
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Homelessness Update

Demand across our temporary accommodation gateways remains very high and there are currently almost 2,000 households in temporary, supported and hotel accommodation across the city. The Council also still has exclusive use of four hotels to provide emergency accommodation.

To ensure an ongoing response to this demand, we continue to increase the amount of temporary accommodation available. The Gasworks site in Grangetown is nearing completion and will accommodate our homeless families. In addition to this, I am pleased that fire safety works required at the Baileys Court family scheme in Adamsdown have been completed. These units have now been allocated to homeless families. In addition, a permanent site for those ready for move-on has also been opened within the city. This site will enable us to permanently accommodate up to 50 individuals, whilst freeing up much-needed supported accommodation.

Our emergency accommodation at Tŷ Olympian in Cardiff Bay has now closed, with eligible service users being allocated units across our Single Persons Gateway. Whilst there is a lot to learn from this project, given the scale of the housing crisis, the scheme was pivotal in reducing the number of rough sleepers in the city from approximately 50 to 20. The number of rough sleepers remains low and work is ongoing to ensure that we continue to engage with our rough sleepers.

Homelessness Prevention

There are currently just over 400 households being supported that are at risk of homelessness. The excellent partnership between the Housing Advice Team and Llamau is also continuing to support our homeless prevention work by providing an invaluable mediation service that supports families going through relationship breakdowns to help them communicate better and stay together. Since April 2023, 81% of households threatened with homelessness have been successfully prevented by our work to support customers to remain in their homes or find alternative accommodation. In addition, the number of young people accessing homeless prevention services continues to increase, with both of our Young Person's Prevention Officers nearing caseload capacity. Further work will be undertaken to understand why more young people are presenting and what we can do to address this.

I would like to thank all of the teams in the Homelessness and Housing Services for their continued hard work and dedication throughout this very difficult time for housing in Cardiff.

Refurbishment of Tŷ Ephraim

Refurbishment work on our temporary accommodation at Tŷ Ephraim will commence shortly. This will add kitchens to each unit of the accommodation so that residents can prepare their own food and develop their skills to live independently. This refurbishment will help us deliver on our commitment to provide high quality accommodation for those in housing need.

Housing Development Programme

Our new build housing development programme has delivered 190 new properties during the period from April 2023 to the end of February 2024. This takes the overall total delivery of new council homes in Cardiff to 1,039 to date. There are also a further 11 new build projects on site which, when completed, will significantly increase the number of new homes completed.

Addison House in Rumney – our new community living scheme, which has delivered 44 high quality, sustainable, low carbon apartments that support independent living for older residents – has been officially handed over to the Council. So far, 24 tenants have signed up to downsize into the scheme, thereby freeing up much-needed family accommodation in the city.

This is the first of 10 community living schemes that we are delivering through our new build programme. A further three new community living schemes are currently being constructed in Riverside, Butetown and St Mellons. Our construction partner for the new community living scheme at Leckwith Road in Riverside has also been nominated for a national award for achieving the highest score in relation to environmental impact/local community and workforce.

When all of our 10 new community living schemes have been completed, we will have invested over £200 million in delivering 620 new older person apartments across the city – housing that meets the needs and aspirations of older people and supports independent living.

The procurement process to appoint a partner developer to deliver around 2,000 new homes through our second Housing Partnership Programme has reached a milestone following completion of the Pre-Qualification stage and we have entered into competitive dialogue with three successful bidders. This process will be completed by the end of this year.

Leasing Scheme Wales

The Landlord Enquiries & Tenancy Support (LETS) Team has been working closely with landlords to encourage sign-up to the Leasing Scheme Wales, the Welsh Government-backed leasing scheme that offers guaranteed rental income for between five and twenty years. I am pleased that we have now reached our initial target of 67 properties on the Leasing Scheme Wales. Following this success, the scheme will be expanded to a maximum of 404 properties. The team will actively promote this scheme through a publicity campaign to local landlords in the new financial year.

School Holiday Activities at St Mellons Hub

The Community Volunteering Team worked with the Passport to the City Team and St Mellons Hub to arrange for a series of partners to deliver free activities and workshops for children and young people during the school half-term holiday last month. These included a broad range of activities from street dancing workshops with Little Gigs to tiny robot coding with the Curriculum Team, to an interactive opera performance of Snow White with the Royal College of Music and Drama. The team used these sessions as an opportunity to talk to parents and young people to gain feedback, which will inform the programme of volunteering activities being produced going forward. Based on this feedback, they will now be running a volunteer-led programme of activities at St Mellons Hub during the Easter school holiday period.

Visits to Hubs by Local Children's Author

Whitchurch, Llanishen, Penylan and Radyr Hubs have recently welcomed local children's author P.G. Bell to read some of his stories, as well as getting involved with colouring and literature related activities. P.G. Bell is the author of The Train to Impossible Places series, which was shortlisted for Waterstones Children's Book Prize in 2019, as well as other books and stories. These visits to our Hubs provided children with a fantastic reading opportunity that encouraged them to let their imagination run wild. The events were a huge success, with a large number of adults and children in attendance who also provided really positive feedback.

World War II Workshops

Llanishen Hub organised World War II workshops at Coed Glas Primary School, which included a World War II trail at Llanishen Cemetery, a visit to three war graves, and exploring the village hall where evacuees were sent. This was followed by a workshop at the Hub, which explored what happened in Cardiff and Llanishen during The Blitz. During the event, a local resident shared stories about his mother who is believed to have become the first female railway signalwoman in the UK and potentially worldwide. The workshops were supported by St. Isan Church, Cardiff Bereavement Services and Cathays Heritage Library, and really brought local history to life for the children who had a fantastic time visiting locations, examining documentation and learning how to carry out research.

Community Safety Update

Safer Streets Funding

The Community Safety Partnership has been successful in its bid for funding as part of Round 5 of the Home Office's Safer Streets Fund. The work supported by this round of funding will be focused in Adamsdown and Riverside, and is being targeted at reducing violence against women & girls and anti-social behaviour in these wards in line with Community Safety Partnership priorities. The Safer Streets funding has supported the provision of the following resources and initiatives:

- Six CCTV cameras;
- Dedicated resource for CCTV monitoring;
- Target hardening measures in a local park; and

- Virtual Decisions programme – using Virtual Reality (VR) technology as a preventative tool to reduce the risk of young people being victims of crime and violence.

The South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner's Office has also funded an initiative to reduce anti-social behaviour through motocross provision.

Elective Home Education Pilot Project

The Council's Community Safety Team, in partnership with our Education and Youth Services, has run a pilot project for parents and young people who are currently engaged in elective home education in Ely & Caerau. Community feedback from professionals and residents in Cardiff have highlighted concerns that individuals who are in elective home education are potentially more vulnerable to exploitation and criminal behaviours than those in mainstream education, as they lack access to awareness activities and information that would be provided by schools. There may also be less support or awareness of support services for parents and young people engaged in elective home education.

The pilot project, which delivered eight sessions in a community space, sought to provide those in elective home education with a variety of presentations and activities that could improve attendees' knowledge of potential safety risks. During the project, the families helped to plan and develop the sessions, with individuals sharing ideas of what they would like to achieve. The project included wide partnership involvement, with sessions being delivered by South Wales Fire & Rescue Service, South Wales Police, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board, Cardiff Youth Service's Digital Team and Corporate Apprenticeships.

The project was positively received by those who attended and families are keen for the service to continue. The outcomes of the pilot project are currently being evaluated and funding opportunities will be explored in order to support the continuation of the project.

Cardiff Strategic CCTV Meeting

A partnership meeting between the Council and South Wales Police has been established to better allocate CCTV resources to areas of concern as part of the management of the CCTV camera response to anti-social and criminal behaviour in the city. This meeting focuses on the data-led allocation and installation of funded CCTV cameras, the co-ordination and communication between partners and assets, and the response to received requests for CCTV. Since its establishment in late 2022/early 2023, the Cardiff Strategic CCTV Meeting has received more than 20 requests for CCTV provision across Cardiff, of which more than a third of requests have been supported. Of those requests which were not supported, the majority of locations have seen other measures implemented, such as increased patrols or improved lighting, to help tackle criminal or anti-social behaviour.

Serious Violence Duty

In response to the Serious Violence Duty, a draft Violence Prevention Strategy and delivery plan have been developed, which will be subject to consultation over coming weeks. An evaluation of progress will be undertaken at the end of the year in order to understand what works, identify improvements in data collection, and consider options for sustainable funding.

Street Based Lifestyles Group

The Terms of Reference of the Street Based Lifestyles Group are currently being reviewed and refreshed to ensure the focus of the group is accurate in terms of the current concerns affecting the cohort. The proposed primary priorities are substance misuse, homelessness, and safeguarding. A suicide prevention approach would be a supplementary priority of the group. Key actions for the group include ensuring that a harm reduction methodology is applied to all decision making, preventing drug use, adopting a continuous improvement methodology and problem-solving approach to supported accommodation, and utilising the Violence Prevention Strategy to identify and address risks associated with street-based lifestyles and violence.

Operationally, officers supporting work within the Street Based Lifestyles priority area have been focused on the wards of Butetown, Riverside, Adamsdown and Splott, and have undertaken the following key actions:

- Established a task & finish group in North Butetown to address resident and business concerns relating to drug use and anti-social behaviour outside the local primary school and church. The work of the group is ongoing and has good attendance from council services, local supported accommodation managers, South Wales Police and ward councillors. The group is working to improve drug paraphernalia reporting, knowledge and response, explore funding options to target harden locations, and scope community safety improvement measures, such as lighting and CCTV.
- Improved reporting mechanisms for Park Rangers across Cardiff for drug paraphernalia and other items relating to criminal activity.
- Implemented a problem-solving model in Tudor Street to address individual and community behavioural issues centred around a supported accommodation site. Following testing and evaluation, this model will be rolled out to other areas.
- Facilitated a quarterly meeting in Adamsdown/Splott to understand the concerns facing the community and to work with police and health services to address cross-cutting issues.

Problem Solving Group

The Problem Solving Group currently has no assigned project manager, but recruitment is underway and a project manager is expected to be in post by May 2024. The work currently undertaken by the Problem Solving Group centres around facilitation of conversation and action around low level anti-social behaviour in multiple areas of the city. Current projects relate to youth annoyance in Llanrumney, nuisance vehicles in Cardiff Bay, and anti-social behaviour in parks in Splott & Tremorfa.

In addition, the Problem Solving Group is in process of setting up a multi-agency meeting to better understand the current partnership position and response in relation to off-road and nuisance vehicles in the city. This meeting will concentrate on understanding actions taken in relation to enforcement, education, intelligence and safeguarding, and will support the development of a delivery plan outlining proposed partnership work in 2024/25. The Problem Solving Group will also focus on implementing the initiatives funded through Round 5 of the Home Office's Safer Streets Fund.

City Centre Group

The City Centre Group has recognised the need for a student-specific sub-group in relation to student safety within the night-time economy. The group has acknowledged that Cardiff has a large and growing student population, which has a positive influence on the city's night-time economy, and that students have specific challenges and vulnerabilities related to the evening and night-time economy. The first bi-monthly meeting to support student-specific safety needs took place on 29 February 2024.

The City Centre Group is also working with health partners to develop a harm reduction event specific to recreational drug use in the night-time economy. The event will focus on raising awareness and improving understanding of the principles of harm reduction, exploring where harm reduction approaches and strategies have been adopted and how this can be developed in a Cardiff context.

The Council is currently undertaking work as part of the City Centre priority area to understand and map cross-sectional work by our Community Safety and City Centre Management Teams within the city centre. This work will help to develop a more joined-up approach to tackling criminal and anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
22 March 2024