
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Community Safety Update

There has been a slight decrease (0.4%) in overall crime in Cardiff compared to the previous year. Specific crimes that have seen a notable decrease in incidents compared to the previous year include business and community burglaries (down by 55.6%), hate crime (down by 31.7%) and drug offences (down by 22.8%). A considerable amount of work is being undertaken by the Cardiff Community Safety Partnership to keep Cardiff a safe place to live and work. I will provide all members with a more detailed update shortly.

Community Living Project – Addison House

I was very fortunate recently, along with local ward members, to attend the ‘topping out’ ceremony of our newest Community Living Project – Addison House – at the former Rumney High School site. It was great to witness first-hand the progress being made and to celebrate what will be a fantastic addition to our Community Living portfolio of accommodation for older people. I was particularly impressed with the wonderful views of the city from the resident’s lounge and roof terrace on the fourth floor and I am sure that future tenants will be equally impressed. The ceremony marked the halfway point in the construction programme for this new and exciting development which is scheduled for completion in July 2023.

Community Hub Update

We are continuing to develop new and exciting digital services within our Community Hubs programme. Our latest addition is wi-fi printing, which is now available in all our Community Hubs and Libraries. Customers can now print directly from their smartphones or devices, saving the need to log on to a public computer to request printing. This new service has been very well received with over 2,000 wi-fi print requests in August.

I am very pleased to announce that footfall and the number of books being issued have continued to increase, along with the number of attendees at our community events. Throughout August, all districts have entertained communities with a wonderful range of activities to suit all. The Community Inclusion and Wellbeing Team took over 40 people for a day trip to St Fagans National Museum of History. A fantastic family health event also took place at Grangetown Hub, with over 200 community members attending, which was supported by many partner agencies, including MIND, Scope & NHS health practitioners. Across the city, Community Fun Days took place in partnership with the Emergency Services and proved to be very popular.

Last month, Butetown Pavilion staff also worked tirelessly to ensure that children had access to activities. Staff delivered a sports camp, consisting of football, basketball, rugby, cricket and boxing. It ran for two full days each week with 100 children attending each day. The team at the Hub also prepared healthy packed lunches for the children each day. The children also had sport tuition, literacy sessions, art and crafts, and learnt cake decorating. It was a huge success and each child was awarded a medal and certificate at an award ceremony that was held on the final day.

Providing Warm & Welcome Spaces

As part of the wider ongoing work to support people during the cost-of-living crisis, we will soon be launching Warm & Welcome spaces in our Hubs and Libraries and at Llanover Hall. This is an initiative being set up across the country, opening up doors to allow citizens who are concerned with heating their homes. A dedicated space will be available to those who want to come in. Free tea and coffee, library provision, wi-fi, public PC use, and tablet hire will all be provided. We will also be putting on more events and drop-in advice sessions to keep people active and help with their money matters. A small grant scheme will be made available to community organisations that would like to be involved in offering warm spaces. More details on how to apply will be shared in the near future.

Increased Demand for Homelessness Services

I am saddened to report that the number of people accessing homelessness services has increased significantly over the last few months. The number of people who need temporary accommodation has risen considerably, with waiting lists for this type of accommodation up by a stark 350%. This may of course get worse with the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis affecting people's ability to pay their rent and mortgages.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of landlords issuing no-fault eviction notices to private tenants in the city. Most notices are due to the landlord selling the property and could be a consequence of current high property prices. This also impacts on the Homeless Team's ability to find alternative private rented properties as there are less properties available. Fewer rental properties also drive-up rent levels. In Cardiff, this increase is resulting in very few properties being let at or close to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate (the maximum amount that can be claimed in benefit). In a sample of the market taken recently, 98% of properties were being let at least £100 above the LHA. The average shortfall across all bedroom types is £318 per month.

The Homeless Teams are closely monitoring the situation and taking swift and decisive action to alleviate the pressures on the service. A range of solutions are being put into place which include increasing temporary accommodation provision, allocating more social housing to homeless clients, supporting access to the private rented sector through financial incentives and improving homeless prevention services so that people are supported at an early stage before they reach crisis point.

There is a range of services in place to help people who may be struggling with their rent and the help available is continuing to be publicised through the Council's social media channels and various other publicity campaigns. I would urge anyone who may be experiencing difficulties to contact the Advice Line on 029 2087 1071 so help can be provided as quickly as possible.

Joint Working between Homelessness Services and Health

The Homeless Multi-Disciplinary Team, which supports some of the most vulnerable and complex homeless people in the city, has been working closely with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board, Substance Misuse Area Planning Board, Primary Care in Communities Team (PCIC) and the Cardiff & Vale Health Inclusion Service (CAVHIS) to improve access to health services for people living in temporary and supported accommodation.

Significant progress has been made over the last few years with a range of health services now provided directly in several homeless schemes. These include GP sessions, nurse-led clinics, optometry outreach clinics, dietetics and, more recently, podiatry. There are also additional services such as counselling and substance misuse treatment and support available, and these are making a significant difference to people residing in our schemes. CAVHIS provides access to public health screening and short-term support for many vulnerable groups in the city who find it hard to access healthcare and who are not registered with a GP. Often service users living in supported accommodations are digitally excluded and will not engage with primary or secondary care services, leaving their health issues until they require urgent attention through attendance at A&E or Out of Hours Services.

Building further on this, an exciting pilot project will provide a safe space for people living in homeless schemes and the opportunity to engage with various forms of digitally enabled healthcare, including video consultations, health screening and self-referrals. The initial pilot will be located at the Ty Ephraim supported accommodation scheme, with a view to expand to other schemes if the pilot is successful. The dedicated space will be private and fitted with equipment to enable video consultations to be provided by the Health Board. This will allow service users at Ty Ephraim to engage with various primary and secondary care services through “Attend Anywhere”, the nationally advocated video consultation platform for NHS Wales. This pilot project is being developed alongside the Health Pod pilot, which aims to provide similar types of digitally enabled healthcare to all digitally excluded patients across Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.

‘My Way Home’ Project

A range of work is currently underway aimed at preventing and alleviating youth homelessness in the city. National Lottery funding of £10m was recently made available to fund a limited number of strategic projects. A successful bid was made to the fund, with the full support of the Council, for an exciting project that will be led by Llamau in partnership with many local third sector and housing partners, together with organisations including Cardiff Council, Welsh Refugee Council, Cardiff University and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board. The “My Way Home” project sets out to redress the balance of inequality faced by homeless young people who are often discriminated against because of their natural reactions to the trauma they have experienced. The project will identify young people at risk of becoming homeless and work to prevent this from happening by using the Upstream Cymru approach. Upstream Cymru is based on the original Geelong project developed in Australia. It is a model of early intervention for young people at risk of disengaging with school, becoming homeless and entering the justice system.

Working in partnership with Cardiff University, the project aims to identify school-aged children and their families who may be at risk of homelessness, via a survey, in order to provide early intervention and targeted support. Studies have shown that youth homelessness can be reduced by 40% where such a scheme is implemented. The project is underway with 733 pupils in Cardiff already surveyed. Officers from Housing & Communities and Education will be taking this work forward with Llamau to raise awareness of this important work and to offer it to more schools as the project develops.

Where homelessness cannot be prevented, wraparound, specialist, person-centred and trauma-informed support will be provided to young people whilst they are homeless. This includes:

- Targeted Youth Service engagement, based on data collected via the Upstream Project
- Specialist support workers for those in supported accommodation with complex needs
- The “Step Into” Programme, offering learning, training, employment, peer mentoring opportunities and a range of diversionary activities
- Specialist support from the Welsh Refugee Council
- Young parents support

There will also be a focus on mental health and wellbeing, with a full-time psychologist appointed by the Health Board. Platfform, a mental health charity, will provide a bespoke 10-week programme focusing on improving young people’s wellbeing. Finally, access to bespoke longer-term housing using the Housing First approach will also be available for those young people that need it.

Young Person’s Multi-Disciplinary Team

Another part of our work to address youth homelessness is our new Young Person’s Multi-Disciplinary (MDT) Team. This builds on the success of existing Homelessness MDT, which was established in 2019. The new team will focus on young people with complex and multiple needs, especially those presenting to homelessness services. This pilot project aims to provide therapeutic intervention, support and treatment to address the underlying issues that often result in homelessness. The team will undertake in-depth assessments, leading to a person-centred co-ordinated support and treatment plans, allowing young people to discuss their specific needs and access dedicated support from a range of professionals. The team is funded jointly by the Council and Cardiff & Vale University Health Board to meet the needs of the most vulnerable young people in the city.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
23 September 2022