

**Cabinet Response to the Community and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee
Report entitled Temporary and Supported Accommodation – The Single
Persons Gateway**

R1. Due to the high level of engagement of individuals with mental health and/or substance misuse with low-threshold day centre services; more work is required in order to develop additional open access provision of harm-reduction advice and therapeutic intervention work.

(KF2,4,10,12)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is agreed

Many rough sleepers are presenting with complex needs, including substance misuse (including poly drug use) and mental health issues. It is agreed that it is essential to develop additional services to meet the needs of this group including assertive and open access services for this client group.

In 2018/19 a bid was made to the Welsh Government to set up a Multi-disciplinary Outreach team to address the underlying causes of homelessness. This MDT includes:

- Mental Health Worker
- Advocate
- Additional Primary Care Nurse
- Substance Misuse Outreach Worker
- Rapid Prescribing Service
- Therapeutic Outreach Workers and access to ring-fenced psychological services
- Counselling
- Peer Mentor Co-ordinator
- Diversionary activities

The team provides wrap around support to the most entrenched rough sleepers or those who have been evicted repeatedly from supported accommodation. Support is provided wherever needed, including on the street and in the Huggard day centre.

To the end of September, the Multi-disciplinary Team has received 298 referrals, with 270 cases opened to specialist workers. Of the 58 cases that have been closed, 33 clients (57%) have successfully secured accommodation or maintained their existing accommodation.

Funding for this MDT was initially for one year only, further funding bids were made for 2019/20 and were successful and more recently WG funding has been secured for 2020/21.

Action - Moving forward a more fundamental review is needed of how harm reduction advice and therapeutic services are provided in Cardiff (see below for details of the proposed strategic review)

R2. Review hostels across Cardiff to assess whether there is enough provision for couples, women and vulnerable individuals and ensure all provision is assigned in line with an individuals need and vulnerability.
(KF1,2)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is Agreed

A strategic review of services for single homeless and vulnerable people has commenced. Work so far includes:

- Research commissioned by the council and carried out by Homeless Link
- Site visits to Helsinki and Glasgow
- A Needs Assessment – showing current client support needs as compared to current provision and how this is likely to change in the future.

The findings from this activity are to be taken forward as a strategic project chaired by Cllr Thorne and involving partners from Housing, Social Care, Health, Police, Probation and third sector providers. The aim of this project is to set out a way forward for future homelessness services in Cardiff.

The effective assessment of individual needs will be a key element of the review. It is clear that current services are not meeting the needs of our more complex and vulnerable clients.

It should be noted that some improvements have already been made to services for couples. While there are some separate services for women, the need for urgent improvement in this area has been recognised and work on this has commenced.

Action – take forward a review of hostels and other services for vulnerable people as part of the strategic review.

R3. Actively promote investment in, and seek funding for, alternative accommodation provisions.
(KF5)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is Agreed

Officers are constantly seeking additional funding to invest in services and accommodation in Cardiff. During 2018/19 an additional supported housing complex of 40 units was established specifically targeted at clients with complex needs.

Welsh Government funding has been achieved for 3 Housing First schemes in Cardiff:

- Salvation Army Scheme - 12 clients have sustained tenancies so far (2 failed)
- Council private sector scheme – 8 clients sustained tenancies
- New Council prisoner scheme – 1 client has moved in recently

Housing First takes those sleeping rough directly into permanent, self-contained accommodation with intensive support.

The Needs Assessment currently being carried out (see response to R2 above) has revealed that there is insufficient accommodation and support for the most complex cohort of rough sleepers. Once the quantum of this additional need becomes clearer bids will be made to the Welsh Government to fill this gap. This need will also inform future building of specialist support units.

Action: to continue to seek additional funding for alternative accommodation provision.

- R4. Engage with Registered Social Landlords and Landlords in the Private Rented Sector to find ways of encouraging them to house single homeless people whilst encouraging the importance that people with substance use problems and/or mental health problems need to be supported.
(KF2,4,6)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is Agreed

Both RSLs and private landlords do already house single homeless people as do the Council.

Both RSLs and private landlords are providing properties for the Housing First schemes.

In 2017/18, 27% of social housing one bedroom properties that were let went to single homeless people. Unfortunately this was only 188 properties showing the low number of overall social housing lets.

Changes to the social housing Allocation Policy made recently will give all those dwelling within the Single Persons Gateway accommodation priority for social housing with higher priority being given to those who are most vulnerable.

It is accepted that more needs to be done to demonstrate that all social housing partners are housing single homeless people and therefore reporting will be improved to ensure that this can be monitored effectively and consideration will be given to setting specific targets for housing this group.

Unfortunately access to the private rented sector is becoming more difficult. There is evidence that private landlords are leaving the market, a range of factors such as welfare reform, removal of tax incentives and more regulation are making the private rented market unattractive.

Rents in Cardiff are well above the level that can be claimed through housing benefit. Local Housing Allowance rates, the maximum that can be claimed in benefit in the private rented sector, have been frozen for 3 years. Previously LHA rates were based

on the bottom third of rents so they were below average rents before the freeze. Benefit claimants in Cardiff are paying £24.08 a week or £1,252.41 a year on average towards their rent. Representations are being made to UK Government to raise the LHA rates from next year.

While some success has been achieved in using the private rented sector for single homeless people, this is quite limited due to the factors above. Funds have been made available to key partners to allow them to offer bonds and rent in advance. Where private accommodation is used for Housing First the Council acts as guarantor.

It is agreed that a more consistent approach to support on move on from hostel is required and a clear pathway is being developed. Floating support is available to help clients to achieve a successful move and officers will work with supported housing providers to ensure that this is arranged in all cases.

Action:

- Improve the reporting of social housing lets to single homeless people
- Ensure there is a clear pathway for move on from supported housing and that floating support is made available to those with ongoing support needs.

R5. Provide funding, or seek funding, for more support for individuals with complex needs when they are 'moved on' from hostels.
(KF2,4)
Agreed

Floating support is available to assist with moved on however it is agreed that there is a need for more assertive support for clients with more complex needs as they move on. Defining this need will form part of the Review mentioned above and services will be remodelled or additional funding bids made as appropriate.

Action: Review the support available for those with complex needs when they move on from hostels as part of the Strategic Review of services.

R6. Provide additional, positive and innovative advertising regarding provisions for the homeless with the intention of changing the mind-set around rough sleepers and the perception of rough sleepers.
(KF7,9)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is Agreed

Much work has been done over the past year to improve the understanding of the public about rough sleeping and the services available.

In February a social media campaign was commenced focussing on positive real life stories – rough sleepers who have come into services and are turning their lives around as an encouragement to others still sleeping out and also to dispel the myth that there isn't enough help available in the city.

Videos, infographics and gifs about services were created and general awareness raising about what to do if a person has concerns about someone sleeping rough, are if they are at risk of homelessness themselves. The activity reached 3.6m people, was generally well received and attracted a lot of attention with almost 180 comments/messages, most of which were responded to.

Also over the winter advertising was developed for displays on the big screens in town, encouraging people to access services, not only so people who are rough sleeping are aware of provision but also to raise public awareness of services.

Postcards printed for the Outreach Team to deliver to clients on the streets as well to encourage them to come to diversionary activities.

During the Homeless World Cup this summer, some of the client videos were re-run, together with some new content promoting diversionary activities including a volunteer at the coffee mornings being operated in the city centre. That campaign reached 3.4m people and the overall feedback was generally positive.

There have been a number of very positive stories about Fighting Homelessness recently, both on Wales Online, in the Echo, on ITV Wales and Capital FM, as well as across our own Council channels.

Although much good work has been done this is an ongoing issue and further ways will be sought to get key messages across.

Action: continue to explore innovative ways to change mind sets around rough sleeping.

- R7. Work with the Welsh Government to explore ways of changing the laws so that organisations can work more effectively with individuals with substance use problems. With a particular focus on changing provisions so that this group will better engage with services.
(KF8,11)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is Agreed in principle

There is evidence to show the potential benefits that changing the approach to substance misuse could have, including safe injecting spaces.

Safe injecting spaces are currently illegal in this country and despite representations made by Glasgow council and other organisations there are no proposals to change the law in this regard.

Current legislation can also prevent support workers from engaging fully with their clients. Change in this regard lies with the UK government as is it not a devolved issue.

Officers are currently working with partners to develop a joined up approach on this issue.

Action: Once review is complete consideration will be given to lobbying the UK Government about changes to the law to allow services to work more effectively with those with addictions to illegal substances.

- R.8 Seek long-term funding for those organisations that are only receiving short-term funding so that the services, that are vital in addressing rough sleeping, are sustainable.
(KF14)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is Agreed in principle

Unfortunately much of the funding for homelessness services is grant funding received via the Welsh Government. The case for longer term certainty for this funding was made forcibly recently during the consultation on the new Housing Support Grant. This grant brought together a number of housing grants such as supporting people grant and the homeless prevention grant into one funding stream.

When recommissioning services, Cardiff does award contracts for longer periods, in the case of the Young Persons Accommodation and Support contracts awarded recently, for up to 7 years. However due to the uncertainty around funding break clauses are included in the contract to allow for changes to funding.

Unfortunately the Welsh Government has indicated that they will not be confirming the grant for a longer period. Officers will continue to raise this issue at every opportunity, however further representations at this time would not be appropriate.

Action: continue to press for longer term allocation of funding to the Housing Support Grant.

- R.9 Ensure that collaboration with the Health Board is continued and improved with a particular focus on early interventions to try and prevent mental health or substance misuse problems.
(KF15)

RESPONSE: This recommendation is Agreed

It is agreed that collaboration with Health is essential to address issues of mental health and substance misuse. The recent site visits mentioned above included the Director of Public Health for the University Health Board who has also agreed to be part of the board overseeing the strategic review mentioned above. Other health colleagues will also take part in the task and finish work- streams that are to be set up as part of the review.

Action: continue to develop improved links with Health Board to address issues of mental health and substance misuse.