
HOUSING & COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Single Persons Gateway Review

I am extremely pleased to announce that the number of people identified as sleeping rough in Cardiff was down to 34, as of 23 January 2020. This has more than halved when compared to previous figures recorded in January 2018 (73) and January 2019 (73) and is the lowest figure for six years. I would like to congratulate the outreach and multi-disciplinary teams for all their efforts in providing support to those sleeping rough in the city. We recognised a need to change the way that we deliver some of our services and I'm pleased that the new arrangements are having a positive impact on people who really need our support.

We are undertaking a strategic review of services for single homeless and vulnerable people in Cardiff. This is in response to the increase in complexity of vulnerable clients in Cardiff and the subsequent difficulties that our accommodation and support providers are experiencing when supporting these vulnerable groups. The review is also needed to respond to the continued high levels of rough sleeping in the city and the projected increase in single person homelessness.

The strategic review is focusing on four distinct areas of work, and we have made significant progress against all four areas:

- **Accommodation & Support:** Using learning from recent research trips to Finland and Glasgow, we have held two working groups with partners to develop a Cardiff-specific model of Housing First. These working groups have analysed the three models of Housing First currently being piloted in Cardiff and discussed the challenges in delivering this model of service, as well as the significant successes of the schemes. This will help us to develop sustainable and expanded schemes going forward. We have also developed minimum standards of emergency accommodation using best practice from across the UK. Much of our newer provision already meets this new standard and we are consulting with partners about how we can implement the new standard across all provision.
- **Assessing & Meeting Complex Needs:** Using learning from visits across the UK and Europe, together with a detailed needs analysis of Cardiff's homelessness population, we are working with partners to develop a new pathway for single homelessness people in Cardiff. This pathway includes a multi-agency assessment and accommodation centre model, ensuring that we can meet the needs of clients with the most complex needs. We are also working with our supported housing providers and Registered Social Landlords to work towards the Welsh Government aim of no evictions into homelessness.

- **Homeless Prevention, Rapid Rehousing and Move-on:** We are expanding our prevention work with single people who are threatened with homelessness and working to rapidly rehouse those who do become homeless. We are working closely with private sector landlords to develop a new leasing scheme that will allow tenants to stay longer in their new homes.
- **Street-Based Lifestyles:** Our Environmental Improvement Group is working with a range of partners from health, criminal justice, waste management and the third sector to help the residents of Butetown with issues in their neighbourhood. A public health needs assessment is in train, which will help us to understand the specific health needs of individuals who are injecting drugs. This will help to reduce the health harms and community impact of public injecting.

The delivery of these four workstreams is being overseen by a strategic partnership board, which I chair. Two board meetings have already been held with the next one arranged for March 2020.

Whitchurch & Rhydypennau Hub Projects

The Cabinet agreed in May 2018 to build upon the success of the Hub Strategy in Cardiff by developing wellbeing services in the North and West of the City. There are a large number of older people living in the North and West of the City and, as a result, there is an identified need to bring together services with a focus on wellbeing, community engagement and independent living via the creation of new Community Hubs.

Funding has been secured from the Welsh Government's Museum, Archives and Libraries division and the Integrated Care fund to transform the existing buildings at Rhydypennau and Whitchurch Libraries and both sites closed earlier this month to enable work to commence. The refurbishment of these sites will include extensions and internal improvements. The extension at Rhydypennau will provide a new community room, an improved entrance, accessible parking and landscaping. The enhancements at Whitchurch will include the creation of a community room, the reinstatement of the original entrance, internal refurbishment and the installation of accessible toilets.

The new Hubs will open by summer 2020 and offer programmes that will support people to stay healthy, independent and active in their communities. This will include the provision of specialist housing advice and access to events and activities which will provide low level therapeutic activities for people to benefit from and enjoy. Work will take place with partner organisations, local groups and volunteers to ensure that the services provided are tailored to the needs of the community and enhance the library services that will continue to be successfully delivered in the new and enhanced buildings.

Welsh Public Library Standards

I was very pleased to receive the assessment from the Welsh Government of the Welsh Public Library Standards. The Standards framework monitors the performance of library services within Cardiff on an annual basis and I am very happy to be able to say that the report overall was a very positive one. Highlights include remaining the most visited Library service within Wales in terms of the numbers of people across Cardiff who regularly visit our Hubs and Libraries, as well as virtual visits from those who access the digital services that are offered. I am particularly pleased to note that the numbers of active library borrowers and members are increasing year on year and this I believe is a reflection of the quality library services that Cardiff continues to deliver.

Cardiff Hubs & Library Service now records the highest number of children's book loans per Capital in Wales and this is supported by a children's literacy programme that delivers events and activities to inspire children to develop their reading skills, including the Summer Reading Challenge of course which this year saw more children completing the full challenge than previous years with over 19 thousand books being read. The report also acknowledges the strong support that Cardiff provides for health and wellbeing including offering a full range of services as well as leading on sector-wide initiatives. Cardiff Hubs & Libraries Service has a lot to offer to the citizens of Cardiff and I am glad that Welsh Government has recognised this within the Library standards assessment.

Transport for Wales Bus Passes

Since Transport for Wales became the administrators of the bus passes process, Central Library hub has helped over 11,000 customers apply via the online process, plus more by post and through advice enabling customers to apply themselves. Cardiff itself has 37,000 applications, which means Central Library Hub has assisted with a third of the city's applications since 11th September 2019. I would like to thank those officers who have provided this support to so many customers, going over and above the call of duty. Central Library Hub assisted Transport for Wales in testing their systems and offered feedback to enable them to resolve many online issues. The team has shown great commitment helping customers become digitally literate, working as a team to support with customers in a friendly and timely manner earned us many positive comments, and recognition in the letters section of the paper.

Smart Meters

Cardiff Council is working in partnership with Smart Energy GB to enable older people in the city to learn about smart meters and the positive changes they can bring. Some of the aims of the project are to encourage over 65s in Cardiff to take up a smart meter, to dispel any myths about smart meters, and to promote other energy saving schemes such as Warm Home Discount and NEST. A number of teams within the council have been briefed about the benefits of smart meters to ensure that we are reaching all our customers. We have also extended this to Housing Associations and partners around Cardiff. Two energy saving bingo events were hosted successfully at Central and Llandaff hubs and officers have, for example, attended coffee morning and community groups to help promote the use of smart meters, to dispel myths about smart meters, and to explain how to use a smart meter using the in-home display screen to monitor energy consumption and reduce energy bills.

Community Safety

As Co-Chair of the Community Safety Strategic Leadership Board with the South Wales Police & Crime Commissioner, I am pleased to update members on some of the progress that has been made in this area over the past 12 months. The Council has worked with colleagues from the Police, Health Board, Probation, the city centre business community and the third sector to significantly strengthen our approach to community safety in the city, and we have identified and agreed a number of priorities aimed at tackling some of our key challenges. Our priorities are:

- City Centre & Street Sleepers
- Violence Prevention
- Prevent & CONTEST
- Locality Based Working

Notable successes include the significant reduction in the number of individuals sleeping rough, which is now at its lowest level for three years, and the number of tents in the city centre. In addition, the launch of the Violence Prevention Unit, introducing a new approach to preventing violent crime, including knife and organised crime, working in partnership with public health.

The Cardiff Community Safety Partnership has also recognised the need to tackle crime in our city's poorest communities. It is for this reason that we have chosen to focus on developing a locality approach in wards with particularly pronounced community safety issues, beginning in 2019 with Butetown and Splott. In these two wards, locality based working groups are working across partners and with the community to identify the issues that matter most to the communities and to develop and implement a range of initiatives to not only tackle crime, but also provide opportunities for communities and young people to make their areas better places to live.

We are also improving links with the Safeguarding Board, Youth Offending Board and Area Planning Board to have a more joined up approach to addressing some of the very complex issues we face in tackling crime and creating safer communities.

We still have lots to do, but I would like to assure members that all partners are committed to working together and we now have strong partnership arrangements in place to make sure that this commitment gets turned into action and, ultimately, improves the safety of our city's communities and the lives of the people of Cardiff.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
24 January 2020