

COMMUNITY & ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 JANUARY 2019

Present: Councillor McGarry(Chairperson)
Councillors Ahmed, Carter, Ebrahim, Goddard, Jenkins,
Kelloway, Lent and Molik

53 : APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None received. Councillor Carter advised that he would need to leave the meeting for a short time to attend another meeting.

54 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None received.

55 : MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 January 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairperson.

56 : TEMPORARY & SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION - SINGLE PERSON'S GATEWAY

The Chairperson advised Committee that the meeting had been arranged to hear from a range of service providers on temporary and supported accommodation in relation to the Single Persons Gateway.

The focus of the meeting would be for Members to gain an understanding of the following issues: An update on winter provision (particularly over the Christmas period); Are services fit for purpose?; How the hostels work together – is it effective?; Supported accommodation – how effective is it? What kind of support is on offer?; Do people coming through the gateway get the support they need?; For Members to understand the complexities of the service and the people that use it.

Members would hear from a range of representatives and to start proceedings, the Chairperson welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne (Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities); Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People & Communities); and Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Housing & Communities)

The Chairperson read out an email she had received from former Councillor Eleanor Sanders explaining the service offered by the Churches Night Shelter as there was no representative at the meeting. The email detailed that the Churches Night Shelter opened their doors just before Christmas would be open until the end of March, they are open in different churches every night from 8pm to 8am, with around 20 spaces available each night; in recent years they have worked more closely with the Council's Outreach Team and one of their main aims is to try and move guests on to more permanent accommodation.

The Chairperson invited Councillor Thorne to make a statement in which she thanked Committee for the invitation to attend as part of its review of homelessness and the

Single Persons Gateway. She added that Members would be aware that homelessness is a complex issue and many clients who use the single person's gateway have challenging issues including mental health, substance misuse and offending behaviour.

Councillor Thorne considered Cardiff to be very lucky to have a range of supported accommodation options, provided both by the Council directly and by a range of very committed partners. However, the numbers coming into services and the increasing complexity of clients is putting pressure on those services. There is a need to review Cardiff's provision to make sure that it does meet the needs of the clients and the Scrutiny review comes at an opportune time, ahead of the recommissioning of some of the single person gateway services next year and any comments or suggestions that the Committee may wish to give ahead of that recommissioning would be welcomed.

Members were provided with a presentation on the Single Persons Gateway Overview after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked for more information on the pods and whether they had individual doors and beds and were able to be locked so that personal belongings could be left in them. Officers advised that the pods vary from project to project and that providers would be able to give more information on their specific pods.

Members found it useful to see the number of people in the gateway but were concerned about the significant number of people who are not engaging with the service; asking how Officers envisage the gateway should work, where the blockages are in the system and how long people should spend in each stage of the process. Officers stated that ideally it would just be a few days in emergency accommodation, but it does vary on demand and need and vulnerable people can be put through to later stages in the process. With regards to first line hostels, there would be a review after 6 months but there are challenges with moving on such as needs and availability of second stage accommodation.

Members considered that the blockages could be in stages 1 and 2 and the shortage of supply in frontline and second stage accommodation could be causing this; if this supply was expanded then it could free up emergency accommodation for people on the streets. Officers explained that people will have problems moving on for various reasons but it was important to ensure that there is enough second stage accommodation and it is the right sort of accommodation.

Members considered that the numbers in relation to supported housing for people with mental health and substance misuse issues was very low and asked what the Council was doing to support these people. Officers explained that they are doing what they can at the moment, the review will see if a whole scale change is needed; currently they look at the level of need and identify the best provision.

Members asked when they would know that the needs assessment has been carried out and the numbers of people and who are getting help are known. Officers said that the needs assessment would be carried out in the Spring/Summer.

Members stated that they had previously said there should be more awareness of Council services targeted to the public and asked what was being done about this. Officers advised that they are working on getting good news stories out to the public.

Members asked what was being done for people who have stated that they don't want a hostel or emergency accommodation. Officers outlined the Housing First scheme and the work being done by the Outreach Team. Members asked if the Housing First scheme was successful and were advised that there had been 8 people successfully housed through the Housing First scheme and there were 3 waiting; this scheme would be expanding next year with Council provision.

Members asked if the Single Person Gateway, although an important mechanism, was failing as the numbers of rough sleepers are increasing. Officers explained that there were a number of reasons that the number of rough sleepers is increasing including the complexity of client needs meaning that they are harder to house. There have been an increased number of people going into accommodation but nationally the numbers of rough sleepers has increased; there is always room to improve and that is why the review was happening.

Members noted that new initiatives are tried based on feedback from service users, these are based on needs and what has worked well elsewhere.

Members asked if there was a bigger role for Health to play and Officers agreed that more input from Health services was needed long-term; there was provision taken onto the street and there was a nurse but the Multi-Disciplinary Team that was set up would enable expertise be brought in and be readily accessible. Members were advised that the Public Services Board have signed up to improve services for rough sleepers, the Area Planning Board would be taking a more active role and there was a partnership focus to align roles.

Members discussed people coming to Cardiff to rough sleep from outside the area and Officers advised that just over a third of people rough sleeping are from outside of Cardiff, from a widespread area of England and Wales; people are assessed and if they are considered a priority need and their own local authority can be identified then contact would be made.

The Chairperson welcomed Richard Edwards from the Huggard centre and invited him to address the Committee. Members were advised that this was a very important and difficult social issue and whilst Cardiff was fortunate to have such good facilities and level of provision it was important not to be complacent. Mr Edwards explained that the Huggard Centre provided an open access day centre which was unique in Wales, in 2018 it had worked with 2174 individuals, recently the centre had seen an increase of around 24 new rough sleepers each month; alongside this increase in number, there had also been an increase in the complexity of people's needs. Members were advised that the client group of the Huggard Centre had changed, when it started in 1989 the client group was predominantly middle aged males with alcohol dependency, recently there had been a huge explosion in drug use and clients were younger and often with mental health issues, which they had suffered with either previously or due to the drug use. Mr Edwards explained that this tied in with issues of County lines, where drugs were being run into cities and vulnerable people were being exploited. Members were advised that the Huggard Centre had 1

Health post which supported substance misuse support. In 2018, 83 people had been supported into treatment services and an extra 198 people had been added to the misuse/needle exchange database. It was stressed however that more input from Health services was needed. Members were advised of the correlation between addiction/substance misuse and street sex work/begging and were advised that some people use the Huggard's services in the daytime but are back on the street at night time as this is more lucrative. Members noted that in order to gain sympathy and money people often portray a negative impression of the services provided to homeless people; Mr Edwards explained that there is sufficient accommodation in Cardiff – however, the type of accommodation is restrictive and often communal in nature.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Edwards for addressing the Committee and invited questions and comments from Members;

Members discussed the needle exchange programme and noted that around 20 litres of needles are collected daily. Members noted that since such programmes have been in place then there has been a reduction in blood borne diseases; however Members noted that there was a wider community safety issue with regards to needles being discarded on the street. Mr Edwards agreed that the needle exchange programme is vital for all in the community, including those in street based sex work; adding that needles given out are single use needles with locks on that are safe if discarded. It was stressed that more investment from Health Services was needed to provide the correct harm reduction advice. Mr Edwards explained that he is unable to allow drug use in the Huggard Centre, therefore people are driven onto the street to take their drugs; he explained that he would like to work with them and stop this and address the wider community safety issue and bring people into services but this would be a bold move and it would require changes to the law.

A Member explained that he had read an article with rough sleepers which had said that the Huggard Centre was rife with drugs and thieves and asked if this was correct. Mr Edwards explained that they deal with complex clients often with offending behaviour, if they were not dealing with them at the Huggard Centre then they would be on the streets; they do however try to provide the safest environment; they are fully staffed and there is CCTV inside and outside which is constantly recording; there is infrared CCTV in the communal sleeping rooms; any issues are reported to the Police and there is a zero tolerance with drug dealing and the drug squad are informed immediately. With regards to theft, there are 49 personal safes for clients to use, they are not complacent, they are aware there are high risks but they take steps to make sure people are made welcome and feel safe and secure. Members discussed what could be done to address the increase in drug use. Mr Edwards explained that people on the streets are highly vulnerable to exploitation and peer pressure and more resources are needed to support and advise people at the needle exchange point, to get them into services more quickly.

Members asked for more information on how they envisage bringing people with drug addiction in service? Mr Edwards explained that current drugs laws go back to the 1970s and these are a legal sticking point. It would take a bold political move across Welsh Government, Police, Local Authorities and Health to explore "Enhanced Crime Reduction Centres", but he considered that a safe place for people to use their drugs

with medical support would protect lives and the wider community, have a positive impact on drug use and reduce drug deaths and public drug litter.

Members asked about the Police's role and asked how vulnerable people are not criminalised but that the drug pushers are tackled. Mr Edwards explained that there is an agreement in place between the Police/Welsh Government with regard to possession of drugs.

Members asked what was in place to help women on the streets and what specific work was being done with regards to the street sex trade. Mr Edwards explained that there are a number of specialist projects in place for women involved in the street sex trade, there were very complex needs and a multi-agency approach is taken. Women at hostels are segregated and supported, with counselling and wrap around services are provided where possible.

The Chairperson welcomed Yvonne Connolly and Laura Carey from the Salvation Army and invited them to make their presentation to Committee, after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked how the Salvation Army works together with other hostels and were advised that the management team for frontline hostels meet on a monthly basis; they share and learn and advocacy is developed through this forum. There are lots of moves and swaps between hostels and relationships between them are very strong.

Members referred to floating support and that 91% of people leave with full support and asked what number of people this referred to. Members were advised that this represented 256 people last quarter and they were currently working with 92 people/families/couples.

Members discussed how long a client would spend in Ty Gobaith and how easy it was for them to move on to another type of accommodation. Members were advised that move on accommodation was a challenge for everyone; with regards to timescale they worked on a 6 month principle, with a review after 6 months; on average the time was more like 8 months. It was added that the service has changed a lot and now involved more wrap around services and support.

Members asked what the priority would be in relation to funding if there was an influx of grants of investment. Ms Connolly advised that there was a catalogue of things, the City needs a city-wide approach and while there are strengths across all services, there is also a need to talk to the people who use the services to establish why (for example) they are not feeling safe or using services. These could be difficult conversations to have but it was important to listen to people and reflect. Housing First needs to be on offer to people.

Members asked in relation to the Commissioning Strategy, how long was needed for the strategy to work. Ms Connolly advised that there was a national issue around commissioning cycles but 7-9 years should be the base to enable investment in buildings and services to establish stability.

Members asked if there were any spare beds in Ty Gobaith, what the charges are and whether there were any problems in relation to receiving payments. Members

were advised that Ty Gobaith was running at 97% capacity, with the other 3% being rooms out of use due to the need for repairs. All referrals come via the Single Persons Gateway. Charges are currently £13 self-catering; £31 half board. Payment arrears are quite high and this continues to be a challenge, and they are working with the Job Centre to look at any benefit issues.

Members asked if Ty Gobaith has seen an increase in drug use and family breakdowns. Ms Carey stated that there had been an increase in drug use but it was the type of drugs and their impact had been the significant change, an example was given of the physical presentation of someone taking SPICE in comparison to heroin and the huge physical and mental impact it has. It was stated that Cardiff compares quite well with other cities in relation to drug related deaths and has good harm reduction and needle exchange programmes. With family breakdowns, there has been a significant increase; the Northlands centre sees the immediate effect of this and they work with families and provide respite and support.

Members asked how Ty Gobaith deals with the retention of needles and were advised that they have given out 658 needles and received 5000 in return so the return rate was good. They also work with schools to ensure that any reported discarded needles are cleared up quickly.

The Chairperson welcomed Gareth Jones and Sian David from the Wallich centre and invited them to address the Committee.

Members were advised that the Wallich was established in 1997, they deal with around 31 clients out on the street, but 40 in the last week.

Members were advised that in relation to Rough Sleeper Intervention, due to pedestrian safety, the Wallich are currently not able to access Queen Street.

There is emergency accommodation and some further accommodation via the private rented sector. The Night Shelter is expanding to 22 places and the Clare Road house is just reopening. The Wallich is running at capacity.

Members were advised that the average stay is 3 weeks

The Wallich has a Community House Team with a dual diagnosis project for mental health and substance misuse that provides a co-concurring, psychologically informed environment.

In the past, there were around 30 incidents a month, but now only 2/3.

The Wallich has rolled out a number initiatives – through WG funding, there are a network of therapists; they are dealing with an increased number of clients with Adverse Childhood experiences (ACEs); there is a need to increase therapeutic services.

A key goal is to get employment or volunteering for clients – through counselling and therapy.

25% staff working for the Wallich have Lived Homeless Experience.

The Wallich is involved in Ty Tarian, in partnership with the YMCA which offers a specialist 5 bed space.

The Wallich also run a number of mobile operations such as multi-disciplinary services and a mobile health centre which takes a medical room out to people who need it. They look at different models and engage with people through the night, building trust and guide people into services.

With regard to the demographics, in the early 1990's this was predominantly groups of people with alcohol dependency; these are still clients but they are housed and supported in the community in the Shoreline project.

The Chairperson thanked Gareth Jones and Sian David and invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked for more information about the issues faced in relation to approaching people in tents on Queen Street and were advised that they have been asked not take their vehicle onto Queen Street as it has a health and safety problem with pedestrians, particularly on the breakfast run.

Members asked in relation to the Shoreline project whether landlords are being risk averse. Members were advised that the issue is a "hot potato". The Wallich is currently reviewing their drugs policy, and the Police and Crime Commissioner is fully supportive. The Wallich doesn't want to exclude people with drug issues, they want to work with them but landlords can be restrictive, it's a difficult issue but a measured approach is needed.

Members referred to residents and asked what is offered to have more people inside during the day. Members were advised that they encourage volunteering and they have developed a peer mentoring scheme. They engage with residents to establish what their goals, needs etc. are. They work with employers in relation to criminal records and addressing skills shortages.

Members were encouraged to hear about results and successes, but wondered if this was due to the small numbers. Members were advised that one size does not fit all, and hostels are not the answer long-term; it was difficult to say what it would be like if there weren't a range of options available.

Members asked if the services provided are getting more complex and if there was a risk of overcomplicating things. Members were advised that Housing First is a well-researched and proven initiative. Innovation is not developed for the sake of it. Partnerships and working together is key as is continually learning and moving.

Members asked if Cardiff was lacking in relation to local innovation and were advised that there was plenty of innovation. A major issue is the lack of supply in both the social housing and private rented sector to move people on from hostels.

Members asked if the commissioning strategy was supporting the 3rd sector. Members were advised that it was not, short-term funding was not conducive to planning and developing services. It also places smaller organisations at a disadvantage. The hope was that the multi-disciplinary team would be a major development in addressing this.

Members asked if there were enough services for dual/multi diagnosis clients and were advised that it can be tough to arrange services – particularly commissioning across health, housing and the criminal justice system.

The Chairperson welcomed Tamsin Stirling an Independent Housing Consultant and invited her to address the Committee.

Ms Stirling advised Members that she was a Splott resident and a Freelance Housing Specialist who had been involved in the Housing Wales Act 2014 Policy Development and Homelessness was a part of that.

As a resident she was sad to see the change in the City, particularly with the tents and stated that this shouldn't be accepted as the way things are. She outlined a number of things that she considered important, including; The need to engage with people on the street; the Give DIFFerently Campaign which she considered was only useful for people who are engaged in the system; the issues of violence and stigma for people on the streets; the need for individuals to engage in educating themselves as citizens were key considerations. There also needs to be a better coordination of effort via the Frameworks Institute (CRISIS), partnerships and organisations within them playing to their strengths through commissioning and achieving outcomes; co-producing services; and developing these with service users and providers were key going forward. She also outlined research and evidence giving an overview of sources in relation to preventative measures, prison leavers, rough sleepers in England and Scotland; international sources which could also be crucial in in developing policy and practice.

The Chairperson thanked Tamsin Stirling and invited questions and comments from Members;

Members asked if a comparison could be made between what is happening in Cardiff to other cities (such as Los Angeles) and whether it was time to accept that there is a real crisis in Cardiff. Ms Stirling advised that in terms of the scale of the problem then no. Tents are becoming an issue and Welfare reform has had a massive impact, but in the UK there would not be the kinds of "sweeps" there were in LA to achieve short-term impact as this was not helpful and it did not work.

Members asked Ms Stirling if she considered this a complex spiral. Ms Stirling considered that the system had become dysfunctional particularly in relation to the number/range of student accommodation but not social housing in the City. She considered that there was a need to look at the housing market and homelessness together.

Members asked in relation to rough sleepers, whether there was any research that identified any schemes that work and whether there is an increase in numbers of rough sleepers. Ms Stirling advised members that Housing First is an example of good practice and yes, there are more visible rough sleepers currently.

Members discussed supply and demand and asked if there was a correlation between housing need and homelessness. Ms Stirling considered there was, but there is also the need to challenge human psychology around rough sleepers and shape public perceptions of rough sleepers. Ms Stirling considered there is a psychic numbing and there needs to be a move towards a "kinder Cardiff".

The Chairperson welcomed Ian Ephraim from Ty Tresillian and City Centre Outreach Team and invited him to make his presentation to the Committee after which the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Member noted the reference to 5 rough sleepers in one day, with 4 re-presenting and asked why this had happened. Members were advised that 1 was from London; 2 from Newport of which one had a local connection.

Members asked if there were any issues with “move on” accommodation and were advised that the average time people remain is around 6 months, but, for some, it can take over a year to find them suitable accommodation.

Members asked where the Multi Agency team were based and were advised that they are based in Housing Options Centre but they are out engaging with other providers too and will also engage with rough sleepers on the street.

The Chairperson welcomed back welcomed Councillor Lynda Thorne (Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities); Sarah McGill (Corporate Director, People & Communities); and Jane Thomas (Assistant Director, Housing & Communities) and having heard evidence from service providers, the Chairperson invited them to comment on some of the issues raised.

Officers reflected on what had been presented and considered that it had been an interesting discussion with common themes and evidence including;
Partnership approaches that needs to be whole system; a variety of provision; joined up; one size doesn't fit all;

Trauma informed approach;

Joint commissioning across health, police and the Council was vital;

It is a very complex situation, but there was a willingness to find solutions;

There are issues in relation to short-term funding and it needs to be sustainable;

Commissioning arrangements need to be reviewed as there is a need to do things differently;

More work in relation to communication is needed;

With regard to partners, there needs to be relationship building and address issues of “competition”;

A real need to understand why people do not engage with services.

The Chairperson invited final questions and comments from Members;

Members asked about issues with housing stock and as a social landlord, is there more Cardiff can do with housing associations. Members were advised that almost all accommodation is provided via Housing Associations.

Members noted that Officers were not aware of the access to Queen Street issues.

Members noted that there was a perception that rough sleepers are avoiding services and asked if more can more done to use and promote a “safe” hostel for those with mental health problems. Officers agreed that they need to monitor this.

AGREED: that the Chairperson, on behalf of the Committee, writes to the Cabinet Member conveying the observations of the Committee via a report when discussing the way forward.

57 : URGENT ITEMS (IF ANY)

None received.

58 : DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Budget Scrutiny – 18th February 2019 at 4.30pm, Committee Room 4, County Hall, Cardiff.

59 : PRESENTATIONS

The meeting terminated at 8.25 pm