs by providing affordable accommodation for owner occupation or renting whilst at the same time reducing the risk of nuisance and environmental problems. In some cases, demolishing and clearing unwanted and worn out old buildings may be the best course of action.

Empty Property levels will be assessed and as part of the Authority's Private Sector House Condition Survey to be completed in March 2008. However, a recent analysis of Council Tax records (for Exempt Dwellings) was undertaken in May 2007 in order to provide an indication of the scale and geographical spread of empty properties. The findings are outlined in the Table below.

Residential Properties with Council Tax Exemption (Vacant) (All Tenures) - September 2002.

	COUNCIL TAX BAND							TO TA L
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	
ABERTILLERY & LLANHILLETH	2 2 6	4 3	5	3	1	0	0	278
NANTYGLO & BLAINA	4 9	2 8	2	4	4	0	0	87
EBBW VALE, CWM & BEAUFORT	2 8 8	4 9	1 1	8	4	0	0	360
TREDEGAR	7 7	4 0	1 1	8	1	1	1	139
BRYNMAWR	3 0	1 2	9	4	1	0	0	56
TOTAL	6 7 0	1 7 2	3 8	2 7	1 1	1	1	920

The Authority will develop an Empty Property Strategy with the following aim:

To tackle poor quality empty properties with a view to:

- Bringing them back into use for renting;
- Bringing them back into owner-occupation;
- Enabling the provision of affordable housing;

- Partnership working with registered social landlords, private sector landlords and developers;
- Removing them from the housing stock, where appropriate, (i.e. Demolition/Clearance).

Our Goals – Private Sector Housing

- **To have a better understanding of the condition of the private sector stock within Blaenau Gwent**
- **To establish a Living Independently Repair Grants.**
- **To develop an Empty Property Initiative** - a review of funding opportunities and the new powers under the Housing Act 2004, to effectively deal with empty dwellings and to facilitate affordable housings schemes, having regard to the role the RSL sector can play within this.
- **To establish a Disabled Persons Relocation Grants.** – to assist disabled persons to relocate to more suitable accommodation where their current dwelling is not easily or economically adaptable.
- **Loans/Equity Release Scheme** – to develop alternative financial assistance packages to assist home-owners fund repairs and improvements. The outcome of Welsh Assembly Government funded research will inform this policy initiative.
 - **To identify a new renewal area**
 - **To maximize the regeneration benefits that investment in the private sector can bring**
 - **To take direction from the key regeneration strategic documents for the area e.g. HOV' s Turning Heads and the Regeneration Strategy for the County Borough to identify areas of strategic importance**

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Sustainable Development

The promotion of sustainable development and the use of renewable energy resources are key tasks to help combat global warming. It is vital that principles are embedded in the planning system to tackle climate change such as planning for communities where people have better access to public transport, and rely less on their cars and making sure that substantial new developments use low-carbon energy. The way in which housing is built, maintained and used has a significant and immediate impact on the environment. Housing can have a great impact on harnessing sustainable measures to help avoid future environmental damage by:

Developing homes for life

Ensuring wider community sustainability factors are in place such as open spaces and leisure facilities, transport links, health resources, employment, etc.
Using renewable resources in its construction and maintenance.

'Starting To Live Differently The Sustainable Development Scheme of the National Assembly for Wales' states 'the Assembly's vision of sustainable development remains a broad one, embracing commitments to improving quality of life, promoting equality and tackling disadvantage and poverty.'

The WAG are dedicated to promoting sustainability within housing and produced a *Sustainable Development Action Plan* in 2004, setting out key actions to deliver sustainable development in Wales.

'Building a future for Wales A strategy for sustainable housing' was produced in 2005 by the World Wildlife Fund and states- 'Our homes have a major impact on the environment, with more than half of all material resources consumed globally used in construction, and 45 per cent of energy used to heat, light and ventilate buildings, and a further 5 per cent used during their construction.'

Sustainability contributes to settled and cohesive communities that balance social, economic and environmental components for forthcoming generations. Future development and regeneration must be environmentally sensitive and contribute to community safety.

Local policies and decisions in Blaenau Gwent can influence the impact of housing development on the environment and it is a key principle that sustainability is at the heart of any development plan.

The regeneration of the Heads of the Valleys (HOV) region through the HOV Initiative is underpinned with sustainability as a priority.

Joint procurement and the use of renewable resources will be vital components in ensuring sustainability across the region is at the forefront of regeneration.

The private sector can play a major role in developing sustainable communities, including increasing the numbers of affordable housing provision through Section 106 agreements and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

In Blaenau Gwent 65% of all the housing stock is owner occupied and over two thirds of these being built pre- 1919. Owner occupiers are being encouraged to utilize available grants via the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme, produced by WAG and EAGA.

A Policy Agreement made with the Welsh Assembly Government has set targets to reduce carbon emissions from housing in Blaenau Gwent.

Fuel poverty can affect vulnerable members of the community and as such energy efficiency is an important tool for promoting sustainability and is addressed in the following section. Also community safety is a vital component to help maintain sustainable communities and is addressed in section ?

Using the Strategic Housing Forum as the principle mechanism for its promotion, sustainable development will be embedded within all processes of scheme development from initial concept and design through to the construction and every day use of homes. This will mean the close involvement of private developers and housing associations to ensure a cross sector approach

Our Goals – Sustainable Development

- Develop a sustainable housing development policy in conjunction with planning guidance
- To promote sustainable housing measures within existing stock and future homes
- To work closely with Planning to ensure full regard for sustainable housing within the Heads of the Valley Partnership
- To achieve joint procurement in all regeneration works through partnership working and improve economies of scale helping to contribute to sustainable development

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ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Energy Efficiency

Energy efficiency for the purposes of the Home Energy Conservation Act is defined as the total energy consumption under standard occupancy conditions. This was estimated as 3,299,940 GJ per year for the whole housing stock at April 1997. At that time a target reduction of 30% was set over a 10-year period. After reviewing progress and consulting local authorities, the target was revised by Government to a more realistic reduction of 12% over the same period.

To date, after 9 years, it is estimated that an overall improvement of about 12.44% has been achieved. The estimates of the progress achieved include estimates of numbers of measures installed by private sector householders that the Council has no means of monitoring, i.e. boiler replacement, loft insulation, hot water cylinder insulation and low energy lights. However, these estimates are based on Welsh national average statistics and are conservative, so the progress reported may still be an underestimate.

The rate of improvement in 2005/06 is significantly higher than that in previous years. This is primarily due to more improvements to the Council housing stock in 2005/06 compared to previous years. However, the rate of uptake of HEES grants in the area in 2005/06 has decreased slightly compared to the previous year.

Energy Efficiency Measures Undertaken

A The Owner Occupied Sector

The HEES for Wales scheme assisted 264 owner occupier households in 2005/06, which is just slightly more than in 2004/05 (256) but significantly more than in the year before that (198). These measures had a total value of £414,289.

However, the majority of the energy efficiency measures installed to owner occupied homes in the area in 2005/2006 were through the energy suppliers' EEC programmes, in particular British Gas (487 measures in the area in 2005/06) and Scottish and Southern Energy (171 insulation measures plus 8,392 CFLs). Information was also reported by EDF Energy for the first time this year (144 insulation measures).

A table of energy efficiency measures undertaken in the private sector is included in **Appendix B**. This table does not include measures installed by householders themselves or through contractors that have not provided the Council with information, in particular heating installers. The totals in that table will therefore be a considerable under-estimate of the total activity in this sector. The numbers of measures installed by householders without grant support have been estimated from national average statistics and are summarised below.

Measure	Number in 2005/06	Total since 1997
Hot tank insulation	148	1,332
Loft insulation	148	1,332
Central heating – new boiler (conventional)	-	2,884
Central heating – new boiler (condensing)	406	616
Low energy lights	500	4,500

In 2005/06 973 homes had double glazing installed – since 45 homes in the local authority and housing association sectors are known to have had double glazing installed, the remaining 928 were assumed to be in the owner occupied sector. An energy efficiency survey was carried out in 2005/06 by the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre using DIY home energy survey forms. These included a section on 'recent changes', i.e. measures installed in the previous 12 months. In most cases the total numbers of each measure are lower than those reported from other sources, but where the total numbers from this survey exceed the total numbers reported elsewhere, they have been included (and assumed to be in the owner occupied sector) as follows:

Measure	Number in survey	Reported elsewhere	Number included
Draught sealing	68	39	29
Hot water tank jackets	186	181	5
Energy efficient fridges and freezers	2,964	0	2,964
Energy efficient washing machines and dishwashers	2,303	0	2,303

B The Private Rented Sector

The measures known to have been installed in the private rented sector in each year since April 1997 are summarised in the table in **Appendix C**. The only source of information on improvements in this sector this year apart from the HEES scheme is that provided by Excelsior Insulation. Only seven homes in this sector received HEES grants in 2005/2006, compared to four in the previous year and three in the year before that.

C The Local Authority Sector

The measures known to have been installed in the County Borough in the local authority rented sector in each year since April 1997 are summarised in the table in **Appendix D**. The information on this sector is more complete than the other sectors since the local authority has records of its central heating and window replacement programmes for each year since 1997 as well as details of the measures installed through HEES. Information has also been provided by Domestic and General (for 2001/02, 2002/03 and 2003/04) and Excelsior Insulation (for each of the last six years) regarding improvements they have carried out in

this sector. However, the measures installed by Excelsior Insulation in the local authority stock in 2005/06 have not been included to avoid the risk of double counting these.

The Council housing stock consisted of 7,326 dwellings at 31/03/04 and it is believed that these have better energy efficiency on average than the rest of the housing stock in the area. All of these properties have full central heating systems, at least 100mm of loft insulation and all hot water cylinders are insulated. At that time, only 606 properties still needed to be converted from single to double glazed and all exterior doors are draughtproofed, and over 3,000 homes had replacement uPVC doors.

Only 11 homes in the local authority stock received HES grants in 2005/06, compared to 52 in the previous year. Only £7,384 worth of improvements were carried out through HEES grants in 2005/2006 in this sector (compared to about £55,000 in 2004/05 and £67,000 in 2003/2004).

D The Housing Association sector

The measures known to have been installed in the County Borough in the housing association sector in each year since April 1997 are summarised in the table in **Appendix E**. The information on this sector is less complete than the other sectors as information has only been received from four of the housing associations with housing stock in the area - Linc-Cymru (formerly Glamorgan and Gwent HA), Wales and West HA, Gwerin HA and Aelwyd HA.

Otherwise, the only sources of information on improvements in this sector are the HEES scheme and Excelsior Insulation. Only 3 homes in this sector received HEES grants in 2005/2006, which is fewer than in the previous year when there were 18.

Percentage improvement in energy efficiency as a result of the measures installed

The percentage improvement in energy efficiency in the nine years to 31 March 2006 as a result of all the measures described above is 12.44%, or an average increase of 1.38% per year. The rate of increase in 2005/06 is significantly higher than in 2003/04, with an increase of 4.93% compared to 1.88% in the previous year. Most of this increase is in the local authority sector. The breakdown of these totals by tenure is provided in the table below:

Tenure	% improvement in energy efficiency		
	1997-2005	2005/06	Total since 1997
Owner Occupied	4.26%	1.82%	6.08%
Private Rented	0.07%	0.01%	0.08%
Local Authority Rented	3.12%	3.03%	6.16%
Housing Association Rented	0.05%	0.07%	0.12%
Total:	7.50%	4.93%	12.44%

N.B. The figures in the above table are all expressed as percentages of the total energy consumption across all sectors at 1 April 1997, so the percentages for each sector can be simply added to obtain the total.

Reduction in CO₂ emissions

The reduction in carbon dioxide emissions since 1997 as a result of all the measures described above is estimated as 24,831 tonnes per year, of which 10,226 tonnes per year were due to the measures installed in 2005/06. The breakdown of this total by tenure is provided in the table below:

Tenure	Reduction in CO ₂ emissions (tonnes/year)		
	1997-2005	2005/06	Total since 1997
Owner Occupied	8,434	4,183	12,617
Private Rented	132	15	147
Local Authority Rented	5,940	5,891	11,830
Housing Association Rented	99	137	236
Total:	14,605	10,226	24,831

N.B These estimates are based on standard occupancy conditions and thus may indicate greater reductions than those likely to have been achieved in practice.

Compared to the baseline estimate of the total CO₂ emissions in April 1997 of 195,752 tonnes per year, the overall reduction of 24,831 tonnes per year over the last 9 years is equivalent to a reduction of 12.7%.

Reduction in kWh of fuel used

The reduction in delivered energy consumption as a result of all the measures described above is estimated as 114.0 million kWh per year, of which 45.2 million kWh per year is due to measures installed in 2005/06. The breakdown of this total by tenure is provided in the table below:

Tenure	Reduction in energy consumption (million kWh/year)		
	1997-2005	2005/06	Total since 1997
Owner Occupied	39.0	16.7	55.7
Private Rented	0.6	0.1	0.7
Local Authority Rented	28.6	27.8	56.4
Housing Association Rented	0.5	0.6	1.1
Total:	68.8	45.2	114.0

N.B These estimates are based on standard occupancy conditions and thus may indicate greater reductions than those likely to have been achieved in practice.

Total estimated saving in fuel bills

The total reduction in fuel bills as a result of all the measures described above is estimated as approximately £1,892,000 per year, of which about £809,000 is due to the measures installed in 2005/06. The breakdown of this total by tenure is provided in the table below:

Tenure	Saving in fuel bills per year		
	1997-2005	2005/06	Total since 1997
Owner Occupied	£639,000	£372,000	£1,011,000
Private Rented	£10,000	£1,000	£11,000
Local Authority Rented	£427,000	£427,000	£854,000
Housing Association Rented	£7,000	£10,000	£17,000
Total:	£1,083,000	£809,000	£1,892,000

N.B These estimates are based on standard occupancy conditions and thus may indicate greater reductions than those likely to have been achieved in practice.

Reduction in sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions

The estimated reductions in sulphur dioxide and nitrous oxide emissions are summarised in the table below:

	SOx emissions (kg/year)	NOx emissions (kg/year)
1997-2005	48,253	29,728
2005/06	42,178	22,589
Total since 1997	90,431	52,317

Our Goals – Energy Efficiency

- To promote the principle of energy efficiency in meeting the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by 2012
- To support the principles of attaining carbon zero products and explore pilot opportunities with Blaenau Gwent
- To seek energy efficiency solutions where practicable in all social housing grant schemes.
- To seek funding to deliver energy efficient products in new and existing housing
- To explore the principles of Eco Homes Excellence
- To continue working with energy suppliers to address fuel poverty issues with current housing stock in all tenures

HOMELESSNESS

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HOMELESSNESS

The Welsh Assembly's National Homelessness Strategy 2006 - 2008 has the prevention of homelessness as a theme throughout, along with the need for local authorities to refocus services towards prevention and housing options advice for those facing homelessness.

The Authority commissioned a review of the homelessness service and allocations service in November 2006. The review recommended changes to the way homelessness is addressed in the borough. One of the recommendations was to establish a Housing Options Team. The Authority has bid for funding to create a Prevention Officer post and are acting on the recommendations of the review.

The Homelessness Forum has been established since 2003 to support the Homeless Strategy. Specific objectives of the Homelessness Strategy are to:

- Prevent homelessness wherever possible by ensuring that high quality advice/advocacy and a range of preventative measures are readily accessible to those at risk;
- Reduce repeat homelessness and abandonment of tenancies;
- Ensure the provision of appropriate housing and related services for homeless and potentially homeless people in Blaenau Gwent;
- Ensure that appropriate support is provided to people to maintain tenancies or to enable people to secure settled accommodation;
- Build on existing partnerships between statutory, voluntary and private sector agencies to maximise the resources available to meet identified need for homelessness and prevention services;
- Demonstrate best value, eliminate duplication, bridge gaps and work towards best practice across services provided for homeless and potentially homeless people;
- Seek to minimise exclusion of homeless people not only from accommodation but all areas of life i.e. Healthcare, education, employment, social services;
- Ensure that adequate emergency accommodation is available to anyone who would otherwise have to sleep rough;
- Ensure that housing and social services have secure joint working arrangements in place so that individual needs are fully assessed and provided for;
- Ensure that all vulnerable groups are able to access specialist support services;
- Reduce intentionally homeless decisions;

- Reduce Bed and Breakfast usage and develop alternative temporary housing options;
- Reduce homelessness due to eviction and seek to eliminate eviction for non-payment of Housing Benefit and water rates;
- Maximise the usage of existing housing stock;
- Ensure that usage of the bond scheme is maximised;
- Minimise the need for emergency or temporary accommodation;
- Sensitise policies toward the needs of homeless people;
- Support the development of schemes that help people into education, employment, training and other activities;

The Authority's Homelessness Champion is Cllr Jim McIlwee.

Homelessness staff regularly attend seminars and training events to keep their knowledge of homelessness legislation and emerging issues up to date.

The need to have a clear plan to facilitate the move on of clients from temporary accommodation has been recognized. All partners will work together with the voluntary sector to actively co-operate in the development of a comprehensive resettlement strategy.

The Main Causes of Homelessness in the Borough

Relationship breakdown and family disputes continue to be the main reasons why people face homelessness in the borough. Also, there is evidence to suggest that there is increasing numbers of properties in the private rented sector being sold, to make profit from the increased house prices, and tenants becoming homeless. Those that become homeless are provided with temporary accommodation, usually in the authority's homeless unit and by working closely with our partner providers any length of stay in temporary accommodation is kept to a minimum. Homelessness services work in conjunction with allocations to ensure those in greatest housing need are provided with suitable preference. No homeless families are placed in bed and breakfast accommodation by the Authority.

The Prevention of Homelessness

The adopted Homelessness Strategy emphasises the benefits of preventing homelessness and establishing preventative mechanisms at an earlier stage e.g. education services, independent advice services, information and promotion and a greater emphasis on the support services necessary to help people sustain accommodation.

Understanding the causes of homelessness means that measures can be adopted to help prevent it occurring. The Authority with its partners via the Homelessness Forum recognize that the prevention of homelessness, in line with the ethos of the Welsh Assembly Governments ' National Homelessness Strategy 2006-2008' is the key to developing services in the borough. During 2006 an independent consultant reviewed the homelessness service and following this the Authority has submitted a bid for the funding of two Prevention Officer posts to help reduce homelessness occurring.

A successful bid to the Welsh Assembly Government to fund a Tenancy Sustainability Officer will lead to the development of a Tenancy Sustainability Strategy, cross tenure projects and collaborative working with to prevent.

Tackling Domestic Abuse

Blaenau Gwent Domestic Abuse Forum has been established to give strategic direction to planning services for people that are or have been subjected to domestic abuse. Housing partners play a key role in the Forum with other key agencies involved with domestic abuse services in the borough, including Community Safety, Supporting People, Womens Aid Monmouthshire, Blaenau Gwent Domestic Abuse Service and the police. The 5 former Gwent authorities forming the regional Supporting People Forum have identified domestic abuse as their top priority for establishing services across the region.

Supporting People offer a limited floating support service of 5 units at present provided by Women's Aid Monmouthshire.

There is no provision of a hostel for persons fleeing domestic abuse within Blaenau Gwent at present. Present arrangements for accommodating this client group usually involve out of borough placements. Funding from WAG has been secured to develop accommodation and members of the Domestic Abuse Forum are currently observing existing models of provision in Wales.

Findings of research into domestic abuse in Blaenau Gwent undertaken by Womens Aid Monmouthshire are due to be published mid 2007 and are expected to recommend development of a womens refuge in the borough.

Our Goals – Homelessness

- To complete the review of the current Homelessness Strategy and subsume priorities into LHS operational plan and Strategic Housing Forum monitoring and evaluation processes.
- To relaunch and remarket the Local Homelessness Forum, reviewing current membership and terms of reference
- To seek alternatives to existing temporary accommodation at Arosfa, through WAG funding mechanisms
- Reduce the number of homelessness acceptances
- Develop a service with a preventative focus across all sectors with consideration of a Housing Options service for housing advice
- Develop a range of suitable temporary accommodation
- Develop a move on strategy from temporary accommodation
- Eliminate the need for the use of B&B
- Develop private landlord links and an approved list
- Establish a direct access hostel in the borough
- To develop services for people fleeing domestic violence

SUPPORTING PEOPLE

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SUPPORTING PEOPLE

Strategic Approach

The Supporting People (SP) programme focuses on the planning, financing and monitoring and reviewing of supported accommodation and housing related support services throughout Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council. Housing related support is delivered through a range of schemes, managed by different providers across all tenures, including: the council, housing associations, voluntary and charitable organisations and privately run schemes.

Utilising improved strategic planning we aim to strengthen the understanding of the housing and support needs of vulnerable people within not only our own local authority but also regionally. The Supporting People programme aims to better shape the future direction of services and helping to ensure service users receive good quality and effective support that meets their needs. The programme is administered through joint commissioning arrangements between Housing, Health, Social Care (Adult and Children Services), Community Safety and Probation.

Supporting People funded services make an invaluable contribution towards achieving local and national policy objectives, particularly in relation to community safety, health, social care and wellbeing, reducing homelessness, social inclusion and unnecessary stays in hospital. We aim to ensure the services we commission:

- Deliver to best meet identified needs
- Meet recognised and accepted strategic priorities
- Are of good quality, accessible, sustainable
- Are cost effective

VISION

The Supporting People Programme in Blaenau Gwent aims to:-

‘Improve the quality of life of vulnerable adults through the provision of effective housing support services. We aim to make Blaenau Gwent a place where people are able to achieve their potential for independent living.’

Key Values

The key values taken in the production of this plan is as follows:

- Every person has a fundamental right to respect as a unique individual, regardless of origin, status, gender, age impairment or perceived contribution to society.
- Every person should have the opportunity to live an ordinary life in the community with dignity, the right to self-determination and the right to take responsibility for their own lives, whilst exercising such responsibility toward others.
- Partner agencies aim to promote the social inclusion of people in the services that they provide as far as is possible.

Underlying Principles

Arising from our statement of values, the **principles** informing the planning and development of Supporting People Services as pursued in this plan, can be highlighted as follows:

- **Inclusion:** increased emphasis is placed on the involvement of supporting people users in activities that are socially inclusive and on the general theme of social inclusion.
- **Individuality:** the assessment of each individual's needs taking into account their wishes and those of their carers is **fundamental** in the provision of services. The cultural, linguistic and personal expectations and preferences of individuals are likewise key factors in assessments.
- **Quality:** services should be provided as locally as possible, avoiding a pattern of centralised and/or institutionalised provision as far as this can be achieved.
- **Diversity:** services should be as diverse as possible to ensure that individual and 'specialist' need is met appropriately.
- **Accessibility:** whilst striving for diversity, equal opportunity of access to services and ordinary community facilities should be also achieved.
- **Partnership:** to meet the needs of individuals in an effective and co-ordinated way, agencies as well as users and carers need to work in **partnership**.
- **Support:** services need to support individuals and their families/carers and **not supplement** existing relationships or social networks.
- **Independence:** 'supportive' services will also aim to maximise independence for users.
- **Choice:** the 'partnership means **involving** individuals in making decisions about the services they require and hence their ability to exercise **choice** has to be achieved and extended.

- **Professionalism:** for most of these principles to be put into practice, users and carers must be confident of the professional competence, as well as the commitment and integrity of the **staff** who work in Supporting People Services. Employing agencies need to give a 100% assurance of this and have the support mechanisms in place to achieve it.

Key Government Objectives

Key Supporting People objectives for central and local government are:

- **Promoting independence** – support to enable people to make their own decisions and take control of their own lives;
- **Alleviating crisis** – support to help people through crisis in their lives;
- **Resettlement** – support to help people establish themselves in a new home and community;
- **Inclusion** – helping people who may not be seeking support, who have difficult behaviour or unconventional lifestyles, or who have multiple needs.
- **A focus on people** – flexible services commissioned & delivered, based on needs.

The Supporting People programme must integrate with these wider developments in order to deliver its key aim – **the design and implementation of a Supporting People Framework** that can:

- Adapt and respond appropriately to the changing needs of clients by providing appropriate and cost effective services;
- Enable people to maximise their independence;
- Prevent unnecessary and expensive admission into institutions such as hospital, prison or residential care;
- Help people in such institutional care to move to a more independent and stable home in the community;
- Prevent crisis that lead to homelessness and tenancy breakdown;
- Contribute to a balanced and sustainable community.
- Ensure that people are given a range and choice of support services to enable them to live within their own local community

Supporting People Operational Plan Key Themes

The Supporting People Programme in Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council commissions supported accommodation and housing related support services for vulnerable persons. These are classified by the Welsh Assembly Government as 'E' numbers. It is recognised that persons may have a multitude of housing support needs that induce their vulnerability and may not fall into one lone client group, also that needs are often complex and intense.

For the purpose of this operational plan the service user groups have been categorised using the relevant E no's as presented by the WAG guidance for Supporting People.

E1 Women seeking refuge from domestic abuse	E8 Young single homeless people and young care leavers
E2 People with learning disabilities	E9 Ex-Offenders
E3 People with mental health problems	E10 Homeless or potentially homeless people
E4 People suffering from alcohol dependency	E11 People with chronic illness, incl. HIV/Aids
E5 People suffering from drug dependency	E12 Vulnerable single parents
E6 BME/Refugees with support needs	E13 Older People
E7 People with physical disabilities	

The Supporting People Team undertakes analyses of data relating the unmet needs of service users from within these client groups or ENO's. This information is collated using differing mechanisms including:

- Use of Gwent Unmet Needs mapping form (GNME)
- Information from planning forums and provider meetings
- Analysis of current contract monitoring information including waiting lists, voids etc
- Service user and carer consultation

Client Groups – Supporting People ‘E’ Numbers

E1 - People fleeing domestic violence

There is a high demand for floating support services and housing support services for women fleeing domestic abuse in Blaenau Gwent. At present there is only a temporary 5 unit floating support scheme available in Blaenau Gwent to women fleeing domestic abuse. There are no supporting people services in the locality for men fleeing domestic abuse.

Blaenau Gwent is currently the only Local Authority in Wales that does not have a refuge. It has been identified by the Supporting People Team, Housing Department and Safer Blaenau Gwent that an intensive supported housing project is required for women and children who are unable to remain at home due to domestic abuse. Women are presenting with a number of complex issues mainly mental health and substance misuse. There is a lack of specialist services and safe accommodation within the area to provide a comprehensive support package.

A permanent floating support scheme needs to be developed to meet the need within the locality. It is paramount that the scheme is able to offer support provision to men as well as women who are fleeing from domestic abuse.

However, the Welsh Assembly Government has recently granted approval for the development of a supported housing project for women and their families who are experiencing domestic abuse for whom traditional refuge accommodation will not meet their needs. The Welsh Assembly Government has agreed both capital and revenue funding for 6 to 8 units depending on the availability of a site. Approval has already been granted to remodel an existing floating support scheme so 10 units will now be available to develop a permanent floating support scheme for people fleeing from domestic abuse.

At present, the Supporting People Team in conjunction with its partners are looking at the feasibility of sites for development and identifying models of best practice for both accommodation and floating support schemes.

E2 - People with learning difficulties

The Supporting People Team is currently funding a floating support scheme which is adequately meeting the needs of the residents in Blaenau Gwent.

However, measures indicate the potential for an increase in supported housing for people with learning disabilities. There is a need to develop a spectrum of supported housing services to ensure that people with support needs are able to live within their own communities and are not reliant on residential/nursing type placements.

A high proportion of people with learning disabilities live with ageing carers and will require accommodation. Often this can be short term accommodation with support to enable them to adjust to independent living.

The involvement of the Supporting People Team in the planning for transition of children with disabilities to the adult learning disabilities team has enabled accommodation issues to be highlighted before a crisis occurs.

There is an increasing need to commission a short term crisis accommodation house for people with a learning disability who are homeless. This includes the need to look at accommodation for younger people who may have previously lived in foster or educational residential placements.

Accommodation developed for people with learning disabilities must be flexible and address other issues such as service users who have complex needs including mental health.

E3 - People with mental health problems

Measures indicate a high demand for the floating support and housing support services for people with mental health issues. There is limited supported housing and floating support provision in the locality for people with mental health issues.

There is no crisis/emergency accommodation that will support people with mental health problems in Blaenau Gwent. There is also a severe lack of 24 hour supported provision, which results in a need to place younger people within residential and nursing settings.

The Supporting People Team and Mental Health Accommodation Planning Sub Group and out of county placements information has highlighted the urgent need to develop supported housing provision in Blaenau Gwent.

The remodelling of Arosta Homelessness Hostel to extend specialist support services to people with mental health problems will further help to address the support needs of this client group.

E4/E5 - People suffering from alcohol/drug dependency

Measures indicate an extremely high demand for a floating support scheme and supported housing provision for people with a substance misuse problem.

There is currently no dedicated floating support scheme for this client group. However, both Wallich Clifford and Trothwy Cyf's floating support schemes offer support to people with a substance misuse problem.

The WAG has agreed capital and revenue funding for the Vesta Project in Blaenau Gwent. The project will provide supported housing to people who have previously had a substance misuse problem and who have completed a detox programme. Planning permission has been granted on a site and work is due to commence in July 2007.

The development of the Specialist Domestic Abuse refuge will also assist in further meeting the needs of this client group; evidence have shown a link between substance misuse and domestic abuse.

The WAG has also agreed both capital and revenue funding for 2 regional supported housing schemes across Gwent. The schemes will provide support to young people with substance misuse problems and to people suffering with mental health issues and substance misuse problems. All 5 Gwent Local Authorities are working in partnership to identify suitable sites within the Greater Gwent area for these supported housing projects.

Black & Minority Ethnic Groups (BME), (incl. E6 Refugees & Travellers)

At present there are no dedicated supporting people services to this client group in Blaenau Gwent. The recent census has identified that Black and Minority Ethnic Groups make up 0.8% of the population of Blaenau Gwent. Supporting People services for this client group maybe more appropriate on a regional basis (i.e. Gwent) and this should be given great consideration in future Supporting People Operational Plans.

E7 - People with a physical disability, E11 Chronic Illness, E16 sensory impairment who require support and E17 people with HIV and Aids

Measures indicate a need for Supporting People services in relation to this client group. There is a need to develop adapted accommodation to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities. This will often require additional support services to secure and maintain a tenancy. There is a particular need to develop these services for young people with physical disabilities/sensory impairments.

E8 - Young single homeless people who require support and young people leaving care

Measures indicate a high demand for the floating support provision for young people. Additional units have now increased Trothwy Cyf's floating support scheme in order to meet this demand.

There is limited supported accommodation provision in Blaenau Gwent to meet the needs of young people. The Supporting People Team have evidenced a high proportion of young people are homeless/threatened with homelessness and are residing in hostels.

E9 - Ex – offenders

Gwent Supporting People Teams, the Probation Services and YOT/YOS hold regular planning meetings. A working party has recently been established from the group and is currently devising an Accommodation Strategy for offenders/ex-offenders in Gwent.

Data from the Planning Group suggests that offenders have particular problems maintaining and securing tenancies and often have increased difficulties with budgeting, anti social behaviour and substance misuse problems.

In 2007 the Supporting People Team agreed to fund a pilot a Gwent wide floating support scheme with Trothwy Cyf for prolific offenders. The scheme is available to people aged 16 plus and referrals are made from Probation and YOT/YOS.

There are significant links between the client group and homelessness. There is no suitable temporary accommodation (with support) available to offenders in Blaenau Gwent. This results in an increase in homelessness and re-offending. There is also a severe lack of move on accommodation for this client group. Support is required to help service users set up and maintain a home and to teach life skills. This support can then prove invaluable to a person when they move into their own accommodation.

The remodelling of Arosfa Homelessness Hostel to extend support services to homeless people with multiple needs including offending behaviour will help to address the support needs of this client group.

E10 - Homeless or potentially homeless people who require support

Measures indicate an extremely high demand for the service provision for this client group. At present there are only 34 units of floating support provision and no Supporting People supported housing accommodation for people who are homeless/potentially homeless.

The possible remodelling of Arosfa Homelessness Hostel to extend support services to homeless people with multiple needs will help to address the support needs of this client group. The Housing Department has submitted a SHG bid to WAG to develop a new hostel.

There is also a severe lack of move on accommodation for this client group. Supporting People, Homelessness Department and their partners need to be working together in identifying appropriate move on accommodation with support.

E12 - Vulnerable single parents / E13 two parent families who require support

There is currently a floating support provision available to vulnerable families which is currently meeting the need within the locality.

There is no supported housing provision in Blaenau Gwent for this client group. The Arosfa Homelessness Hostel provides accommodation to homeless families but at present it does not offer a support mechanism to the families. The remodelling of the hostel will help address these needs.

There is also a link between this client group and domestic abuse. The new specialist domestic abuse refuge in Blaenau Gwent will help to further address the needs of this group.

E14 - Older people and E15 frail elderly

Whilst there is a range of accommodation for older people/frail elderly living in Blaenau Gwent many schemes are unsuitable and require remodelling to ensure that people are able to access a 'home for life' with appropriate levels of care, support and the availability of appropriate technology.

Blaenau Gwent does not currently provide any extra care/home for life type accommodation. However, the WAG has recently approved a SHG bid for an extra care scheme to be developed in Blaenau Gwent.

The Authority has developed a 'Living in the 21st Century' Strategy, which reflects the interface with other organisation, specially housing providers and healthcare, to ensure a more co-ordinated approach to service provision for older people in the 21st century. The strategy proposes a move away from traditional forms of care such as residential/nursing care and homecare. This has been highlighted by the recent decision to close 4 of the 5 local authority residential homes. Therefore, Blaenau Gwent needs to be developing appropriate accommodation and support/care services for older people/frail elderly, which will allow them to access a 'home for life'.

Cross Boundary Issues

The Blaenau Gwent Supporting People Team works closely with colleagues from Caerphilly, Newport, Torfaen and Monmouthshire. These local authorities are key players in terms of addressing regional partnerships and commissioning frameworks. The Supporting People Regional Officers Group (SPROG) involves SP officers across Gwent meeting regularly to develop and implement joint planning and commissioning, with a view to facilitating more effective, viable and quality SP services and processes on a Gwent-wide basis. SPROG have enabled Supporting People teams across Gwent to utilise a single Gwent-wide process for reviewing and monitoring SP funded services, and also enables needs evidence to be gathered and analysed regionally, in order to identify unmet needs and project development on a Gwent-wide basis. Gwent-wide commissioning includes:

- 6 unit floating Support Scheme for Prolific Offenders in Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent
- 10 unit Trothwy Arms project that provides floating support to 10 high risk of harm prison leavers at any one time across Gwent.
- Supporting People Development Officer for Gwent post that affords focus on gathering and analysing needs information regionally contributing to the development and co-ordination of a Gwent-wide SP commissioning process.

Gwent SP have also prioritised two Gwent wide projects for development during 2008/2009:

- 6-8 unit dual diagnosis shared temporary supported accommodation for persons with both substance misuse and mental health issues.
- 6-8 unit shared temporary supported accommodation for persons aged 16 – 18 years who have substance misuse issues.

Capital and Revenue Funding Links

The Blaenau Gwent Supporting People Operational Plan identifies projects that require both capital and revenue funding for development. Discussions are held between the SP officers and representatives from the Housing Department along with other strategic partners to ensure that planning processes are streamlined and appropriate service bids submitted.

Examples of this can be evidenced with:

- ◆ Extra Care Housing for Older people in conjunction with LINC housing association
- ◆ Vesta Substance misuse project
- ◆ New supported housing services Domestic Abuse and specialist needs
- ◆ Social Housing Grant submission to WAG for a replacement homeless hostel and prioritisation of SPRG to provide support within the service.

Supporting People Operational Plan and the Homelessness Strategy

The Homeless Strategy shows clear links with the Supporting People programme.

The aim of the Homeless Strategy is to ensure an appropriate and co-ordinated response to people who are in housing need and to prevent homelessness occurring due to a lack of accessible services.

The Supporting People Operational Plan links into the aims and objectives as set out in the Homeless Strategy, in that it:

- Homelessness will be tackled by different organisations working together at operational and strategic levels
- All services must be needs led
- Homelessness will be tackled by long term solutions as well as by short term crisis measures
- All services must be accessible to homeless people
- The importance of social networks must be recognised

Since 2003 the Supporting People Operational Plan has consistently prioritised development of a new homeless hostel as a high priority. The Supporting People Team is currently identifying potential funding streams, including service remodelling to achieve this.

The SP team currently funds the following services that support the key themes within the homeless strategy and homeless preventative agenda:

Scheme Name	Support Provider	Funding Source	Location	Landlord	Project Type	No units funded by SP in 2007	Primary
BGCBC Floating Support	Mencap Cymru	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	24	Learning disabilities
BGCBC Floating Support	WAIMON	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	5	Domestic abuse
BGCBC Floating Support	Social Services(Home Care)	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	21	Vulnerable families
BGCBC Floating Support	Wallich Clifford	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	34	Homelessness
BGCBC Floating Support	Gofal Cymru	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	12	Mental health
BGCBC Floating Support	Trothwy Cyf	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	8	Young & vulnerable
BGCBC Floating Support	United Welsh Housing Association	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	15	Generic
Brynglas	Gofal Cymru	SPRG	Ebbw Vale	United Welsh Housing Association	Supported Housing	6	Mental health
Cynnal	Trothwy Cyf	SPRG	Various	Various	Floating Support	10	Care leavers
Elmwood House	Victory Outreach	SPRG	Tredeggar	Victory Outreach	Supported Housing	6	Ex offenders
Eureka Place	Gofal Cymru	SPRG	Ebbw Vale	United Welsh Housing Association	Supported Housing	2	Mental health
Fitzroy Avenue	Gofal Cymru	SPRG	Ebbw Vale	Local Health Board	Supported Housing	3	Mental health
POPOS	Trothwy Cyf	SPRG	Gwent	Various	Floating Support	5	Ex offenders
The Bush Hotel	Victory Outreach	SPRG	Abertillery	Victory Outreach	Supported Housing	8	Ex offenders
Trothwy Arms Project	Trothwy Cyf	SPRG	Linc Cymru Housing Association	Linc Cymru Housing Association	Floating Support	2	Ex offenders
TS House/Outreach	Network NCH	SPRG	Blaina/Various	blaenau Gwent County Borough Council's Housing Department and United Welsh Housing	Supported Housing	8	Care leavers

Strategic Planning

Planning Information

The scope and diversity of Supporting People services is reflected in the wide range of policies which have influenced the development of this Supporting People Operational Plan include:

- The Substance Misuse Action Plan
- The Health and Social Care Plan for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council, Social Services Department.
- The Health Social Care and Well Being Strategy
- The Housing Strategy
- The Homeless Strategy for Blaenau Gwent
- The Crime and Disorder Strategic Community Plans
- The Community Plan for Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council
- The Joint Review Report of Blaenau Gwent Social Services Department – 2003 and subsequent the Improvement Plan
- New Telecare strategy

The plan has also been influenced by several national policies including:

- The Care Standards Act 2000 and its new regulations for care provision
- The Local Government Act 2000 giving new duties for promoting or improving social environmental well being for local communities
- The Valuing People Framework
- The National Service Framework for Mental Health Services
- The Publication of The Way Forward for Housing
- The National Service Framework for Older People
- The Area Probation Strategies
- The Children's Act
- The Care Leavers Act

Target outcomes/ Project Proposals

Housing related support focuses on helping people to set up, manage and sustain accommodation, therefore reducing homelessness and preventing crisis. The outcomes from Supporting People services in Blaenau Gwent are that vulnerable persons are supported to achieve more independent, quality living.

The local housing strategy not only addresses housing needs and the availability of affordable housing for residents of Blaenau Gwent but links with the Supporting People strategy to provide a holistic remit of housing with support to enable people to access housing and sustain occupancy. Proposals for new development feed into

the local housing market assessment. The priorities for development in 2008/2009 are listed below:

Project Development Summary 2008/2009

Local Priorities – Blaenau Gwent Services

The following projects have been identified as priorities for development in Blaenau Gwent subject to additional revenue WAG funding being allocated for 2008/2009 and following years. Capital funding is also required for some of these projects and we have made links with the Social Housing Grant submissions currently being identified by the Housing Department within BGCBC. For schemes marked * revenue funding has already been identified by WAG, schemes marked ** have both revenue and capital funding allocated by WAG and / or the Local Authority.

Supporting People Grant Services: -

Community Care Services

	PROJECT NAME	SCHEME TYPE	PROVIDER (IF KNOWN)	NO OF UNITS
1	Supported housing	Learning disabilities Accommodation	SHG required Provider be identified	10
2	Supported housing	Young person accommodation (physical / learning disabilities)	SHG required Provider be identified	3
3	Supported housing	Mental health accommodation	SHG required Provider be identified	6 (2x3)
4	Supported Housing	Physical disabilities Adapted properties using telecare etc	SHG required Provider be identified	10
5	Living support	Learning disabilities independent living packages utilising telecare etc	Provider to be identified	10

Older People Services

	PROJECT NAME	SCHEME TYPE	PROVIDER (IF KNOWN)	NO OF UNITS
1	Extra care/home life accommodation	Supported housing / Sheltered Accommodation	SHG – Linc Cymru	40
2				

Supporting People Revenue Grant Services

	PROJECT NAME	SCHEME TYPE	PROVIDER (IF KNOWN)	NO OF UNITS/ SPRG revenue
1	Arosfa Hostel Homeless People	Homeless hostel (development of existing provision)	SHG – UWHA	20 (approx.)
2	Crisis Homeless Accommodation Learning Disabilities	Supported Housing	To be identified	3
3	BGFSS Mental Health	Floating support	To be identified	10
4	BGFSS Homelessness and additional needs (Substance misuse)	Floating support	To be identified	10

Regional Priorities – Greater Gwent Services

The following projects have been identified as priorities for development in the wider regional supported housing context across the former Gwent area.

Unlike the local priorities listed above, both capital and revenue funding has been identified by WAG for the provision of these services. Negotiations are currently under way across the wider Gwent area to identify potential sites for the projects.

	PROJECT NAME	SCHEME TYPE	PROVIDER (IF KNOWN)	NO OF UNITS/ Approx SPRG revenue
	Substance Misuse/ younger people**	Supported housing	To be identified	6**
	Substance misuse and mental health**	Supported housing	To be identified	6**

The following projects commenced development during 2006/2007

Supporting People Revenue Grant Services

	PROJECT NAME	SCHEME TYPE	DER (IF KNOWN)	PROX REVENUE COST annually	NO OF UNITS/ PRG revenue
1	POPOS scheme in partnership with Caerphilly CBC	Floating support homeless vulnerable people with support needs due to repeated offending behaviour.	Trothwi Cyf	£29,380	5
2	Young person Supported lodgings scheme	Supported housing	NCH	£12,480	3
3	Specialist Housing Domestic Abuse	Supported housing	UWHA/ support provider to be identified	£138,630 approx	5/6
4	BGFSS Domestic abuse	Floating support	To be identified	£59,280	10
5	VESTA	Supported housing Substance misuse	UWHA/ Wallich Clifford	£36,000	5
5	BGFSS Older person support	Floating support	Trothwy Cyf	£29,640	5
6	BGFSS Homeless support	Floating Support	Wallich Clifford	£29,640	5

Older Persons

The Supporting People Operational Plan contains many links to older people and community care services. Supporting People, along with the Housing Services and its partners, has a key role to play in the Blaenau Gwent long term vision for Older people services- *Living Independently in Blaenau Gwent in the 21st Century*. Its subsequent actions including the closure of mainstream residential homes and development of extra care provision are key themes in the SP operational plan. Indeed since 2004 the Supporting People Team has undertaken reviews of all SP older persons services in Blaenau Gwent including sheltered housing schemes and community alarm service. A member of the SP team also sits on the Tele care implementation team and has been an integral part of the development of the new service. The service reviews undertaken in sheltered accommodation schemes throughout Blaenau Gwent have resulted in a recommendation by Supporting People that Blaenau Gwent should review the functions and purpose of the schemes and scheme managers to ensure that services better meet the requirement of current and future tenants.

The needs identified by the Supporting People Team has been further evidenced by The Welsh Assembly Government's Policy Review of 'Housing and Older People' (July 2004) highlighted older peoples housing aspirations and in particular noted that they wanted:-

- To remain at home.
- To have a say on the type of provision provided.
- To have a range of housing and support available.

The review made 26 recommendations, which included amending 'existing guidance to encourage better joint working between housing, health and social care agencies, building

on the new joint planning and funding mechanisms in place at the local level.' Also, it stated that Local Housing Strategies should highlight the work done on the following: -

- The role to be taken by sheltered housing, including the development of leasehold, common hold and shared ownership opportunities to older homeowners seeking sheltered accommodation, and the level of provision that may be appropriate;
- The local role and provision of enhanced sheltered housing;
- The local role and provision of "Extra care" housing;
- The local role and provision of residential and nursing care;
- Proposals to meet the accommodation needs of people with dementia;
- Proposals to meet the accommodation needs of disabled people;
- Proposals to meet the needs of older people living in general housing.

The *National Service Framework for Older People* refers to the need for various different housing options to be available to people, as they grow older, including extra care housing.

The age profile of Blaenau Gwent Profile at the 2001 census clearly shows the need for older persons provision:-

- 12,000 people over 65
- 4,400 people 75-84
- 1,300 people over 85
- 300 very dependent
- 3,624 dependent

Anticipated Changes Between 2001 and 2021

- 15% increase in over 65 age group
- 42% increase in over 85 age group
- 15% increase in very dependent
- 14% increase in the dependent

As part of the Local Housing Market Assessment, a separate assessment of the needs of specific household groups, including older people was undertaken in partnership with Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Councils. Subject areas addressed in relation to older people included:

- Their perceptions of their current accommodation
- Their thoughts on future accommodation
- Their attitudes to different accommodation types
- Their thoughts on information and support
- Their thoughts on essential future housing needs

Some of the main findings of the research included:

The vast majority of older households own their home outright or rent from social landlords, whereas households with no older members are more likely to be buying their own home, or renting in the social and private sectors.

Households with older members are more likely to be satisfied with their current accommodation than households with no older members. This positive perspective is often associated with the locality, and proximity to friends and family. However, some negative perceptions of current accommodation exist. These relate to poorly designed accommodation, and a lack of community / social cohesion.

Cases for thinking about future accommodation include poor health, unsuitable accommodation, under occupied accommodation, and vulnerability / insecurity.

Over 35% of all household respondents aged over 60 years felt that it was likely they would consider moving to a bungalow in the future. Around 20% were also likely to consider single floor accommodation, although there were concerns over security if these are on the ground floor. Many older people would also consider private developments for retired people and sheltered housing but there certainly appears to be a stigma regarding sheltered accommodation.

Older people were often keen to remain in their own homes but they realise that affordability and manageability are key barriers. Features perceived to be important in any home occupied by older people include: maintenance free gardens, more space for storage and dining, necessary facilities, a spare room and personal front doors.

There were mixed opinions on whether adequate information is available for older people. It was suggested by some that people must be made more aware of the housing options, which are available to them. It is vital that any information is adequately explained.

Focus group participants recognised that technology is increasingly playing a role in the support of older people. It is thought that this technology should be promoted more widely by those who visit people's homes. Other support needs include: household adaptations, garden maintenance and transport provision.

Essential future housing needs were prioritised as: a safe and accessible location, access to healthcare support and well designed and affordable accommodation.

There currently exists within Blaenau Gwent 22 sheltered housing complexes, 11 owned by the local authority and 11 owned by the various registered social landlord consortia which operate within the Blaenau Gwent area. The quality and type of the sheltered complexes vary, as do the void levels within each. Popular schemes are those with separate bedroom and kitchen facilities. High void levels are found in those complexes that currently include bedsits. Research shows that these are unpopular due to the higher expectations of today's older people. A service review of sheltered housing undertaken by Supporting People produced a number of recommendations to improve provision.

Blaenau Gwent has one of the largest concentrations of care homes in Wales (in terms of its size) With a total of 741 beds. These are divided into:

- General Nursing 198
- E.M.I. Nursing 124
- Residential 306 (independent 142 L.A. 164)

As part of the Living Independently in the 21st Century Strategy the Authority is committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable older people. Its capacity to respond to need through traditional forms of care e.g. residential homes is limited due to an increase in demand for services as a result of demographic pressures from an ageing population. Research also suggests that the traditional forms of care are sometimes not the most appropriate choice of accommodation but are used due to the limitations around choice. In a response to this the strategy is proposing a move away from standard residential care, including the closure of 4 of the 5 local authority homes, with investment in specialist long term residential provision including for example dementia care.

A successful bid for SHG was made to WAG for an Extra Care Sheltered Housing Complex to be developed in partnership with Linc Cymru at Ebbw Vale, with work due to commence in 2008.

The scheme will consist of 40 units of accommodation, 15 of these will be two bed units with the remainder one bed units.

The authority has a Telecare Strategy which is being taken forward by an assistive technology and telecare strategy forum including Social Services, Housing, C2BG, - Monitoring Centre, Gwent NHS Trust, Blaenau Gwent Local Health Board, Police, National Children's Home, Linc Cymru Housing Association, Melin Homes, Care and Repair, Environmental Services and service users and carers.

The authority is developing an older persons accommodation strategy to identify current service provision, key issues and identifying recommendations for service development.

Younger People

The authority takes forward the needs of younger people under the Children's Framework Partnership and National Service Framework. Housing plays a key role in ensuring young people have a solid foundation from which they may develop their education and life skills.

As part of the Local Housing Market Assessment, a separate assessment of the needs of specific household groups, including younger people was undertaken in partnership with Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen Councils. Subject areas addressed in relation to younger people included:

- Their current housing circumstances
- Thinking about housing
- Housing perceptions
- Housing issues
- Housing needs and aspirations
- Overcoming housing barriers

Some of the main findings of the research included:

- According to the Local Household Survey, households with young respondents were more likely to be found in terraced housing and were far more likely to be in the private and social rented sectors than the overall population of the sub-region.
- The majority of young people who took part in focus groups believed that they would move out of the family home between the ages of 18 and 20 years, once they had found employment or they were attending university.
- Generally there was limited awareness amongst young people about what housing providers exist in the area. There was general agreement that more information is needed, perhaps in colleges when young people are thinking about leaving home. Possible methods of dissemination include the Internet, magazines and presentations.
- Young people were generally very positive about detached and semi-detached housing and all forms of apartments. By contrast, young people made a number of negative comments about town houses and duplexes. When asked what type of accommodation they thought they would like to move into when leaving home, most would like to move to a semi-detached or mid-terraced property. No young people thought that they would move to a flat but they did recognise that some young people might.
- Young people stated that currently, important features of the area where they live include: proximity to shops, public transport, other facilities and friends. When asked about important features of an area where they might live in the future, young people stated: area safety, availability of cheap housing, presence of a university, and cheap housing.
- Households headed by young people are more likely to report that their housing costs are just manageable. Young people who live in the family home also identify housing costs as a key issue.
- 14% of young household are dissatisfied with their current home, which compares with 50% for all households in the sub-region. As a consequence of this dissatisfaction 35% of young households want to move which compares with 20% of all households.
- Young people raised three key issues for overcoming barriers to accessing housing: greater employment opportunities, greater information dissemination, and greater housing provision.

Our Goals – Supporting People

- To ensure planning for strategic objectives is undertaken in an inclusive process to help link revenue and capital funding streams.
- To gather evidence of need with partner agencies and services to inform future Supporting People Operational Plans.
- To work regionally in partnership with other local authorities by means of the Supporting People Regional Officers Group to share best practice and develop regional priorities.
- To work in partnership with homelessness services to identify support needs and provide appropriate services.
- To help contribute to sustainable communities across tenure by the provision of supported housing services.
- To continue to work closely with social services and housing services in remodelling older persons services in line with Living Independent in the 21st Century.
- To help develop assistive technology services throughout the borough.
- To help provide supportive services to vulnerable young people.



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HOUSING MANAGEMENT

HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Maintenance

Housing Services operate a responsive repair service to its properties by means of a Direct Labour Organisation, with an outreach service within each of the five major towns for tenants to report disrepair and a telephone hotline. An out-of-hours emergency service is also operational in the borough.

All properties have central heating and PVC windows with the vast majority being double-glazed.

Strategic Approaches to Lettings

Demand for affordable housing in the borough is increasing and social housing plays an important role in helping to meet demand. It is therefore essential that the lettings scheme used is transparent, equitable to all client groups, provides real choice and is focused on need.

There currently exists little consistency with regards to letting policies within Blaenau Gwent. Lettings are made via a points system, as the one adopted and recently reviewed (to address more effectively the requirements of the Homelessness Act 2002) by the Local Authority and large a choice based lettings schemes from the registered social landlords that operate within the area. The application of a consistent approach would give transparency to the lettings process. The establishment of a common waiting list within Blaenau Gwent would be the first step in developing a joined up approach. The development of community housing agreements and establishment of standard nomination agreements would also aid consistency and transparency.

As part of the Healthier Future Strategy a register of adapted properties is being developed helping to match those persons in need with suitable properties as early as possible.

The need for introducing local lettings policies will be reviewed on a regular basis. Such policies can help to address imbalances within the housing system such as low demand areas for example.

Community Sustainability

Housing Services play an active role within Safer Blaenau Gwent. Community Safety and order are basic requirements for social cohesion.

Housing Services are dedicated to preventing instances of anti-social behaviour in and around council estates and to supporting victims of ASB.

The council formally adopted Housing Services Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures in 2006.

Secured by Design

Secured by Design is a police initiative to encourage the building industry to adopt crime prevention measures in development design to assist in reducing the opportunity for crime and the fear of crime, thereby creating a safer and more secure environment. It is intended to achieve a better quality of life by addressing crime prevention at the earliest opportunity in the design, layout and construction of homes. Current planning policy advocates secured by design. The registered social landlord sector is fully compliant within the design of its schemes.

Tenancy Sustainability

Establishing and maintaining settled communities requires people to be able to remain happily in their homes for as long as possible.

Funding for a tenancy sustainability officer has been secured from WAG in partnership with United Welsh Housing Association and Melin Homes to help develop a tenancy sustainability strategy.

Objectives of the sustainability officer will include: -

1. Working in partnership with local Housing Associations to research the reasons for tenancy failure, i.e. carrying out a baseline assessment throughout the social housing sector, identifying common trends/ themes and building on existing core performance indicators for tenancy sustainability for analytical purposes.
2. Evaluating the performance of existing support networks and organisations that operate in the locality.
3. Identifying best practice throughout the UK.
4. Developing an outcome based action plan to be agreed through the strategic housing forum.
5. Managing the delivery of the actions / outcomes for the forum.

The project will improve tenancy sustainability and community cohesion, contribute to the prevention of homelessness, improve rent revenue, reduce costs associated with void control and contribute to the improvement of the health and well being of tenants and the local community.

Existing support networks in Blaenau Gwent: -

Gofal Cymru - Mental Health
Wallich Clifford - Homelessness
Trothwy Cyf - Young People
NCH Network – Young People

Our Goals – Housing Management

- To establish a Common Housing Register
- To seek the development of consistent policies and procedures with regards to housing management
- To establish community housing agreements with the registered social landlord sector and standardised nomination agreements
- To share good practice across the housing management sector in Blaenau Gwent
- To establish scrutiny mechanisms for housing management services in Blaenau Gwent
- To establish performance management information with regards to all social landlords operating in Blaenau Gwent
- To monitor and evaluate performance of social landlords within Blaenau Gwent with regards to areas such as estate management and anti social behaviour
- To regularly monitor progress with regards to WHQS across the sector
- Strengthen overarching partnerships such as the Community safety Partnership ensuring participation by all social landlords operating in the area.

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COMMUNITY REGENERATION

Community Regeneration

The Welsh Assembly Government's Communities First programme is in its fifth year of operation within Blaenau Gwent.

Thirteen areas within Blaenau Gwent fall under Communities First initiative: Abertillery, Blaina, Cwm, Cwmtillery, Ebbw Vale North and South, Garnlydan, Llanhilleth, Nantyglo, Rassau, Six Bells, Tredegar Central and West and Sirhowy are Communities First areas.

The Communities First Programme provides the infrastructure to break down some of these barriers, by sectors working in partnership at a level close to communities. This improves the chances of regeneration and renewal activity being sustainable and meaningful within the community it affects.

As an example, the first successful food co-operative was established in April 2005 in Six Bells and now operates on a weekly basis. The project was developed in partnership with the Rural Regeneration Unit of WAG, Link Cymru (formerly Glamorgan and Gwent Housing Association), BTCV and the community. It provides fresh vegetables, fruit, eggs and salad and has proved to be a great success.

Two valleys in Blaenau Gwent are supported by development trusts and more details of their activities are given below. This leaves one valley without a Trust but with 5 Communities First partnership boards as the previous Trust did not survive. Other ways will need to be investigated to support the strategic operations of this valley.

Tredegar Development Trust (TDT)

The origins of Tredegar Development Trust go back to 1994 when Blaenau Gwent Borough Council, Gwent County Council, and the Welsh Development Agency commissioned a report entitled 'Tredegar Strategic Action Plan'.

The plan identified a number of individual projects all aimed at regenerating Tredegar. The report focussed on the socio-economic issues being experienced within Tredegar and how a menu of projects could be developed to combat these issues. Responsibility for developing projects contained within the action plan remained at that time with the Council but it was soon realised that for the community to drive forward improvements in Tredegar and for other avenues of grant funding to be opened up, an organisation that was autonomous and separate from the Local Authority needed to be established.

Development Trusts had already by this time, begun to appear across Wales e.g. the Arts Factory in Ferndale, Rhondda and Cwmni Tref Development Trust in Caernarfon North Wales.

Tredegar Development Trust was established in 1996 to drive forward some of the recommendations coming out of the strategic action plan. Since its creation, it has continued to play a key role in the regeneration of Tredegar and is now a high profile organisation within the Town. Some of its key achievements include :

Catapult – A Community Learning Resource Centre

Pathways – An environmental regeneration project with a focus on vocational learning for project participants

Sirhowy Landscapes – a Trust enterprise which provides gardening maintenance and environmental improvements to elderly residents and people on low incomes

A social enterprise resource office with its own enterprise officer

The Trust also works to ensure the future of key local buildings in the town, including

The conversion of 40 Castle Street (Aneurin Bevan House) into the headquarters of the Trust

The development of a project centred around the building, 10 The Circle, once home to Tredegar Workmens Medical Aid Society, which was used as a blueprint for the NHS by Aneurin Bevan.

The Trust is now the employing body for the Community First Programme within Tredegar Central and West and Sirhowy wards and supports the action plans and activities identified through the consultation and work being carried out in the community and the CF Partnership board. It is in the process of acquiring a 25 year lease on 2 Local Authority houses to develop a family resource centre. It has also supported the establishment of a community transport provision as a separate social enterprise.

Ebbw Vale and District Development Trust (EVAD)

The origins of Ebbw Vale and District Development Trust (EVAD) date back to 1997 when a number of local community groups and individuals came together to discuss the regeneration of the town and the surrounding area. After a period of training for prospective Directors and a gathering together of information on potential projects, a company limited by guarantee was formed in 2000.

Since the formation of the company in 2001, the Trust has instigated a number of projects in Ebbw Vale and its surrounding communities, including: -

The acquisition of a building to house the Info Shop which acts as the base of the trust and also a one-stop-shop for residents of the area to interact with a number of agencies such as:

Careers Wales Gwent

Speak Easy debt management

JobMatch

Trading Standards

Working Links

Replay Scrap Store – a social enterprise recycling scrap materials

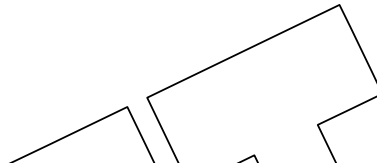
Support facilities for Communities First funded and initiated activity by taking on leases for IT and youth provision

EFTEV – A joint social enterprise project with Tredegar Development Trust, which set up Candy Stripes, a nursery provision set up within a redundant building and Tidy Trev, a kerbside recycling service in partnership with the Council.

The Trust is now the employing body for the Community First Programme within the Ebbw Fawr valley covering Rassau and Garnlydan , Ebbw Vale North and South and Cwm Waunllwyd and Victoria. The Trust now supports the action plans and activities identified through the CF partnership boards and community first funded staff. It has purchased the Cwm Café on behalf of the local Partnership board and is investigating the potential use of some Local Authority housing in Rassau.

In November 2006 Housing Services provided a presentation on ???? and played a part in accompanying workshops at a Communities First Overarching Network event in Bryn Bach Park, Tredegar. The theme of the event was the environment, attendees included: -

- BTCV
- BGCBC Environmental Projects
- BGCBC Housing Dept
- Gwent Wildlife Trust
- Tenants & Residents Associations
- Forestry Commission



Our Goals – Community Regeneration

- To continue to work closely with Communities First to ensure all partners contribute to regenerating designated areas in a co-ordinated manner
- To have full regard for Communities First Local Action Plans and to contribute fully in their development
- Make maximum use of local consultation frameworks within Communities First to determine housing priorities.

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CONSULTATION

CONSULTATION

'Quality Streets' has been prepared following the 'Evidence Days' held in April 2007. The key issues and priorities resulting from that day have been subsumed within the body of the document.

The Strategy will be forwarded to the key stakeholders who attended the 'Evidence Days'. Further to this all consultees, listed within the 'Preparing Local Housing Strategies 2007' Welsh Assembly Government guidance, will be consulted.

It is envisaged that there will be a four week consultation period prior to 'sign off' from the Strategic Housing Forum

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Main Findings of the Local Housing Market Assessment

- The assessment was based primarily on the analysis of 1,500 interviews conducted with households across the area between March and May 2006.
- Additional data from the WAG, Land Registry and a range of other information from the Council also informed the analysis.
- All data was based on a reference point of Quarter 1 2006 (i.e. Quarter 4 2005/06)
- Local Housing Market Areas are defined as being the geographical area in which a substantial majority of the employed population both live and work and where those moving house without changing employment choose to stay.
- Blaenau Gwent can be described as a Housing Market Area – for 64% of local residents in employment work in the borough and 78.8% of people changing address within the area stayed within the local authority boundary.
- A detailed analysis of movement patterns clearly identify a further four local HMAs, each with their own centre of population. These are Abertillery, Blaina/Brynmawr, Ebbw Vale and Tredegar.
- Blaenau Gwent has seen a fall in population of 10% in the period 1981 - 2004, compared with a 5% for Wales over the same period.
- The area has experienced an outmigration of population of 1,000 people in the period 1999-2004.
- A net 1,320 migrants moved to the rest of Wales.
- The Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) population in Blaenau Gwent comprised 1.8% of the total population in 2001, including 1.0% from NonWhite groups and 0.8% from White groups other than White British.
- Terraced housing accounts for 60% of the total stock.
- Over two fifths of the households interviewed estimated that their property was built pre 1919, with only 2% of stock built in 2000 or later years.
- Just under two thirds of all properties across the Blaenau Gwent are owned outright or owned with a mortgage, with a small number (less than 1%) part owned through shared ownership. Around a quarter of the stock is rented from social landlords with the remaining 8% in the private rented sector or tied accommodation.
- Tax band A has the highest proportion of 1 and 2 bedroom properties (49%), with 73% of properties in band F or higher having at least 4 bedrooms.
- 810 households (2.9%) are currently living in technically overcrowded housing, but almost a sixth of households considered their current home to be too small.

- Whilst 72% of households technically underoccupy their property, only 5% said that they currently had too many rooms.
- The vast majority (89%) of households were satisfied with their current home, and 79% stated that they had no problems with the condition of their property. However, Council tenants were more likely to be dissatisfied with their home and to report that they had at least one problem.
- 1% of the population in Blaenau Gwent live in communal housing, with the majority of these in medical or care establishments.
- The household structure shows that Blaenau Gwent has proportionally more single parents than Wales as a whole.
- The health of the population of Blaenau Gwent appears to be much worse than the average for Wales. 50% of all households in Blaenau Gwent contain a member with a limiting longterm illness and 27% of all people suffer from limiting longterm illnesses.
- 5% of households felt that their homes were not currently adequately adjusted to the health problems of household members.
- Many households reported that they could not afford the adjustment to their home, which were required to make it suitable for the person with a health problem.
- Unemployment has been in longterm decline, with virtually all of those who are economically active are now in employment.
- The proportion of people disabled under the definition of the Disability Discrimination Act is much higher than for Wales as a whole.
- The population of Blaenau Gwent is over represented in the lower qualification categories and underrepresented in the higher qualification categories. Two thirds of those aged over 50 years have no formal qualifications.
- There are fewer people employed in professional and administrative occupations and more in elementary and plant and machinery occupations. Manufacturing is very important to the Blaenau Gwent economy.
- VAT registration have been higher than deregistration, indicating the number of businesses in Blaenau Gwent has been growing.
- Salaries have been rising more slowly for those on lower incomes.
- Information from the analysis is statistically reliable at a borough wide level.
- The household structure shows that Blaenau Gwent has proportionally more single parents than Wales as a whole.
- 5% of households felt that their homes were not currently adequately adjusted to the health problems of household members.

- Many households reported that they could not afford the adjustment to their home, which were required to make it suitable for the person with a health problem.
- Household affordability depends on the relationship between the cost of appropriate local housing and the amount that the household is able to afford. Whilst assessments should not commit households beyond their means, affordable housing should not be allocated to households able to afford housing in the private sector.
- Existing rents in the social sector do not tend to differ significantly by property size. Rents for smaller private rented properties are only marginally more expensive than social rent, but there is a larger differential for properties with more bedrooms.
- The study assumed the amount affordable for rent was 25% of gross household income. The amount affordable for owner occupation is the total amount borrowable (3.5x individual income or 2.9x joint income) together with any existing equity and savings, offset against any debts or negative equity.
- Over the seven-year period from 1999 to 2005, the average property price in Blaenau Gwent rose by 161%. Much of the rises in property prices occurred in 2003 and 2004 and since this time average prices have remained stable.
- In the second quarter of 2000, 90% of all completed property sales were priced at less than £80,000 – this figure was below 60% of all sales in 2005. Over the same period, the number of houses selling for over £100,000 has risen from almost zero to more than 20% of the total.
- 4,811 (17.0%) of established households in Blaenau Gwent are currently living in unsuitable housing, of which 364 need to move within the area to resolve their housing problems and cannot afford to buy or rent market housing – they are in housing need.
- The ORS housing market model identifies an overall 5year net requirement for 1,269 additional dwellings. The net requirement is attributable to a net gain of 1,372 households through migration offset against a slight indigenous decline in households.
- The balance of housing requirements is for 18% social housing, 16% intermediate housing and 66% market housing. This balance is determined on the basis of affordability, assuming that the relationship between house prices and income remains constant.
- A significant proportion of households with dependent children are currently in unsuitable housing – including 25.4% of single parents and 48.1% of groups of adults with dependent children.

Assessment Conclusions and Implications

Overall housing requirements comprise both housing need and housing demand, and the ORS Housing Market Model identified a 5year gross housing requirement for Blaenau Gwent from approximately 9,600 households, of which 40% occurs as a result of established households moving, just over 35% as a result of households moving in to the Blaenau Gwent area for outside, and almost 25% from newly forming households.

However, this gross housing requirement from 9,600 households is in part off set by supply from within the existing stock – as existing households vacate properties, as households leave the area, and as a result of household dissolution. This suggests a 5year net housing requirement of around 1,250 dwellings to meet aggregate needs and demand, an average provision of c.250 annually.

Currently, planning for housing provision is determined by the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) – which identified a total provision of 1,700 across the County Borough over a 15year period, equivalent to an average annual provision of 113 dwellings. Nevertheless, we understand that actual provision in recent years has averaged around 150 dwellings annually.

It is clear that the annual net housing requirement identified by the ORS Housing Market Model suggests that requirement for housing in Blaenau Gwent is currently somewhat higher than in recent years. As previously noted in chapter 5, given the household dwelling balance, any difference between the identified net housing requirement and the actual housing provision will lead to one or more of the identified household flows changing – that is fewer new households forming and/or fewer in-migrant households moving to the area and/or more out-migrant households leaving the area.

The Council is currently preparing a Local Development Plan (LDP) for the area for the period 2006-2021, which will include targets for housing provision during this time. Whilst this study has identified a requirement for 1,250 dwellings for the period 2006-2011, the longer-term nature of the 15-year plan means that longer-term trends should also be considered when determining an appropriate target for housing provision.

Whilst the LDP is currently only a draft document and remains subject to consultation and change, the Council are anticipating that housing allocation will be around 200 units p.a. – between the 150 unit average currently provided and the 250 unit figure identified by this study for the first five years of the plan.

Evidence of Housing Need and the Need for Affordable Housing

Having considered the overall housing requirement for Blaenau Gwent, it is appropriate to consider the appropriate housing mix. In line with WAG guidance, affordable housing should not be considered in isolation, but instead a holistic approach should be adopted by taking account of the entire housing market to see how the different tenure options could help accommodate households in housing need.

The model identified that almost 36% of this housing requirement represents a need for some form of affordable housing provision – but allowing for a continuing supply of housing within the existing stock, differential shortfalls in the market and affordable housing sectors indicate that almost 433 units of the expected shortfall represent an anticipated need for additional affordable housing, including at least 233 homes for social rent.

Proportionately, the need for affordable housing constitutes 34% of the overall net housing requirement – with social housing accounting for just over half of this amount (at least 18% of the net total).

In determining an affordable housing policy position to deliver 34% of all additional housing as affordable, the Council could arguably promote an affordable housing target for qualifying sites of up to 35% or 40% (recognising that some sites would fall short of

the target and that others would have to provide proportionately more than the 34% requirement if this level is to be achieved as an average). Nevertheless, in determining the appropriate mix of housing for the area, it will be important for the Council to balance the provision of additional affordable homes against a range of other important factors.

We have already noted that the Council are seeking to increase the level of current development in the county borough from 150 dwellings annually to a target of 200 units each year – and if this aim is to be achieved, it will be essential that the target for affordable housing is not set at such a level that would discourage development in the area. Clearly, it is the number of affordable homes delivered that is of paramount importance – and a lower percentage could actually yield a higher number of units if the overall level of delivery increased.

Housing Tenure & Size Mix

The net housing requirement identified by the Housing Market Model is focused primarily upon 2bed market and intermediate homes and 1bed homes for social rent – though some provision of additional larger social rented homes (with 4 or more bedrooms) and both 1bed and larger market homes is also shown.

Nevertheless, in the context of social rented housing, whilst there is a significant need identified for additional 1bed units, this is in the context of surplus requirements of 2bed and 3bed units. Affordable housing has been allocated on an objective basis (with the number of bedrooms required determined by household structure) and does not take account of household preferences. It seems likely that whilst households may only technically need one bedroom, they would accept larger homes if they were available.

Given the identified surpluses of midsize social sector homes, it would seem appropriate for the Council to consider allocation policies that would allow households to be housed in homes that were slightly larger than they require as a minimum in order to balance requirements across the existing stock – i.e. households who may only need one bedroom could be offered properties with two bedrooms, and similarly those needing two bedrooms could be offered three bedroom homes. This should ease the identified need for one bed properties and offset the surplus of two and Three bed homes.

In terms of additional housing provision in the social sector, it will be appropriate for the Council to seek a mix of property sizes – including some provision of larger homes, as it is unlikely that households requiring these properties will have their needs resolved within the existing stock. It may be worthwhile considering the requirements of larger households on the housing register when considering the location of such housing.

In relation to market housing, there is a bias towards smaller units that the Council should seek to encourage – but once again, the small surplus of three bed market housing should not be taken to imply that no housing of this type should be provided at all.

Similarly, whilst the need for intermediate housing is focused upon 2bed units, it would be appropriate to consider a mix of housing products to provide adequate choice in this emerging sector.

Finally, it will also be important to monitor the mix of new housing developed to ensure that products are available to the broadest possible crosssection of the community. The Council should aim to avoid polarised developments where social rented housing is provided within developments that could otherwise only include some of the most expensive market housing in the area – for this could inevitably lead to communities where housing is only available to the most prosperous and least prosperous households in the area, with no housing available for households falling between these extreme

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APPENDIX B

Energy efficiency improvements known to have been installed in the owner occupied sector

Notes: 1. No of lamps – 2 lamps per home for EAGA/HEES, 2. N.B. a row for the total of each measure (in bold) has only been included in the table where there is more than one source of information on that measure.
2. Actually Nov 03 to Oct 04

Measure	Source	1997-2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Total
Cavity Wall Insulation	EAGA/HEES	147	59	33	31	40	310
	SWALEC/Scottish and Southern	-	14	1	91	100	206
	British Gas	-	-	266	214	133	613
	EDF Energy	-	-	-	-	65	65
	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	81	41	49	100	202	271
	Heatcare/Scottish Power	-	5	4	-	-	9
		228	119	353	436	540	1,676
Full Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	240	60	66	55	66	487
	SWALEC/Scottish and Southern	-	6	1	64	70	141
	British Gas	-	-	-	111	354	465
	EDF Energy	-	-	-	-	19	19
	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	44	33	52	28	101	157
	Heatcare/Scottish Power	-	2	2	-	-	0
		284	101	121	258	610	1,374
Top-up Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	62	53	27	34	7	183
	British Gas	-	-	246	175	0	421
	SWALEC/Scottish and Southern	-	-	-	12	0	12
	EDF Energy	-	-	-	-	56	56
	Domestic & General (non HEES)	-	-	-	-	2	2
	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	71	18	27	56	117	172
		133	71	300	277	182	963
Draughtsealing	EAGA/HEES	79	54	27	24	14	196

	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	75	23	27	7	4	132
		154	77	54	31	18	334
Double glazing (lowE)	FENSA	-	-	278	517	928	1,723
Tank Jackets	EAGA/HEES	142	33	32	19	22	248
	SWALEC/Scottish and Southern	-	2	91	0	1	94
	British Gas	-	-	238	25	0	263
	EDF Energy	-	-	-	-	4	4
	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	1	0	0	0	0	1
		143	35	361	44	27	610
New central heating with condensing boiler	EAGA/HEES	11	25	19	32	24	111
	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	-	2	0	0	0	2
		11	27	19	32	24	113
New central heating with boiler	EAGA/HEES	5	4	15	8	2	26
	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	-	1	3	2	0	6
		5	5	18	10	2	40
Replacement boiler	EAGA/HEES	1	69	47	97	-	214
Replacement boiler condensing	EAGA/HEES	-	-	-	-	125	125
Electric heating	Excelsior Insulation (non HEES)	-	-	-	-	10	10
Fridgesavers	Powergen	-	-	39 ²	-	-	39
Low Energy Lights ¹	EAGA/HEES	732	478	364	348	266	2,188
	SE Wales EEAC	-	400	1,348	218	238	2,204
	Scottish and Southern	-	-	2,860	1,820	8,392	13,072
	British Gas	-	-	-	2,856	0	2,856
		732	878	4,572	5,242	8,896	20,320
Energy Advice	EAGA/HEES	368	246	198	256	264	1,332
	SE Wales EEAC	-	260	639	202	6,140	7,241
		368	506	837	458	6,404	8,573

APPENDIX C

Energy efficiency improvements known to have been installed in the private rented sector

Notes: 1. No of lamps – 2 lamps per home

2. N.B. a row for the total of each measure (in bold) has only been included in the table where there is more than one source of information on that measure.

Measure	Source	1997-2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Total
Cavity Wall Insulation	EAGA/HEES	2	3	0	0	0	5
	Excelsior Insulation	2	1	0	0	0	3
Full Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	4	4	0	0	0	8
	Excelsior Insulation	35	0	2	1	4	42
Top-up Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	1	1	0	0	5	2
	Excelsior Insulation	36	1	2	1	9	49
Draughtsealing	EAGA/HEES	0	4	0	0	1	5
	Excelsior Insulation	7	1	0	0	6	8
Tank Jackets	EAGA/HEES	7	5	0	0	7	19
	Excelsior Insulation	13	4	2	0	4	23
New central heating with condensing boiler	EAGA/HEES	2	2	1	0	1	5
	Excelsior Insulation	15	6	3	0	5	29
New central heating with boiler	EAGA/HEES	18	2	1	0	2	23
	Excelsior Insulation	1	1	0	2	1	5
Replacement boiler	EAGA/HEES	-	-	-	-	1	1
	Excelsior Insulation	1	1	0	2	2	6
Low Energy Lights ¹	EAGA/HEES	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Excelsior Insulation	0	2	1	2	0	5
Energy Advice	EAGA/HEES	100	8	6	8	14	136
	Excelsior Insulation	39	6	3	4	7	59

APPENDIX D

Energy efficiency improvements known to have been installed in the local authority sector

Notes: 1. No of lamps –2 lamps per home

2. N.B. a row for the total of each measure (in bold) has only been included in the table where there is more than one source of information on that measure

Measure	Source	1997-2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Total
Cavity wall insulation	EAGA/HEES	2	2	19	16	1	40
	Capital schemes	-	-	-	1,030	2,995	4,025
	Domestic and General	18	8	15	-	0	41
	Excelsior Insulation	7	7	22	43	-	79
		27	17	56	1,089	2,996	4,185
External wall insulation	Capital schemes	-	-	86	19	90	195
Full Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	275	2	22	15	6	320
	Domestic and General	11	11	26	-	0	48
	Excelsior Insulation	2	4	36	10	-	52
		288	17	84	25	96	510
Top-up Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	0	6	15	2	0	23
	Capital schemes	-	-	-	835	1995	2,830
	Domestic and General	31	4	0	-	0	35
	Excelsior Insulation	21	28	38	27	-	114
		52	38	53	864	1,995	3,002
Draughtsealing	EAGA/HEES	393	2	21	15	3	434
	Domestic and General	13	8	3	-	0	24
	Excelsior Insulation	62	18	53	10	-	143
		468	28	77	25	3	601
Tank Jackets	EAGA/HEES	272	3	5	3	1	284

	Domestic and General	-	2	-	0	2	0	2
		272	7	3	1	3	1	286
	Capital schemes	680	-	-	-	-	-	680
Double Glazing	Capital schemes	-	373	182	0	0	0	858
Double Glazing (Low E)	Capital schemes	-	-	532	0	0	0	532
New UPVC doors	EAG/HEES	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
New central heating with condensing boiler	Excelsior Insulation	-	1	0	0	0	0	2
	Capital schemes	-	-	-	283	-	283	283
		0	2	0	283	0	283	287
New central heating with standard boiler	EAG/HEES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Excelsior Insulation	-	1	2	0	0	0	3
	Capital schemes	-	-	-	100	-	100	100
		0	1	2	100	2	100	103
Replacement boiler (conventional)	EAG/HEES	0	24	9	0	0	0	59
	Capital schemes	1,374	264	109	17	109	17	2,144
	Total:	1,374	288	118	17	118	17	2,203
Replacement boiler (condenser)	Capital schemes	-	-	271	0	271	0	271
Heating controls	Capital schemes	-	-	20	400	20	400	420
Low Energy Lights ¹	EAG/HEES	1,314	130	94	16	94	16	1,614
	Capital schemes	-	-	10,000	0	10,000	0	10,000
	Domestic and General	-	6	-	0	-	0	6
		1,314	136	10,094	16	10,094	16	11,620
Energy advice	EAG/HEES	571	70	52	11	52	11	737
	Domestic and General	-	20	-	0	-	0	20
		571	90	52	11	52	11	757

APPENDIX E

Energy efficiency improvements known to have been installed in the housing association sector

- Notes: 1. No of lamps – 2 lamps per home
 2. N.B. a row for the total of each measure (in bold) has only been included in the table where there is more than one source of information on that measure.
 3. Glamorgan and Gwent HA now known as Linc-Cymru – the two names are used interchangeably in the above table.

Measure	Source	1997-2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	Total
Cavity Wall Insulation	EAGA/HEES	0	3	0	7	0	10
	Excelsior	0	1	0	0	9	1
	Insulation	-	-	-	-	18	18
	Wales and West HA	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Linc-Cymru	-	-	-	-	9	9
	Total:	0	4	0	7	36	47
Full Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	3	1	1	4	2	11
	Gwerin HA	25	0	0	-	-	25
	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	-	-	1	0	-	1
	Excelsior	0	1	0	0	1	1
	Insulation	0	1	0	0	1	1
	Total:	28	2	2	4	39	3
Top-up Loft Insulation	EAGA/HEES	5	4	0	4	0	13
	Linc-Cymru	-	-	-	-	194	194
	Excelsior	-	-	-	-	185	185
	Insulation	5	4	0	4	379	392
	Total:	6	6	18	0	1	31
Draughtsealing	EAGA/HEES	-	-	4	0	0	4
	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	14	8	0	0	0	22
	Excelsior	-	-	-	-	-	-

Double glazing (low E)	Total:	20	14	22	0	1	57
	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	-	-	1	45	7	46
	Wales and West HA	-	-	-	-	38	38
Tank Jackets	Total:	-	-	1	45	45	91
	EAGA/HEES	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	-	-	2	0	3	2
	Total:	1	0	2	0	3	6
New central heating with condensing boiler	EAGA/HEES	0	1	0	0	0	1
New central heating with standard boiler	EAGA/HEES	0	0	0	0	0	0
Replacement boiler (condensing)	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	-	-	3	12	10	15
Replacement boiler (conventional)	EAGA/HEES	-	1	0	1	0	2
	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	-	-	5	0	0	5
	Total:	-	1	5	1	0	7
Heating controls	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	-	-	1	0	10	1
Low energy lights ¹	Glamorgan and Gwent HA	24	60	46	36	6	172
	EAGA/HEES	-	-	-	-	194	194
	Linc-Cymru	24	60	46	36	200	366
	Total:	11	16	24	18	3	72
Energy Advice	EAGA/HEES	-	-	-	-	194	194
	Linc-Cymru	-	-	-	-	14	14
	Aelwyd HA	11	16	24	18	211	280
	Total:	11	16	24	18	211	280