

# Reducing the number of people 'falling out' of the Housing Wales Act 2014: Ceredigion

Welsh Oak Foundation funded Local Authority (LA) project to support the identification and development of local solutions to reduce the number of people 'falling out' of the Housing Wales Act (HWA) 2014

Crisis UK  
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## Introduction and background to the project

Previous Oak Foundation funded research highlighted that there was considerable variance between LAs in Wales as to the percentage of households who “fell out” of the statutory homelessness system in Wales.

Within the overall caseloads of people seen (pre-project, 2019), the fall out rates ranged from 8% to 29%, with an average of 15.5% across the 22 LAs in Wales<sup>1</sup>. However, there was not one single issue or group of issues which explained the variation.

The Oak Foundation wanted to work with a small number of Welsh LAs to:

- Explore and understand at a local level the unique factors, issues and processes, which were leading to people falling out of the HWA and
- Develop realistic action plans, to test service changes which were tailored to the local context, with an aim to reduce the percentage of people falling out of the HWA, within each LA area.

From February 2021 until March 2023, Crisis, funded by the Oak Foundation, worked with three Welsh LAs; Rhondda Cynon Taff, Ceredigion and Caerphilly, to consider how services could be redesigned to reduce the number of customers falling out of the statutory housing system within S66 (prevention) and S73 (relief) of the HWA 2014.

We are using the term ‘fall out’ to describe the combined group of people who are recorded as:

- Assistance refused
- Non co-operation
- Application withdrawn
- Application withdrawn due to loss of contact
- Other reasons

The project was devised and commissioned pre Covid-19, and the ‘fall out’ considered spanned pre and post pandemic years, which were both very different landscapes. During this time, the Welsh Government's response to provide everyone in need with accommodation was actioned and additional legislative changes were also brought in during the lifetime of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness/householdsforwhichassistancehasbeenprovided-by-outcome-householdtype>

## Main aims of the project

- Increase successful prevention and relief outcomes for people currently falling out of the statutory homelessness system in Wales, and those who may do so in the future; helping to eliminate repeat homelessness and its associated costs.
- Work through specific factors that contribute to people falling out, including wider service improvements and development support in an open, collaborative environment.
- Gain insight from service users who will share their experiences as part of the project.

## Key Assumptions, Risks, and Dependencies at commencement of project

- Covid 19 and the impact of 'Everyone In' would affect the figures relating to 'fall out' for the period since March 2020.
- Covid 19 may affect the delivery of the project as onsite workshops and other activities such as audits etc. may have to be carried out remotely.
- Covid 19 may affect the number of staff available to participate in the project both from the local authority and Crisis.
- Covid 19 and the difficulty of reaching people who have 'fallen out' of the system may affect the number of service users available to contribute and become involved in the project.
- Considerations also needed to ensure that the solutions provided will be suitable in the post-pandemic environment.

## Project management approach

- Allow projects to develop throughout their lifecycle.
- Work iteratively and focus on finding the best solution to fit the unique circumstances for the LA area.
- Collaboration was at the heart of the work, and we prioritised clear and continuous communication through the project's lifespan.
- Share learning and encourage others to use any project materials made available through the Crisis website.
- The project required both strategic and front-line delivery staff involvement to ensure that we had all the relevant knowledge available from which the project could benefit.
- We understood the need for the project to be adaptable and flexible, to fit around each department's existing commitments and we tried to break the work up into small manageable increments.

- As the project was being delivered during the pandemic, we worked in an agile way. Using tools, digital workspaces and collaborative platforms where documents could be remotely shared and worked on together.

## Project detail

Each LA received free, targeted support from Crisis, who gathered evidence to gain insight into the current and past rates of “fall out” from the statutory homelessness process.

The knowledge gained from this process informed workshops and other collaborative processes where idea transfer, problem solving, and solution development took place.

Once the project moved into the solution development phase, more detailed planning and actions took place.

Quick wins and design opportunities were developed for each LA in the form of an action plan. Crisis helped the project team to develop a series of concepts and prototype documents for each of the priority areas that the LAs wanted to focus on.

Following the completion of the project, Crisis continued to be involved in monitoring progress against the action plans, collecting data regarding fall out rates, evaluating the effectiveness of solutions implemented and collating additional feedback from the project teams.

A range of meetings took place throughout the project including regular catch ups with the team leads, regular scheduled meetings with the whole project team, and quarterly strategic meetings with LA leads. The Oak Foundation also led a steering group meeting approximately every six weeks, where progress reports were submitted.

Shelter Cymru and the Take Notice project were commissioned to conduct peer support interviews with LA customers who had their duty ended under one of the five fall out categories detailed above. However, for a range of reasons direct peer to peer research was unable to take place, Shelter Cymru compiled a report from their own ‘Sentinel’ database of previous casework clients, identifying households that would have been in scope for the project<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Copy of the Shelter Cymru report sent alongside this report to Ceredigion

## Summary of key reasons for fall-out identified by the project work

- Accommodation did not always meet needs – some temporary accommodation had particularly high fall-out rates - little evidence of suitability checks even when clear evidence of customer circumstances on files e.g. Health, family connections, schools etc. Supply issues and lack of suitable move-on accommodation identified in all areas causing lengthy stays in sometimes unsuitable temporary or supported accommodation.
- Limited time to conduct quality casework links to fall-out identified (small sample studied) - a large proportion of past fallouts showed poor scores across casework in an audit. No evidence of casework standards to adhere to. Likely high caseload implications.
- Reasonable steps by Council lacking in casework – few or generic steps identified could contribute to potential breakdown in relationship between customer and council together with use of "support worker" model in some areas, leading to council having little direct contact with customer.
- Progressing customers along the homelessness journey effectively could be improved – much better engagement and progression seen in initial phases of the process. Some cases showed little or no contact following assessment to close of file with little evidence of a selection of contact methods being used.
- Letters and communications with customers were lengthy and confusing. In some cases, communications with partners organisations could be strengthened to provide a stronger "safety net" for customers.

## Comparative findings to the [Public Services Ombudsman for Wales -Homelessness Reviewed: an open door to positive change report 2021:](#)

- Letters and PHPs too generic, not personalised enough, too technical and difficult to understand
- Guidance around classification of case closure outcomes not clear
- No system in place to inform officers how frequently they should contact customers during casework or when closing files – casework standards
- Could have wider range and improve use of tech to communicate with customers – more streamlined customer contact journey
- Lack of simple, straightforward information available for customers and partners – websites out of date – could increase and improve self-help opportunities.

## Ceredigion's planned actions

The results of the discovery phase, development of potential solutions and actions taken for Ceredigion are documented in this review.

The onboarding work with Ceredigion commenced in March 2021, and as the project commenced during the pandemic, all initial meetings and workshops were carried out remotely.<sup>3</sup>

The design opportunities drawn from the workshops at the discovery phase were:

### Quick Wins

1. How might we improve access and availability of PRS?
2. How might we use our TA as a platform for positive, sustainable outcomes?
3. How might we increase proactive engagement between client and caseworker?
4. Introduce case management standards / Casework standards and customer contact staff training
5. Update procedure on ending duty categories
6. provide continuity and clarity regarding support for customers?
7. How might we achieve better outcomes for over 25s
8. How might we proactively prevent homelessness?
9. Providers service charge and former tenant arrears policies
10. How may we improve access to MH substance support and social care services

Below, we describe each design opportunity in turn, how it was implemented, and staff reflections on what difference it made.

When there has been duplication or cross-over of concepts, the same concept features under different design opportunities.

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<sup>3</sup> Ceredigion project report has been sent to Ceredigion alongside this report and contains more detailed information of the project work undertaken with Ceredigion, which covers the following areas: Approach and methodology, Discovery goals and activities, Insights gained, Quick wins and design opportunities, Concepts and prototypes, Action plan, Evaluation and monitoring and National Policy implications.

**Quick wins**

Quick wins were identified as tasks that teams could try to complete within the first eight weeks of the project with some effort, design, and consultation.

Concepts developed under this design opportunity	
Make PHPs more customer friendly	Explore different way of contacting customers
Increase awareness of the financial and debt support that is availability both internally and externally	Review the tech used and communication methods (Design Opportunity 3)
Updating customers preferred methods of contact	All case notes are recorded on the system
Reintroduce team meetings	

Progress highlights
<p>The actions taken here were taking steps towards improving customer relationships, with their caseworker. Increasing means of communication, so that it is flexible, and customer led.</p> <p>By reinstating team meetings and providing space for reflection, communication, knowledge, information sharing, and peer support would be increased, benefiting staff wellbeing, service delivery, and retention.</p> <p>It was hoped that they could speed up the processing of information and document sharing and equip teams with a rounded knowledge of all the financial support services available in Ceredigion, alongside creating meaningful plans with customers. This in turn would mean that customers would be able to make more informed choices and help keep customers in the system, making opportunities for intervention and patterns of fall-out more identifiable.</p>

Staff reflections
<p>In the end-of-project survey, one staff member stated that they <i>'were not sure whether once this was all in place it would make much difference to fallout rates'</i>.</p>

**Design opportunity 1:**

How might we improve access and availability of PRS?



Concepts developed under this design opportunity	
Review and evaluate effectiveness of current PRS services	Look at provision of HMOs across the region
Review and renew PRS landlord offer	Further develop PSL scheme (Design Opportunity 2)
Re-establish landlord forums	

Progress highlights
<p>Improving access to PRS and strengthening existing links will help to provide more move on accommodation, allowing more customer choice and helping to move people through the system more quickly, helping to reduce numbers who leave the system early through fall out.</p> <p>Few positive outcomes could be reported by the end of the project, partly due to capacity, but also because Ceredigion face particular challenges, being a rural and coastal area of Wales that is popular with tourists. However, by the end of the project progress was being made on the actions agreed and steps were being taken to try to increase access to the PRS for customers.</p> <p>By the end of the project Ceredigion had recruited a PRS Officer and they had reviewed their package of landlord support, introduced a Rent Guarantee scheme, signed up the WG Leasing scheme and Empty Property scheme. Although relatively few landlords had signed up or leased their properties, Ceredigion were hopeful of increased recruitment as they were in the process of setting up a landlord steering group and getting landlords forums back up and running and the groundwork had been laid for the expansion of the leasing scheme, with the LA finance team overseeing rents and the legal team dealing with tenancy matters.</p>

Staff reflections
<p>During the initial six months of the project staff responses regarding the PRS included:</p> <p><i>'I have only been in the role for one month, but what I have noticed is that there is no affordable PRS for people.'</i></p> <p>Other comments made during this period were:</p> <p><i>'Unfortunately [I] haven't noticed any improvements in access to PRS, although some letting agents have stopped insisting on six months' rent in advance.'</i></p>

*'PRs liaison officer has made limited progress with regard to improving access to PRS during that time (summer months spent on settling in and assisting TA officer'.*

Mid project survey responses included:

*'Had one client accepted in one of the leasing schemes which was a good outcome but there is definitely a lack of private lets within Ceredigion', saying that they 'would like to add there is a lack of social housing also'.*

*'The PRS access improvement had potential to make a big difference too, once the schemes were working more effectively and if the housing market improves'.*

In the end-of-project survey, one staff member doubted that *'the leasing scheme would do much for reducing fallout while unit numbers continued to be so low and without move-on options to create voids',* and that *'the leasing scheme was under-promoted and under-resourced and so not meeting its potential'.*

The Team Lead's final report was more optimistic, with further properties joining the leasing scheme on the horizon, the PRS Officer managing properties, the Finance team overseeing rents and the Legal team managing tenancy paperwork. The Team Lead hoped that the landlord engagement work lined up after the project would help reach the target of sixty-three properties within five years.

## Design opportunity 2 and 9:

How might we use TA as a platform for positive, sustainable outcomes?

Providers service charge and former tenant arrears policies.

Concepts developed under this design opportunity	
Review, increase provision, locations, type of TA and support provided	Consider Rapid Rehousing model - assessment hub, multi agency etc.
Standardise enforcement processes across the different providers	Regular updates from TA providers
Specialist TA for people experiencing MH issues / Improve links with NHS	Review of TA is in the 5 yr strategy and will be in the rapid rehousing plan
Ensure full needs assessments are carried out with customers whilst in TA and at an early stage	Review providers service charge and former tenant's arrears policies
Progress highlights	
<p>It was hoped that improving the provision of TA supported housing customers would have more choice, promote a culture of sustainability, and assist in positive outcomes and less fall out from TA.</p> <p>To reduce fall out rates from TA an early aim of the project was to ensure that every client accessing temporary accommodation had an assessment and access to support at the earliest opportunity. Good progress was made against this action with a new Gateway system being developed and embedded across Housing and with partners agencies.</p> <p>A really positive action that took place to address the backlog in temporary accommodation was negotiating with housing providers to increase allocations for people experiencing homelessness. Temporary changes were made to allocations policies to allow first choice of social housing to those with a homeless duty, which increased allocations from just over 20% to 60%.</p> <p>By the end of the project an agreement was put in place to clear all TA residents' arrears and a new procedure for evictions due to arrears was being implemented. This included more intensive support work with residents, and a new early detection and warning system was introduced across all providers. However, the impact of this change on fallout rates was too late in the project to be detected.</p>	

The team were also collaborating with the Mental Wellbeing team and Health on the potential development of two flats where people with low level mental health needs could also receive support.

### Staff reflections

In the early stages of the project, staff reported that they had *'not observed any improvement in communication and assistance from support providers, and if the SP [support] side of things was working better this may have a greater impact on fallout rates'*.

The Team Lead reported that officers were routinely ensuring TA occupiers are allocated appropriate support workers via Gateway, however one respondent said that *'when referrals were happening, they were not helping move-on from TA because of the limited availability of private rented or social properties'*.

One staff member, giving context about observing a slight reduction in fallout rates mid project said that:

*'I feel that I have not had as many clients with chaotic lifestyles coming through to me personally and in my opinion these are the clients that do fallout in general. Whether because they are already in temporary accommodation and are managing to engage with support provided - all persons accessing TA are assigned a housing support worker.'*

In relation to the standardisation of enforcement and evictions procedures across all housing providers one survey respondent, one respondent commented:

*'New process for evicting people at 8 weeks of arrears is definitely having an impact on the income we are collecting, i.e. more persons are paying/fulfilling responsibilities in comparison with our pandemic relaxed stance. However some people will be evicted for non-compliance'*.

The introduction of temporary changes to allocations policies by housing providers was seen as a positive change and by the end of the project, one staff member believed that *'providers increasing allocations for people experiencing homelessness could make a positive difference for reducing fallout rates'*.

### Design opportunity 3:

How might we increase proactive engagement between client and caseworker?

**Concepts developed under this design opportunity**

Review officer caseloads	Review officer specialisms
Manage expectations and improve communication with partners	Review ways customers contact service

**Progress highlights**

It was hoped that by improving relationships with customers, it would help to build a strong conduit for information sharing and help to stop customers leaving the system with a falling out outcome.

A formal providers message was sent out, both internally and externally, and communications and a call to action was sent out regarding capacity and to reinvigorate partnership working.

From commencement of the project to the beginning of the monitoring period, officer caseloads had doubled. The following steps have been taken to mitigate this and reduce caseloads. Two new Housing Officers and a PRS Officer were recruited, and there was also a shift from officers having case specialisms, so that each application is processed by a single officer throughout all duties owed. The rationale was that, from a customer and staff perspective, it would enable decisions to be made more quickly, and would provide more continuity for the client, and a more efficient service due to officers developing better relationships and gathering relevant information throughout.

Towards the end of the monitoring period staff were reporting that there had been a reduction on caseload held by officers.

**Staff reflections**

In one of the initial staff surveys, a respondent commented that *'there was a high caseload per officer, and that time spent liaising with PRS providers was taking up a lot of their time'*. This was corroborated by the team leader's narrative commentary, reporting that cases had doubled within the quarter, so proactive work to reduce caseloads was extremely difficult.

New Housing Officers started mid project as well as a new PRS liaison officer and staff began reporting that there had been a reduction on caseload held by officers.

The Team Lead also reported that Housing Officers had now successfully shifted to undertaking all steps through to full duty for each application on their caseload. Staff confirmed in the survey that *'being able to gather further information at the beginning of the case makes it easier when the case gets to the full duty'*.

With regard to increase in team members, and structure, survey respondents said, *'the restructure and having additional staff will make a difference long term'*; *'extra staff... has enabled a quicker response'*. and that *'there had been some reduction in the number of cases held by officers after the summer months.'*

### Design opportunity 4 and 5:

How might we introduce case management standards / Casework standards and customer contact staff training?

How might we update procedure on ending duty categories?

Concepts developed under this design opportunity	
Enable officers to access any national training that is developed and delivered	Review and redraft decision letters to make more person centred and easier to read
Develop case management standards	

Progress highlights
<p>It was hoped that by improving the customer caseworker relationship, and customer experience, it would make patterns of fall-out more identifiable and enable the service to be built more successfully around customer need.</p> <p>By the end of the project period, a standardised process for initial approaches from clients, client assessment, and referrals had been agreed.</p> <p>The development of case management standards was programmed in, two workshops took place, and actions were added to team and staff annual objectives. By the end of the project new process had been agreed but not formally implemented.</p> <p>Update procedures on ending duty categories was discussed alongside the casework standards review to try to ensure that the correct reasons for duty ending were applied to make the evaluation of the reasons for fall out more accurate and consistent.</p> <p>Staff believed that creating a consistent set of standards for housing officers to follow would mean clients get a consistent service.</p>

Staff reflections
<p>Initially, a respondent to one of the staff surveys said that '<i>while there was no observable change in fallout yet, they believed it would make a positive impact to reducing fallout for members in the upcoming quarters</i>'.</p>

Another respondent felt that *'the finalising of the case management standards will benefit the team and clients because we will all be working to the same standards and clients will receive the same standards from all housing officers'*.

However another member of staff in response to the end-of-project survey, stated that they were *'not sure whether once this was all in place it would make much difference to fallout rates'*.



### Design opportunity 6:

How might we provide continuity and clarity regarding support for customers?

Concepts developed under this design opportunity	
Evaluating local services	Co-location of services
Providers, customer support and commissioning	In-house financial inclusion debt workers
Community and multi-agency access	

### Progress highlights

This action was about ensuring that people can access appropriate timely support, and that organisations and providers are commissioned or funded to provide the support that is needed. Providing a service that increases positive, informative, contact and support in a range of different ways will build trust, positive relationships, and help to reduce the number of people leaving the system with a "fall out" outcome.

During the monitoring and evaluation period of the project, Ceredigion's Housing Support Needs Assessment was completed and returned to WG. Ceredigion were going to review HSG partnership contracts in terms of local need and to ensure service provision aligned with their Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan. Services were going to be incrementally retendered as appropriate.

A peer support pilot project had been delivered to partners by MIND, supporting local organisations to facilitate peer to peer support within their individual settings.

The LA offices had not reopened to the public during the project. Staff were still working remotely, although one to one meetings could be arranged when needed. Due to this there was no co-location of other services taking place, but there was a public consultation in progress regarding the future use of different LA buildings and co-location, surgeries, and / or providing HSG services in different locations were all being considered.

There was a recognition of the need for a financial inclusion officer, however it was decided that it would be a wider LA service rather a post that would be based withing Housing.

### Staff reflections

*A respondent to one of the staff surveys said that 'Our understanding of support services and mechanism for accessing has improved and more people are receiving housing support. Our prevention and relief numbers have also increased in the year. However there are more presentations than ever.'*

### Design opportunity 7:

How might we achieve better outcomes for over 25s?

Concepts developed under this design opportunity
Increased Temporary Accommodation / Housing First / Accommodation for over 25s with support needs

Progress highlights
<p>Fall-out often happened from TA when it was not able to meet the needs of a customer. It was hoped that by improving the provision of TA supported housing provision for over 25s, and / or increasing the availability of HF units it would give customers more choice, support more positive outcomes, and promote a culture of sustainability.</p> <p>A time critical project supporting people with complex needs had previously been piloted across the county and had achieved positive outcomes for many of the people being supported.</p> <p>Previous funding for HF had been provided, but there was no team in place to support the project, and only a few tenants moved into secure tenancies, and unfortunately, these tenancies eventually failed due to lack of support and partnership working.</p> <p>By the end of the project, it had been agreed that a HF project, which has fidelity to the model, was going to be recommissioned and funded through HSG, and the staff team will be responsible for developing partner relationships, supporting residents, and sourcing properties. But in order for HF to be properly developed and expanded, there would be a need to end the time critical pilot project and a new HF contract would go out to tender.</p>

### Design opportunity 8:

How might we proactively prevent homelessness?

Concepts developed under this design opportunity	
Review Prevention offer	Inter-departmental working
Develop prevention monitoring framework	Customer access to self-help information
Monitor, evaluate and review current prevention activities and any unrecorded activities that take place.	Specialist prevention officers
Staff reflections	
Progress highlights	
<p>Having less customers accessing, and, in the system, would mean that caseworkers would have more time to effectively work on cases, and there would be less stress on the system in general.</p> <p>The majority of prevention was through support to access alternative accommodation, and the shift in RSL allocations previously mentioned was the main contributing factor to this.</p> <p>Ceredigion were considering a local approach to how they worked with the new six month notice period introduced by the Renting Homes Act 2016. It was felt that this was an opportunity to work with a wider range of partners and undertake prevention activities at a much earlier stage</p> <p>Housing explored prevention opportunities with the Early Help and Prevention team, alongside Social Services and Young People's services.</p> <p>The Housing pages of the website were being reviewed and updated to improve self-help areas and customer information.</p> <p>Two new Housing Support Assistants were recruited to be the link between the Housing Options and support providers, and they also provided low level support to customers during the application process.</p> <p>They now also have a trained mediation specialist within the team.</p>	

Survey respondents believed that the actions the team implemented had more of an effect on fallout from prevention duty than from relief duty. Even so, one survey respondent said that '*... I do not think we have done all we can to prevent fallout, however at the same time, this needs to be done at a national level*'.

**Design opportunity 10:**

Improve access to metal health, substance support and social care services

Concepts developed under this design opportunity
Staff reflections
<p>During the initial stages of the project, it was noted by a staff member that there was limited support available (including MH support) for people, one respondent said that there had been <i>'no change in terms of access to MH, substance misuse support or social services so far in my experience'</i>. No feedback was provided by officers as to whether there had been any improvements to this at the end of the project.</p>
<p>fill gaps in the existing provision, which can lead to customers falling out of the system because their needs are currently unmet or poorly met.</p> <p>New referral process established with both Housing and Social Services having access to the Gateway system enabling both to make referrals for support. Improved pathways for young people and people with learning disabilities had also been developed.</p> <p>A sanctuary bed was available for people experiencing poor mental health and extra mental health support was being provided to young HF residents.</p> <p>The provision of mental health outreach support was going to be considered in the recommissioning process.</p> <p>There was recognition of the need for additional specialist mental health supported TA accommodation. Housing the HSG and mental Health teams had been involved in needs mapping exercises, and by the end of the project, two flats were to be made available with mental support being provided post project.</p>

## Insights and reflections

Crisis drew on the following data sources to provide insights and learning about the success of the different design opportunities and of the project as a whole:

- Action plans (developed during the discovery phase) that outlined all actions under the themes and contained action-level comments from quarterly update meetings between the Team Lead in the Local Authority and the Senior Best Practice Officer at Crisis
- End-of-quarter staff surveys (n=1, n=3 and n=2 for quarters 1, 2 and 3 respectively)
- Team Lead narrative reports, completed at end of quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4
- End-of-project staff survey (n=3)
- End-of-project Team Lead survey (n=1)

### Ceredigion results tracker analysis

The staff at Ceredigion were asked to submit a results tracker to Crisis on a quarterly basis, which reported the figures of fallout in the Local Authority (see Table 1).

During the course of the project, numbers of households that either reached an outcome or fell out of the system per quarter varied between 93 and 125 per quarter. The numbers that fell out of the system stayed consistent at between 16 and 18.

The proportion of total households that ended up falling out averaged at 15% across the quarters (hovered at 13-14% with a spike of 19% in Q2 when the number of households that reached an outcome dropped). The proportions of fallout from prevention duty and from relief duty were roughly equivalent over the whole project (47% of fallout was from prevention duty; 35% was from relief duty). By looking quarter-by-quarter there suggests a drop in proportion of fallout that was from relief duty and an increase in proportion of fallout from prevention, but as it fluctuates over the four quarters it is not a definitive trend.

In conclusion, the results tracker cannot alone provide evidence of a reduction in fallout rates in Ceredigion over the course of the project.

Six prison leavers who fell out of the relief duty during the course of the project; three were in the first quarter and one in each subsequent quarter. Given that fallout rates overall stayed at the same level over the four quarters, this suggest that actions from the first two quarters may have helped reduce fallout for this particular cohort.

Table 1: Fallout rates as reported by Ceredigion Local Authority during the project

	Quarter 1		Quarter 2		Quarter 3		Quarter 4		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Number of unique households presenting	125		93		116		123		457	
Number of unique households categorised as 'fall-out'	16	13%	18	19%	16	14%	16	13%	66	14%
Of which prevention	7	44%	7	39%	7	44%	10	63%	31	47%
Of which relief	9	56%	11	61%	9	56%	6	38%	35	53%
Number of prison leavers categorised as 'fallen out'	3	19%	1	6%	1	6%	1	6%	6	9%

### Statutory data analysis

Sixty-six cases fell out of the system between April 2022 and March 2023 when this project was running: 31 (47%) from Section 66 duty, and 35 (53%) from Section 73 duty. The local authority saw an average of 16.5 cases fall out each quarter.

This is higher than the two financial years previous to the project year, where 54 and 52 cases of fallout were recorded for 20-21 and 21-22 respectively, with an average number of cases falling out being 13.5 and 13. In 21-22, the cases falling out of sections 66 and 73 were equal, yet in 20-21, the proportions were 35% from Section 66 duty and 65% from Section 73 duty (see Table 2).

Table 2: Fallout count over three years according to statutory records

Financial Year	Q1 (Apr-Jun)	Q2 (Jul-Sep)	Q3 (Oct-Dec)	Q4 (Jan-Mar)	Total
2020-2021	10	11	13	20	54
2021-2022	17	13	6	16	52
2022-2023	16	18	16	16	66



Therefore, the number of cases falling out of either duty during the project were slightly higher than those of previous years, but not dissimilar in terms of what type of duty they were under. During the 12 months that the fallout-reducing actions were being implemented, the statutory data showed no signs of fallout reducing either in real terms or proportionally.

Over the whole year the project was being run, 17% of cases fell out of the process; (15% from Section 66 duties and 18% from Section 73 duties), whereas this proportion was 16% for the two years previous. Across all Welsh LAs during 22 / 23 the fall out was 16%; 14% fall out at S66 Prevention and 20% at S73 Relief. Although Ceredigion had a higher percentage of fall out at under Section 66 duties, fall out was slightly lower than the Welsh average under Section 73 duties.

Some respondents to the staff surveys commented that they felt they were in significantly high demand throughout the project, and whilst this is not reflected in the data compared to previous years, this could be attributed to staffing levels prior to and during the project.

During the early stages of the project, the team and department were undergoing a restructure which may help to explain why staff felt under more pressure. Throughout the project new staff were being recruited. Due to staff sickness, the PRS liaison officer stepped in to cover other essential TA duties, meaning that their progress was limited and the impact of their role on implementing the actions and subsequent reduction in fallout was less noticeable than staff had anticipated

The three staff members who responded to the final survey reported no observable change in fallout rates (one responded that they had noticed no change; two responded they did not know). This was attributed to:

1. A limited time to notice change: *'... to(o) soon to see any change in fallout rates (as a result of the actions) as some of the actions have not been completed and require time to embed.'*
2. External factors around housing stock: *'Still limited PRS available. People are remaining in TA for long periods of time.'*
3. An increase in demand: *'Our understanding of support services and mechanism for accessing has improved and more people are receiving housing support. Our prevention and relief numbers have also increased in the year, there are more presentations than ever.'*

## Staff observations

Factors that impeded the progress of the actions and their potential impact on fallout rates were outlined in the staff survey responses:

In the Ceredigion area, there was available private rented accommodation, but it was unaffordable to the point that officers could not recommend them to clients:

*'In essence people are being put on to Sec 66 until they are made homeless or if lucky then they have got a property off the housing register.'*

Progress with some actions was slow to start because during the project, the demands on the housing service in Ceredigion LA increased substantially and eased after the team nearly doubled in size by the end of the third quarter.

One staff member, giving context about observing a slight reduction in fallout rates by the end of the second quarter, stated that:

*'I feel that I have not had as many clients with chaotic lifestyles coming through to me personally and in my opinion these are the clients that do fallout in general. Whether because they are already in temporary accommodation and are managing to engage with support provided - all persons accessing TA are assigned a housing support worker.'*

Another said ... *'although this is not a panacea, as still people do not engage with this.'*

With regards to reducing fall out rates at prevention stages Section 66, one staff member said that:

*'I do not think we have done all we can to prevent fallout, however at the same time, this needs to be done at a national level. If we decided that we no longer take into account local connection, and did not find anyone intentionally homeless (2 big areas) but other LA's continued to take a hard-line approach, then we would be inundated with cases'*

When asked which actions over the course of the whole project would make the biggest difference for reducing fallout rates, the following responses were provided:

*'The restructure and having additional staff will make a difference long term'*

*'Extra staff... has enabled a quicker response'*

*'Having a single point of contact. Although this has increased the workload.'*

One respondent commented that the PRS access improvement had potential to make a big difference too, once the schemes were working more effectively and if the housing market were to improve.

## Feedback on the project

Staff surveyed at the end of the project reported that their experience of being involved in the project was positive (33% of respondents) and neutral (66%). This project had had a negative effect on their workload (66% reported a moderate negative effect, 33% reported no effect), but a positive effect on the team's process and ways of working regarding homeless presentations (66% reported a moderate positive effect, 33% reported no effect), and a slight effect on processes and ways of working regarding other areas of work (33% reported a moderate positive effect, 66% reported no effect).

*'The amount of workload the team has to deal with has made it extremely difficult to get motivated about making changes.'*

The two respondents who had been involved in the discovery phase reported that it affected their capacity and workload:

*'It made us think about improvements we could make.... we haven't had enough time to take many of these forward. Some of them were already in our pipeline. We still have the list to work from in future.'*

*'It has added additional pressure during an extremely busy period and as such my ability to contribute was limited.'*

Their experience of workshopping was generally negative:

*'Difficult on [T]eams to get staff engagement.'*

*'I found it frustrating as I feel I couldn't contribute more due to the level of workload during that period.'*

One respondent suggested that the workshopping might be more effective if conducted face-to-face rather than on MS Teams.

The three respondents reported that the implementation of the actions added to their already heavy workload:

*'It was hard to take things forward due to workloads. We did not achieve all that we might have wanted to. Everyone was trying to do things alongside the day job, with high caseload.'*

Their opinions about being asked to complete surveys on a quarterly bases were mixed: one respondent felt it was an effective way to get their feedback, and another thought it was ineffective (the third responded neutrally):

*'I am not convinced the team saw much value in the exercise.'*

Suggestions for more effective methods were face to face sessions and half-hour phone calls with staff.

Final reflections provided by respondents were:

*'I think it would have gone better if workload was at a manageable and preventative level, instead of being in crisis mode.'*

*'The project took place during our restructure which had added a lot of additional pressure to already stretched service. Had it happened this year with a newly formed team and without the distraction and additional work which resulted from the pandemic I think the effects of the project would have been different.'*

The team lead reported that the templates, tools and practices from Crisis would be helpful for other current and future projects and that the project contributes to the ongoing strategic plans in Ceredigion LA.

However, they were neutral about the project being a positive experience for them and that the external support from Crisis had been helpful for their team and themselves; and that being involved in the project had not been a positive experience for the team.

The team lead identified positives of the running of the project:

*'Crisis did all the organising. The brainstorming came up with some good small tweaks that need to be improved.'*

But also noted that some factors impeded the project:

*'We were too busy and also not in the office so it was difficult to give it the time it deserved. There were no ground-breaking ideas, just lots of small incremental things that may or may not improve the situation.'*

The most important learning to come out of the project for the team lead was that *'there are a lot of things we need to do in terms of paperwork etc to make things more standardised and eas[ier] [for customers] to engage'*.

## Concluding remarks

The project was commissioned pre Covid-19, and the 'fall out' considered spanned pre and post pandemic years, which were both very different landscapes and each Welsh LA faced unprecedented pressures and demands on services. The Housing Team Ceredigion were also undergoing a restructuring process during the life of the project which also impacted on capacity.

The effects of this can be seen through some of the comments made by the teams involved in the project, as participation in the project felt like additional work added to their already demanding workloads, and as a result staff felt like they couldn't really focus and contribute to this project as much as they may have like to. Even so, Ceredigion remained on board and saw the project through to the end.

During the discovery phase, the project team gained a wide range of insights which enabled a tailored action plan to be developed. This was alongside the development of additional resources which could support the planning and implementation of several actions that could be taken to trial and test to see if they helped reduce fall out levels in Ceredigion.

However, staff capacity and demands on the service hampered efforts to progress against the majority of the actions that were planned.

During the 12 months that the fallout-reducing actions were being implemented, the statutory data showed no signs of fallout reducing either in real terms or proportionally. Over the whole year the project was being run, 17% of cases fell out of the process (15% from Section 66 duties and 18% from Section 73 duties), whereas this proportion was 16% for the two years previous. The average fall out for Wales during 22-23 was also 16%.

Progress was made against some areas the action plan that resulted in positive changes being implemented such as, Officers now following through on all the duties owed rather than Officers having case specialisms, recruitment of a PRS Officers and sign up to a number of WG RS schemes to expand access to the PRS, rapid support assessments being introduced for people entering TA, and the introduction of a new early detection and warning system across all providers. Progress was also made in other areas outside of the action plan such at the introduction of a Gateway system for support referrals across Housing, Social Services and providers.

Other actions were progressed during the latter stages of the project, but it was too soon to see whether the steps taken would reduce fall out rates.

Ceredigion faced additional challenges due to geographical location and being a tourism area. The lack of affordable accommodation in the PRS posed particular challenges, as many landlords converted to holiday lets and the use of hotels and B&B accommodation was limited. But Ceredigion worked with closely with their local

housing association partners and were able to negotiate an increase in allocations for people experiencing homelessness. This made a great difference to enabling people to access secure accommodation and reduce need for TA.

The action plan developed has provided Ceredigion with a blueprint and resources that they can use to change and or improve processes across a range of areas, which could, once implemented, help to reduce fall out rates in Ceredigion.

Although some staff felt frustrated with the lack of ability to engage, some felt that the project did make them think about the improvements that they could make, and while there was no observable change in fallout rates yet, they believed they could have a positive impact on reducing fallout rates in future.

The Team Lead reported that the templates, tools and practices from Crisis would be helpful for other current and future projects, and that the project did contribute to ongoing strategic plans in Ceredigion.

## About Crisis

Crisis is the national charity for people facing homelessness across Wales, Scotland and England. We know that homelessness is not inevitable, and we know that together, we can end it.

We provide services directly to people experiencing homelessness, carry out research into the causes and consequences of homelessness, and campaign for the changes needed to end it.

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