![Cyngor Sir y Fflint Flintshire County Council logo]

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 8th February 2023
Report Subject	Common Housing Register (Single Access Route to Housing – SARTH)
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) is a partnership between all the major providers of social housing in North Wales, covering the local authority areas of Conwy County Borough, Denbighshire and Flintshire.

The Council manages the housing register on behalf of Flintshire's Social Housing Partners (Flintshire County Council, Clwyd Alyn Housing, Wales and West Housing, Grwp Cynefin and Adra Housing Association) and a single Common Housing Register provides the list of all eligible applicants for social housing.

This service to applicants includes the housing triage assessment, housing solutions triage for those who present as homeless or at risk of homelessness and a wide range of housing options advice. The service also manages all the applicants accepted onto the Common Housing Register once a clearly evidenced housing need has been identified. Only those applicants with a housing need are accepted onto the Housing Register, but all applicants benefit from housing options advice.

Numbers of applicants accepted onto the Common Housing Register has grown significantly over the past three years. This is putting increasing pressure on the administrative burden and management of the register and is also leading to increased wait times for the limited amount of social housing that is available each year. The report will outline the increases in housing needs and the disparity with the availability of social housing which is not increasing at the same rate as the levels of housing needs that are prevalent within our communities.

A customer survey has been undertaken to gauge customer experience, satisfaction with service delivery and opportunities for service improvements. This is informing a service improvement plan and will inform the future direction of delivery of the service with a focus on making the service more efficient and user friendly.

RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	To receive the report and note the significant increases in housing needs across the county and the growing pressures in regard to social housing which is not in line with the supply of available homes locally
2	To note the customer feedback following survey work and the progress in relation to opportunities for service improvement and in particular digital transformation

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMON HOUSING REGISTER
1.01	**Background to the Single Access Route To Housing Partnership** SARTH is a partnership between all the major social landlords covering the local authority areas of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire. Conwy is not a stock holding authority but both Denbighshire and Flintshire have social housing available through their Council Housing Departments. In addition to the above Councils, the partnership also includes Housing Associations; Cartrefi Conwy, Clwyd Alyn, Grwp Cynefin, North Wales Housing, Wales and West Housing and Adra. The SARTH partnership has been in place for over 10 years and is recognised as a strong partnership by all partners involved and externally by Welsh Government and other housing sector and public sector peers. An Operational Panel has been in place from the outset to maximise the benefit of collaboration through the SARTH partnership. The panel is formed of operational managers from each partner organisation. The panel meets monthly, and its primary purpose is to ensure consistency in the application of the policy across the three counties and to review complaints and appeals from applicants. The panel has been instrumental in addressing wider topics than the register such as approaches to changes in legislation and issues arising from welfare reform, Covid and more recently elements of the introduction of the Renting Homes Act 2016. The panel considers lessons learnt from appeals, complaints and identifies policy challenges. Issues are escalated as required for consideration of the SARTH steering group which is the "board" for the partnership. The SARTH Steering Group includes senior officer representatives from all partner organisations across all three counties. The group meets on a regular (at least quarterly) basis to serve as an escalation point for strategic issues arising out of the Operational Panel. The group has further strengthened partnership arrangements between housing organisations across the region and agreed spend and pooled resources enable the partnership to have budget for IT developments, training and staff support where necessary and data monitoring and policy compliance issues.

		Conwy and Flintshire were early adopters of SARTH. Approximately 7 years ago Flintshire were successful in bidding to deliver the Housing Register service for Denbighshire Council and have successfully managed the register for both Flintshire and Denbighshire since. In the last 12months Denbighshire County Council have progressed a restructure of their housing and homeless services and have now made a strategic decision to bring the Housing Register function back in house. This will happen as of the 1st April 2023 and handover work is well progressed.
1.02		**The Common Allocations Policy**
		All partners work within the framework of a shared or Common Allocations Policy. This policy identifies the main principles of the eligibility and prioritisation of applicants seeking social housing, as well as the allocation of social housing across the counties of Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire. Applicants who approach the Council applying for social housing are assessed through a housing triage. Only those applicants with a housing need are accepted onto the Register, but all applicants will receive housing options advice. Where is it is possible to do so, housing help will be offered to overcome housing problems.
		The policy recognises that there is a high demand for social homes and too few vacant properties to meet demand. That was true when the policy was first developed, and now even more so, as evidenced in the charts within the housing needs data found within section 1.06 of this report. The numbers of applicants presenting with a wide range of housing needs is growing significantly and the availability of social housing during the same period has not increased at the same rate – indeed it has decreased significantly in recent years. Consequently, waiting times for rehousing are increasing as there are not enough homes to meet the growing demand.
1.03		**Housing Options Advice**
		The Housing Register Team provide the most useful, consistent, and accessible advice and information to everyone who approaches them looking for housing or presenting with a housing problem. It is intended that where possible fixing housing problems is the priority, to avoid the need for a move. Issues such as disrepair, financial problems, neighbour disputes may be addressed through advice and support and referrals to appropriately placed support services. This avoids disruption for households and reduces demand for the limited social housing that is available in the county.
		When a move is required, applicants are accepted onto the Common Housing Register and housing options advice is still offered, enabling customers to make the most informed choice about how to find a home to meet their needs. This advice covers a whole range of affordable housing options, including social housing options and locations, private rented accommodation, supported housing, extra care, home ownership and other affordable housing alternatives. The policy provides the following commitment:
		"All partners will allocate housing stock in a transparent, fair, consistent, and accessible way, which prioritises the people in our communities according to their housing needs and which meets our legal requirements.

	Working together in this way, partners can share strengths and good practice and place the customer at the heart of everything we do."
1.04	**Policy Development** The Common Allocation Policy is principally governed by The Housing Act 1996 and the Code of Guidance for Homelessness and Allocations 2016 and Welsh Statutory Instruments 2014 No. 2603 (w. 257) – Housing Wales – The Allocation of Homelessness (Eligibility) (Wales) Regulations 2014. Other relevant legislation includes: • Freedom of Information Act 2000 • Equalities Act 2010 • Social Care and Well Being Act 2014 • Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 • Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 • Renting Homes Wales Act 2016 In recent years and as a direct response to the Covid pandemic and significant pressures on homelessness services following the "no one left out" directive from Welsh Government, a variation to the Common Allocations Policy by way of a 50% nominations to homeless households was introduced. Take up of the 50% quota for homeless households has always been well below 50% and the table below provides analysis of the offers made to homeless households through the homeless nominations process. The policy variation is intended to free up the limited resource of emergency and temporary housing and ensure local authorities can still fulfil their statutory duties through the provision of "interim housing (s.68 Housing Wales Act 2014). The tables below outline lettings data over a 4-year period from April 2019 to December 2023. The additional category of SARTH Homeless Direct Lets reflects the opportunity to utilise up to 50% of the available social housing stock to ease pressures on homelessness services within the three counties.

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2019 and 31/03/2020

By Categroy Offer Code	Landlord	Number	Percentage
SARTH Banding Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	79	10.62%
	Flintshire CC	497	66.80%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	28	3.76%
	Wales And West Housing Association	67	9.01%
	Total	**671**	**90.19%**
SARTH Management Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	10	1.34%
	Flintshire CC	48	6.45%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	2	0.27%
	Wales And West Housing Association	13	1.75%
	Total	**73**	**9.81%**
Total		**744**	

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2020 and 31/03/2021

By Categroy Offer Code	Landlord	Number	Percentage
SARTH Banding Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	72	11.08%
	Flintshire CC	381	58.62%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	3	0.46%
	Wales And West Housing Association	34	5.23%
	Total	**490**	**75.38%**
SARTH Management Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	28	4.31%
	Flintshire CC	71	10.92%
	Wales And West Housing Association	13	2.00%
	Total	**112**	**17.23%**
SARTH Homeless Direct Let	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	11	1.69%
	Flintshire CC	22	3.38%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	1	0.15%
	Wales And West Housing Association	14	2.15%
	Total	**48**	**7.38%**
Total		**650**	

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2021 and 31/03/2022

By Categroy Offer Code	Landlord	Number	Percentage
SARTH Banding Offer	Adra	2	0.32%
	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	62	9.92%
	Flintshire CC	333	53.28%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	7	1.12%
	Wales And West Housing Association	61	9.76%
	Total	**465**	**74.40%**
SARTH Management Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	24	3.84%
	Flintshire CC	54	8.64%
	Wales And West Housing Association	17	2.72%
	Total	**95**	**15.20%**
SARTH Homeless Direct Let	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	15	2.40%
	Flintshire CC	39	6.24%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	1	0.16%
	Wales And West Housing Association	10	1.60%
	Total	**65**	**10.40%**
Total		**625**	

Allocations by Landlord and Category of Offer (Flintshire Register)

Tenancies Started Between 01/04/2022 and 31/12/2022

By Categroy Offer Code	Landlord	Number	Percentage
SARTH Banding Offer	Adra	4	1.00%
	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	23	5.74%
	Flintshire CC	198	49.38%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	3	0.75%
	Wales And West Housing Association	48	11.97%
	Total	**276**	**68.83%**
SARTH Management Offer	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	5	1.25%
	Flintshire CC	27	6.73%
	Wales And West Housing Association	17	4.24%
	Total	**49**	**12.22%**
SARTH Relationship Breakdown-Direct Let	Flintshire CC	3	0.75%
	Total	**3**	**0.75%**
SARTH Homeless Direct Let	Clwyd Alyn Housing Association	10	2.49%
	Flintshire CC	53	13.22%
	Grwp Cynefin Housing Association	1	0.25%
	Wales And West Housing Association	8	2.00%
	Total	**72**	**17.96%**
SARTH Hard To Let Property (Direct Let)	Flintshire CC	1	0.25%
	Total	**1**	**0.25%**
Total		**401**	

	Without this policy change, the Councils expenditure on emergency and temporary housing would be far greater. However whilst this variation in policy has assisted with the homeless pressures during and post Covid period, it is of significant concern that when looking at the needs of households who are homeless or imminently homeless, single people and couples under the age of 55 account for approximately 80% of the current homeless cohort in emergency or temporary housing offered by Flintshire County Council Homeless Team. This disconnect between supply of social housing and the local homeless cohort profile is what accounts for the lower than permitted take up on the 50% homeless quota. With more families and older people (over 55s) experiencing homelessness this year than in 2020/2021 and more again in 2021/2022 the take up on the homeless nominations has been greater as there are more family homes and older person homes available than 1 bed general needs properties each year and more household are experiencing homelessness .
1.05	**Future Policy Direction for Social Housing Allocations** There are significant changes with regards to the guidance relating to the allocation of social housing on the back of Welsh Governments ambitions to end homelessness and adopt a Rapid Rehousing approach. As outlined in previous reports to Members in late 2022, the principles of Rapid Rehousing are as much about the prevention of homelessness through early intervention as it is about rehousing people who experience homeless. Welsh Government have supported the prevention agenda through significant investment in the Housing Support Grant (HSG) encouraging Councils and partners to support proactive approaches to ending homelessness. Whilst resources such as HSG are important, so are changes to homeless legislation (currently the Housing Wales Act 2014) and housing law through the introduction of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, with both pieces of legislation strongly supporting the homeless prevention agenda. Reforms and amended guidance on the allocation of social housing will also likely be required. It is expected that the future changes to allocations guidance may further strengthen the links between homelessness and social housing as a significant tool within the prevention and relief of homelessness. Whilst many positive things have been achieved through the increased access to social housing for people who have exited homelessness by securing social housing, there have been some challenges: • Lack of supply of the right types of homes in the right places • Refusals of offers from those who had been lined up to benefit • Issues of anti-social behaviour in some communities • Challenges around tenancy sustainment • Concerns over risk of increasing homeless presentation as a gateway to social housing

		• Complaints from other residents who experience even longer waiting times for social housing
		Whilst not all of these issues have been significant concerns within Flintshire, the SARTH partnership is eager to review and reflect upon what has been achieved in recent years, but also to understand the impact so where needed lessons can be learnt, and successes built upon. Consideration is being given to engaging in a piece of research to evaluate the 50% homeless nominations process and to use this evidence to inform future policy direction both local, regionally and nationally.

Discussions with Welsh Government to consider this matter further are scheduled in the coming months and will be fed back to Chief Officers Team and Members as well as Boards of housing partners. |
| 1.06 | | **Social Housing Need**
Whilst some may refer to the numbers on the housing register as "demand" data, it is important to differentiate between demand and need. All applicants accessing the Common Housing Register have clearly evidenced housing needs. They either have no current settled housing due to homelessness or risks of homelessness or their existing housing is unsuitable. This is clearly different to wanting a move so housing need is a more appropriate title as opposed to demand.

The numbers on the social housing register are increasing and as such waiting times for properties are becoming longer. There were 1,816 households on the Common Housing Register at the end of Q1 in the 2020/2021 period. As evidenced in the chart below demand has grown significantly in the following years and the current number of eligible households on the Common Housing Register at the end of Q3 2022/2023 was 2,386.


Numbers on Common Housing Register |
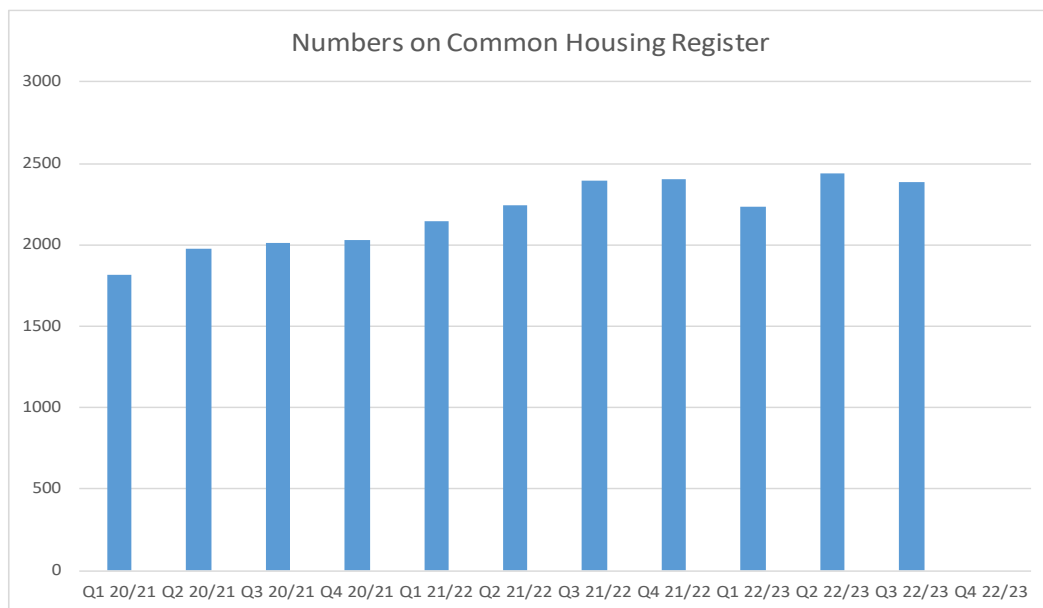
The chart below shows the breakdown of all the eligible applicants on the register by band as the end of Q3 of 2022/2023 reporting period (31st December 2022).

REGISTER BREAKDOWN	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS
BAND 1	143
BAND 2	1765
BAND 3	5
BAND 4	504
TOTAL	**2387**

1.07	**Social Housing Supply** When looking at the supply of social housing across all social housing providers operating in Flintshire it is noted there has been a significant slowdown following Covid in the numbers of available homes. This downward trend of supply alongside the upward trend in housing need as evidenced by the numbers of applicants accepted on the social housing register is a significant concern. This is not unique to Flintshire.

All Social Housing Lettings
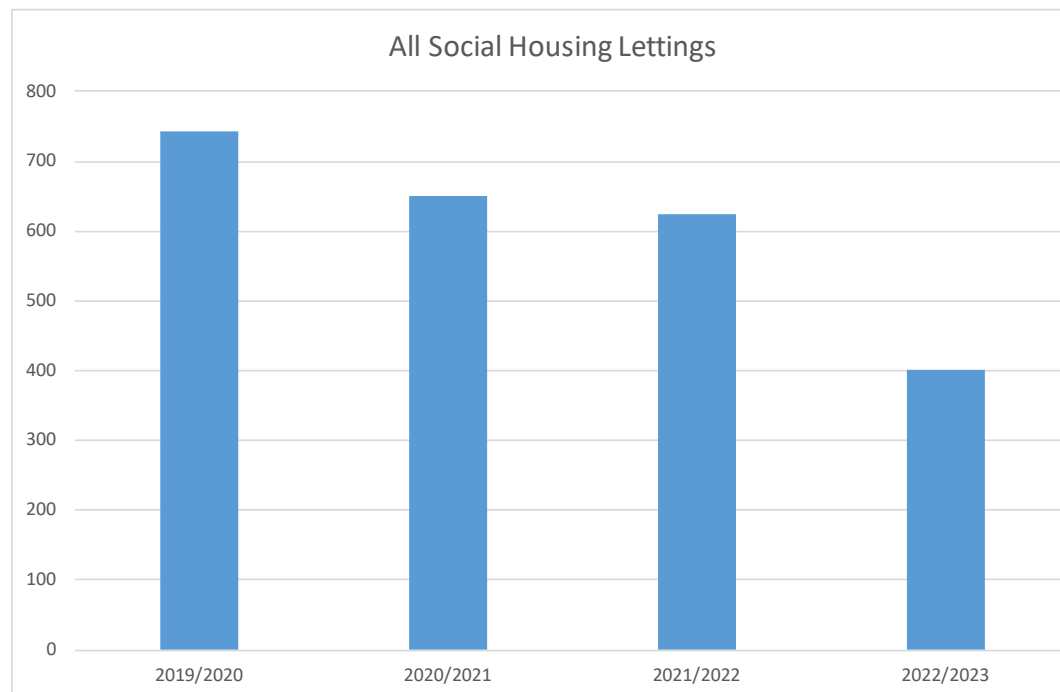
1.08	**Specialist Housing Needs** The vast majority of applicants' housing need will be met from the available housing stock, although not quickly. However, some applicant households require properties to meet needs arising from disability and properties need to accommodate wheelchairs, bed hoists, stair lifts and accessible bathing rooms. Such housing is in particularly short supply within the social housing stock and these requirements would not necessarily be met within an acceptable timescale or within existing stock without some further intervention.

In Flintshire presently, the current specialist housing register has 37 applicants awaiting significantly adapted properties and the applicant's priority banding is detailed below:

Band 1 – 20   Band 2 – 16
Band 3 – 0   Band 4 - 1

A significant lack of larger homes (5 bedrooms plus) is also noted across Flintshire. There are currently 36 applications on the Common Housing Register for families requiring larger properties (5 bedrooms plus). This includes one family with a need for 9 bedrooms. Of these, the applicants can be broken down into the following bands:

Band 1 – 1   Band 2 – 26
Band 3 – 0   Band 4 – 9.

1.09	**Specialist Housing Needs Supply**
	Over the last 2 years and 9 months there have been a total of 38 households with significant specialist housing requirements (major adaptations) who have benefited from the support of the Specialist Housing process.
	April 2020 – March 21 – 17 April 2021 – March 22 – 11 April 2022 – March 23 – 10
	Specialist housing needs are met through a range of significant adaptations to existing homes, purchase of properties and further investment to bring these homes to the standards and specifications required for disabled household members, or through the creation of purpose built new build homes funded through the Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme.
	Sourcing suitable accommodation for applicants with specialist needs and identifying properties that are suitable for complex adaptation work within our housing stock is difficult and budget constraints makes this even more challenging as many of our existing homes that become available each year are not suitable for major adaptations
	The desire to build more specialist and larger homes is therefore appropriately recorded as a desired outcome within the Councils Housing Prospectus, and both the Council and Housing Association partners intend to explore solutions to adapt or extend existing social housing to meet these needs.

2.00	**RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**
2.01	Detailed below are the cost implications associated with the delivery of Common Housing Register, housing advice services and meeting housing needs in Flintshire:

Revenue: The cost of delivering Flintshire's Common Housing Register are in the region of £150,000 per year with the vast majority of costs relating to staff in Customer Services and Housing Register Team.

- 50% of the cost is apportioned to the Council Fund as the local authority has a statutory duty to hold a register.

- 50% is apportioned to Housing Partners based on their stock levels on an equitable split based on the number of homes they have in the County. Example of cost share for 2022/2023 is detailed below:

Partners Split 22/23	Stock Profile	% Split	Costing
Flintshire Council Fund	---	50%	£74,961.25
Housing Partners Contributions	9927	50%	£74,961.25
Total			£149,922.50

Breakdown of costs for Housing Partners 50%

Flintshire Housing Dept	7307	73.61%	£55,176.98
Clwyd Alyn	1583	15.95%	£11,953.63
Wales & West	893	9.00%	£6,743.27
Grwp Cynefin	136	1.37%	£1,026.97
Adra	8	0.08%	£60.41
Total Housing Partners	**9927**	**100%**	**£74,961.25**

Capital: Whilst administering the Common Housing Register is a revenue cost, there are implications for Capital expenditure if we are to meet the housing needs of the people of Flintshire. Housing needs data as identified through the Common Housing Register informs the build programmes of both Flintshire Council and our Housing Partners. The Social Housing Grant (SHG) is the vehicle for build programmes and for purchase options along with Landlord Capital contributions when developing new build schemes or for any one-off purchases linked to the "Specialist Housing Needs" referenced in Section 1.08 of this report. Flintshire's Housing Prospectus which has been approved by Council and shared with our Housing Partners focusses current and future developments around the increased supply of social housing and specific areas of unmet or growing needs.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	The following risks and mitigations have been identified by way of control measures:

Risk: Failure to meet the needs of applicants for social housing as housing need increases and availability of social housing reduces resulting in excessive waiting times for social housing and possible impact on levels of homelessness and other forms of housing hardships.

- **Mitigation:** Build more social housing at scale and pace in line with current and projected demand

- **Mitigation:** Continue to support people to explore all of their housing options including renting privately, supported housing, as well as other affordable housing products such as low cost home ownership, shared equity housing and intermediate rentals

Risk: Emergency housing costs continue to increase at a greater rate due to more households becoming homeless at great cost to the local authority through significant revenue expenditure on the Council fund.

		• **Mitigation:** Sustain the 50% nominations approach as we transition to the Rapid Rehousing model longer term as outlined in the Councils Rapid Rehousing Transition Action Plan. • **Mitigation:** Successfully deliver on the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and ensure the prevention of homelessness is a shared priority across the public sector • **Mitigation:** Build more homes that meet the needs of the homeless cohort such as 1 bed general needs housing, of which there is a significant shortage. • **Mitigation:** Support the Sheltered Housing Review process and share learnings with Housing Partners to consider the long term suitability of some low demand older persons housing to better meet the wants and the needs of older people and explore opportunities to address disparities in the local housing supply. • **Mitigation:** Build more specialist housing to avoid those with significant and complex housing needs becoming homeless **Risk:** Satisfaction levels for those residents accessing the Housing Register services drops due to a failure to respond to opportunities to modernise service delivery and embrace elements of digital self-service. • **Mitigation:** Continue to develop online services and self-help tools to enable people to access more modern and dynamic Housing Register service with a full range of housing options advice.

| 3.02 | **Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact** |||

	Long-term	Positive – Increase supply of high quality sustainable homes and make best use of the housing stock
	Prevention	Prevention - Preventing homelessness and housing hardships through positive interventions that relieve pressures on an already strained housing market
	Integration	Positive – Increased integration between services and partner organisations
	Collaboration	Positive – Increased collaboration between services, partner organisations and service users
	Involvement	Positive – Service user involvement to help shape effective housing and services so that access to homes and housing advice and support is timely and person centred

3.03	**Well-being Goals Impact**	
	Prosperous Wales	Positive – Jobs will be created to deliver housing on a greater scale within Flintshire.
	Resilient Wales	Positive – Creating services and neighbourhoods that are prevention focused resilient communities
	Healthier Wales	Positive – Reduction in health inequalities associated with homelessness and poor housing conditions
	More equal Wales	Positive – Services are delivered in a way that are inclusive for all.
	Cohesive Wales	Positive – Creating services and neighbourhoods that are prevention focused and creating strong cohesive communities
	Vibrant Wales	No impact
	Globally responsible Wales	No impact

4.00	**CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT**
4.01	**Customer Survey Baseline Results 2021/2022** Although lots of data is gathered in relations to housing needs associated with the administration of the Housing Register, there has never been any significant engagement around the quality-of-service delivery or customer insight and applicant feedback sought with view to improving service delivery. In the reporting year 2021/2022 a baseline survey was undertaken with a small sample of applicants from across the Flintshire and Denbighshire areas to gauge the customer experience and satisfaction levels for the Housing Register Service. Whilst this provided a baseline for a "Customer Satisfaction Measure" for tracking in future years through follow up surveys, it was equally important to understand what works well and what needs improving for people who are accessing the Housing Register service. Overview of the customer satisfaction survey 2021/2022 • Low levels of satisfaction with the Register Overall o 32% Satisfied with Register Service Overall • Desire to access more services online

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	○ Applicants want to be able to access their housing application information in a similar manner to which they access online banking - Applicants don't like long waiting times for social housing ○ Lack of ongoing contact and would like live data for how their application is progressing - Some applicants don't want advice about housing options and just want access to social housing ○ Housing partners cannot meet the needs of all applicants, so housing options advice is important.
4.02	**Customer Survey Results 2022/2023** The latest set of customer satisfaction and insight data from 2022/2023 survey is shown below. 300 applicants were approached and invited to take part in the survey. 64 responses were received. Along with demographic data of gender, age household type, one of the first questions asked of the respondents was "how did you find out about the Housing Register". Respondents were asked to rate the standard of service when they first approaching the Housing Register for housing advice and help.
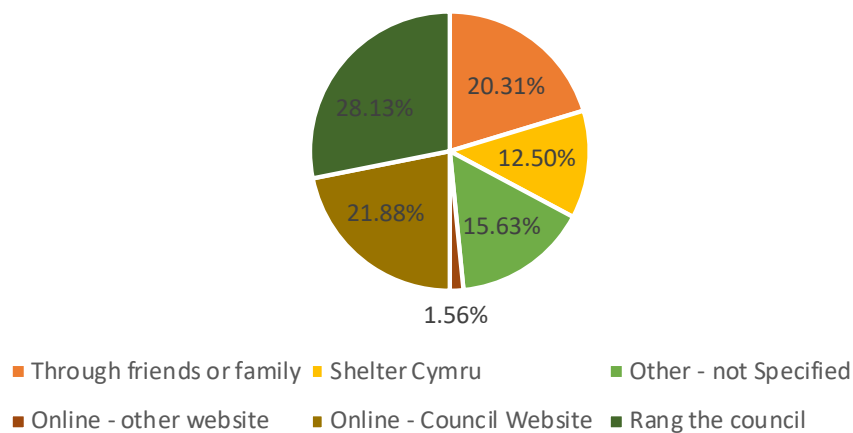
## How would you rate the service when you first applied?
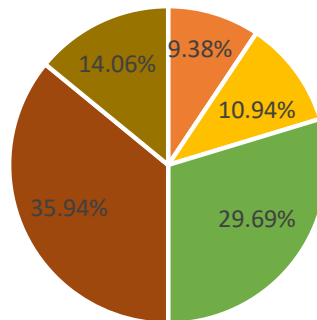
■ Very poor	■ Poor	■ Satisfactory	■ Good	■ Excellent

When first approaching the Housing Register Service, 50% of applicants stated the service received was Excellent or Good. It is however noted in the following table that satisfaction drops when later asked to rate the "Overall satisfaction with the Housing Register Service" where the response of Excellent or Good drops to 37.10%. This likely accounts for the fact that:

1) Residents are experiencing increased waiting times for social housing which creates general dissatisfaction with the services and assistance offered

2) That the changes being implemented to enable more digital access are yet to be fully rolled out.

Overall satisfaction with the Housing Register Service?
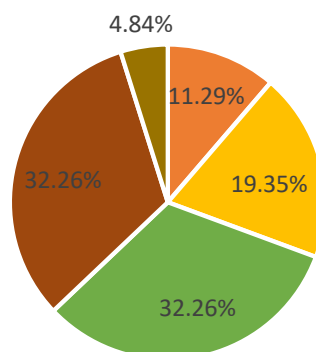
■ Very poor	■ Poor	■ Satisfactory	■ Good	■ Excellent

Although there was lots of feedback in the initial survey about the desire to access Housing Register Services digitally it is noted in the second survey applicants were split as to a preference for digital or telephone based

services. This reflects the need for us to be mindful of offering a range of communication channels for applicants to access.

### Would you prefer to access Housing Register via phone or online?
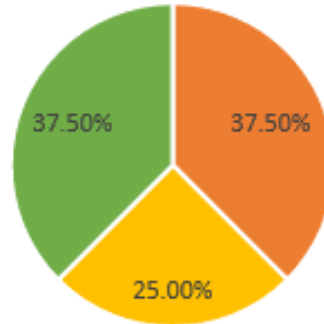
- Prefer to apply online
- Prefer a telephone appointment
- Have no preference

Although not offered as a preference for communication channels, few if any applicants ever request their contact to be in person but this offer is available through our Flintshire Connects Offices.

Residents were asked to identify what services or functions they would like to access digitally. Applicants could provide multiple choice responses to this question to capture all the functions they would like to access online.

What services would you like to be linked to the Housing Register online?
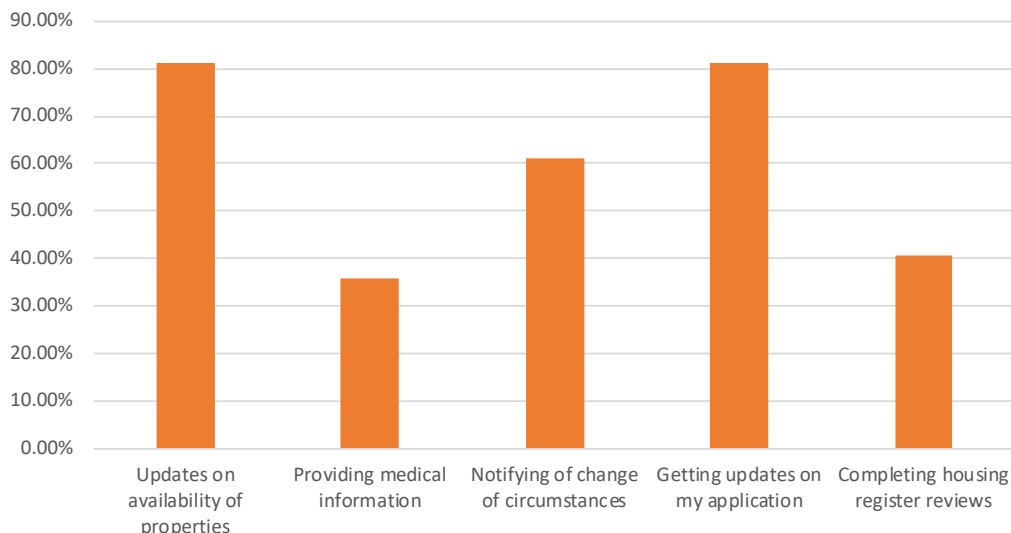
The survey will be routinely delivered each year to track progression customer's satisfaction and additional questions will be introduced to monitor the impact and satisfaction with some of the digital enhancements that will be implemented over the next 12months.

Significant improvements have already been made to online content for housing services through the creation of a "Housing Hub" on the Councils Website. This includes a Social Housing Mapping tool is now available on the Housing Hub which helps people identify the areas of the county where the greatest amount of social housing is available and helps them make informed decisions about their choices for their housing application area preferences.

A Housing Waiting List Calculator is also soon to be launched to enable people to see what the likely waiting times are for social housing in certain areas of the county based on priority banding, application registration date, property requirements and local supply figures for previous years

Both of these enhancements to digital access are referenced as positive practice in a report by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales when seeking to promote awareness of social housing supply challenges, thus enabling people to make more informed choices about their housing options, particularly for those people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Whilst it is always acknowledged that applicants may have specific reasons for only wanting to be rehoused in certain areas and officers promote choice and control when offering housing options advice, it should be noted that those applicants who are flexible with their area choices will in many cases be rehoused sooner.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1: Digital Improvement Action Plan

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Public Services Ombudsman for Wales - Own initiative investigation into the homelessness review process in Wales (October 2021) https://www.ombudsman.wales/blog/2021/10/06/ombudsman-publishes-his-first-ever-own-initiative-investigation-into-the-homelessness-review-process-in-wales-finding-evidence-of-systemic-maladministration-by-local-authorities/

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	**Contact Officer:** Martin Cooil – Housing & Prevention Service Manager **Telephone:** 07880 423234 **E-mail:** martin.cooil@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	**GLOSSARY OF TERMS**
8.01	**Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH) –** the project the enabled the development of the Common Allocations Policy and the label for the Housing Options and Housing Register Partnership.
	Housing Triage – the initial discussion with residents about their circumstances and their housing needs.
	Housing Solutions Triage – the initial discussion with residents about their circumstances and their housing needs where homelessness or a risk of homelessness is identified.
	Common Allocations Policy – the shared policy that Local Authority and Housing Partners have signed up to in regards to the eligibility and prioritisation of housing applications for social housing in Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire.
	Rapid Rehousing - an internationally recognised approach which ensures that anyone experiencing homelessness can move into a settled home as quickly as possible, rather than staying in temporary accommodation for long periods of time.
	Housing Waiting List Calculator – an online resource that enables applicants to receive live data to project how long they may be waiting for social housing as a method of managing expectations and informing their housing options choices.
	Flintshire's Housing Prospectus – the strategic document that clearly highlights the housing needs and aspirations of the local authority in regards to its new build housing programme linked to the Social Housing Grant.