
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Homelessness Demand

The homelessness and housing services are continuing to experience exceptionally high demand for homeless assistance.

The Council's focus remains on preventing homelessness whenever possible. The demand for assistance for our homeless prevention services remains high. 700 people at risk of become homeless were being supported at the beginning of this month, with notice to quit from private landlords being the cause in 62% of the cases. The Housing Solutions and Prevention Team continue to work hard to help tenants to remain in their private rented accommodation or to secure new accommodation before they become homeless.

Family notice to quit also remain a significant cause of homelessness, there were 19 immediate notices received over a six-week period. An emergency mediation service is in place following an immediate notice. Officers will visit the home and mediate with the family regarding their current housing situation and alternative housing solutions. The service has prevented 16 out of the 19 immediate notices from being enforced, either by gaining an extension on the notices to quit while alternative accommodation is sourced, or by the applicant withdrawing their application altogether. Officers will also visit elderly applicants, and those with substantive medical needs, to ensure the housing advice provided and pathway recommended is suitable for their needs.

Despite this prevention work the demand for temporary accommodation remains exceptionally high, with 377 households waiting to be accommodated. The majority of the demand is coming from people currently living within the private rented sector, as the number of "no-fault evictions" by landlords remain high. Whilst the number of households is not decreasing, the teams are taking steps to ensure that better planning is taking place for those we know will need accommodation and ensuring an offer of accommodation is made as early as is possible.

Unfortunately, a large number of families are housed in hotels; in addition to those hotels currently used as family hostels, there are 43 families accommodated in ad-hoc hotels across Cardiff. All households in hotel accommodation are being offered support via the Floating Support Teams and regular meetings are also taking place to discuss the most appropriate options for the family.

The Landlord Enquiry Tenant Support (LETS) team work to secure additional suitable settled accommodation in the private rented sector. A range of options are offered to landlords, including the Welsh Government leasing scheme which allows the private landlord to lease their property to the Council for a longer period of time. 44 properties are now signed up to this scheme in Cardiff allowing more families the opportunity to settle in suitable, affordable accommodation within an area of their choice. The Private Rented Sector Team are working closely with Empty Homes and Rent Smart Wales to ensure landlords are aware of the services and support available to them. The team also continue to attend landlord forums to advise on the services and support that are available.

Housing Design Awards 2023

I am very pleased that one of the Council's housing development projects, which will deliver 13 new apartments for older people in Splott, alongside a new community facility, has been shortlisted in the UK [Housing Design Awards 2023](#). The scheme at Moorland Road is one of a number of new residential developments across the city that the Council is building as a result of priorities set out in the Older Persons Housing Strategy. The scheme includes flats designated for over 55-year-olds, comprising 11 one-bed and 2 two-bed independent living apartments, a community centre and shared garden on a tight corner site in Splott. I am delighted to see recognition for the fantastic work of the Housing Development Team. The winners of this year's awards will be announced later this month.

Family Activity Bridge

Family Activity Bridge (FAB) is a new initiative that has been created by the staff from the Family Supported Accommodation Team who work in several supported housing projects across the city. FAB has been set up to increase engagement and awareness of services across the Council. In the spirit of unity, joy, and togetherness, FAB held its first event at the start of July, bringing families from the different projects together to celebrate Eid at Yr Hafan Community Centre. The event was a great success, filled with laughter and cultural richness. Families from diverse backgrounds came together to celebrate their shared values and traditions, fostering a sense of community and strengthening the bonds of friendship. Through lively entertainment and traditional food, the event provided an opportunity for all families to create lasting memories and strengthen their bonds. It served as a reminder, not only of the significance of Eid, but of the importance of bringing families together.

Summer Reading Challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge returns for another year – with Ready, Set, Read! being the theme. This year it will be centred around the power of play, sport, games and physical activity with lots of free activities for families. The challenge is a great way to get children reading, imagining, and staying active throughout the summer. It is also a fantastic opportunity for parents, carers and families to get involved and share a much-loved pastime, which keeps children's literacy levels up even when they aren't in school and introduces them to the excellent Hub and library facilities that we have on offer in Cardiff. The scheme launched on 8 July 2023 and information on the activities on offer can be found on the Hubs website at: www.cardiffhubs.co.uk

Welsh Public Library Standards

The Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) are set by the Welsh Government to assess if library services in Wales are complying with their duties and delivering library services effectively. Each year, Cardiff Hubs and Libraries Service submits a performance report to Welsh Government detailing the progress that the service has made over the year. I am very pleased to say that the 2022/23 report has recently been presented to Welsh Government and the service is currently awaiting the official performance assessment report; however, I wanted to make you aware of some initial very impressive results. During 2022/23, we have seen:

- 27% overall increase in physical book issues
- 103% increase in children's physical book issues
- 116% increase in Welsh language physical book issues
- Use of E-resources (E-Books, E-Audio Books and E-zines) has risen from 139,782 to 1,245,359
- 258% increase in digital visits

I am very grateful to our Hubs and Libraries staff for their hard work over the last year. It's wonderful to see how well used our Hubs and Libraries continue to be.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
14 July 2023