

**SWYDDFA CYMORTH Y CABINET
CABINET SUPPORT OFFICE**



Fy Nghyf / My Ref: CM32473
Eich Cyf / Your Ref: Scrutiny/Correspondence/
Cllr McGarry

Dyddiad / Date: 06 November 2015

Councillor Mary McGarry
Chair, Community & Adult Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Services
Room 263
County Hall
Cardiff
CF10 4UW

Annwyl / Dear Councillor McGarry

**Community & Adult Services Scrutiny Committee Meeting – 07 October
2015**

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present the information on street homelessness in Cardiff to the Committee and for your recognition of the hard work and dedication of the frontline staff, both from the Council and partner organisations. The importance of such appreciation cannot be underestimated and I will, of course, ensure that this is relayed to those staff.

I am pleased to be able to respond to each of the requests made in your letter:

Impact of changes to Housing Benefit for under 25's

With regard to the removal of automatic entitlement to Housing Benefit for 18 to 21 year old young people, the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 2015 will legislate for the changes proposed from April 2016. However the changes for young people are not due to come into effect until April 2017 and therefore information about this is not yet available. I will provide further information as soon as this is available.

Local Connection Assessment (for non-priority need)

In determining local connection in this instance the same guidance for priority need cases as contained in the Housing Act (Wales) 2014, will be followed. This is set out below:

- The person is, or in the past was, normally resident in Cardiff. This is measured as 6 months of the last 12 months or 3 years of the last 5 years in settled independent accommodation. It will not include detention in Cardiff Prison, hospital stay, recent sofa surfing, hostel or other supported accommodation, night shelter accommodation and rough sleeping.

ATEBWCH I / PLEASE REPLY TO: Swyddfa Cymorth Y Cabinet / Cabinet Support Office,
Ystafell / Room 514, Neuadd y Sir / County Hall,
Glanfa'r Iwerydd / Atlantic Wharf, Caerdydd / Cardiff,
CF10 4UW Ffon / Tel (029) 2087 2479

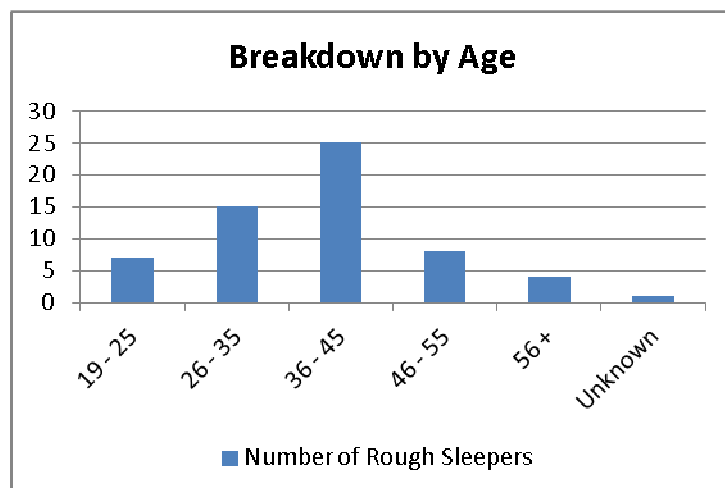
- The person can show that their only local connection is Cardiff having only ever been located here although they may have no recent history of living in independent settled accommodation.
- The person is currently employed in Cardiff. The employment must be genuine and effective (which will exclude unpaid, casual and undeclared work) and where not being housed in Cardiff will jeopardise their ability to retain their employment.
- The person has very close family associations in Cardiff. This is regarded as the applicant being able to prove a primary, meaningful and supportive relationship with a grandparent, mother, father, sister, brother or adult child who has resided in Cardiff for a minimum of 5 years uninterrupted and has stated that they wish to be near the applicant. The applicant must be able to show that regular contact has been ongoing and is still in place and that there are exceptional circumstances surrounding the support that cannot be maintained if they were accommodated outside the area.
- The person was (at any time) provided with accommodation in Cardiff under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (support for asylum seekers) who also meets one of the above conditions.

If the person does not have local connection they will be referred to the Reconnection Team who will assist them to return in a safe and planned way to their own local authority. Support will be provided to help them access the Council's housing advice service in that area, developing connections to be able to offer other advice and assistance with finding accommodation there and linking them in with appropriate statutory and non-statutory support services as required. Emergency Overnight Stay accommodation will be provided during their period of engagement.

As referenced in your letter, the process to waiver local connection will be in place to safeguard the most vulnerable service users, this could be a temporary waiver so that they may access supported accommodation in Cardiff with an agreement that they engage with the reconnection process at the appropriate time or a permanent decision that provides the full access given to those with local connection.

Characteristics of the 60 known rough sleepers in August 2015

The age of those that were rough sleeping ranged from the youngest at 19 years to the oldest at 84 years, with the average age being 38 years. The table below shows the full breakdown.



19 – 25 yrs	7
26 – 35 yrs	15
36 – 45 yrs	25
46 – 55 yrs	8
56 yrs +	4
Unknown	1

Of the 60 known rough sleepers, 56 were male and 4 were female. The breakdown of ethnicity is shown in the table below.

Black British	2
White British	40
White European	18

All rough sleepers are assessed to identify their individual support needs to ensure we provide the most appropriate intervention and support. The below table provides a breakdown of the 3 key support needs you have enquired about.

Mental Health	29
Alcohol	25
Drug	28

Many service users have multiple support needs, where this is a combination of 2 or 3 of the above mentioned. These service users would be regarded as presenting with complex support needs.

Mental Health/ Alcohol	3
Mental Health / Drug	11
Alcohol / Drug	2
Mental Health / Drug	9

The support needs of this client group is, of course, not limited to the three mentioned above (Mental Health, Alcohol and Drugs). Many service users present with a range of different support needs. For those sleeping rough at this time the support needs are highlighted below.

Fleeing Domestic Abuse	2
Learning Difficulties	8
Mobility/Sensory Impairment	6
Ex-Offender/Criminal Justice	24
Chronic Illness	12
Older Person with support Needs	2

Of the 60 known rough sleepers in the August 2015 period, 4 were identified as care leavers. However, the actual figure is probably higher. Those who have left the care system more recently will be more likely to disclose this information because it is a current issue for them. Those who have left for a longer period are less likely to raise it because there are intervening issues and support needs that are more prominent for them by the time they are accessing our services. The early intervention being developed through the Young Persons Gateway service is essential to try to prevent the development of entrenched homelessness.

Of the 60 known rough sleepers none were identified as ex-forces though there have been known situations where service users have not disclosed this information to services even though it is a question that is asked in the assessment. It is something that may only be disclosed at a later stage when a relationship has been established with support staff. It should be noted that

shortly after the snapshot period, a new rough sleeper who was ex-forces was housed after outreach staff helped link him in with the Change Step charity that work directly to support and accommodate veterans who have become homeless.

I can report that for those individuals sleeping rough in the snapshot figure, 14 service users were assisted to access accommodation, 1 service user was assisted with reconnection to Poland and 3 will be moving into the Rough Sleeper Project in the very near future. The whereabouts of 7 are unknown and 1 person has received a prison sentence. 37 are still sleeping rough, mostly in Cardiff though some have moved on elsewhere. 12 of these are EEA nationals who cannot access accommodation because of their ineligibility to welfare and housing. These figures show both the positive outcomes that can be achieved by the support being provided to rough sleepers but also the chaotic nature of many of those who find themselves sleeping rough and the requirement for extended intervention.

In the last 2 weeks, as part of the plan presented to the committee, we have held empty properties in hostels and successfully targeted and moved 6 people into our hostel provision and one other person into the Rough Sleeper Project. As a result of the activity above the total number has reduced from 60 to 50.

Finally, I can confirm that arrangements are now in place for the Cold Weather Provision to begin on 01 November 2015 and the Church Night Shelter will be operational from 01 December 2015. We are also still exploring some additional provision and staff will be actively encouraging people to access these services to try to ensure that nobody needs to sleep rough during the winter.

Thank you again for your kind commendation of the services in Cardiff and we will as requested provide a further update on the homelessness situation to the meeting of the Committee in March.

Yn gwyr,
Yours sincerely,



Councillor / Y Cynghorydd Susan Elsmore
Cabinet Member for Health, Housing & Wellbeing
Aelod Cabinet dros Iechyd, Tai a Lles

Cc: Sarah McGill
Jane Thomas
Kate Hustler
Ian Ephraim
Chief Inspector Dan Howe
Inspector Neil Jones
Kate Burke
Richard Edwards
Antony Kendall
Emma Paynter
Nick Blake