

Homelessness Action Group
Thursday 22 August 2019 13:00 – 16:00
Community Housing Cymru, 2 Ocean Way, Cardiff, CF25 5TG

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees:

Jon Sparkes	Chief Executive, Crisis (Chair)
Katie Dalton	Director, Cymorth Cymru
Peter Mackie	Senior Lecturer, Cardiff University
Naomi Alleyne	Director of Social Services & Housing, WLGA
Clare Budden	CEO, Clwyd Alyn Housing
Clarissa Corbisiero	Director of Policy, Community Housing Cymru
Sian Aldridge	The Wallich (representing Lindsay Cordery-Bruce)
Nick Morris	Policy & Communications Manager, Crisis
Sarah Rhodes	Head of Homelessness, Welsh Government
Mark Price	Project Lead & Group Secretariat, Welsh Government
Sarah Bonwick	Homelessness Policy Team, Welsh Government

Apologies:

Tamsin Stirling	Freelance Housing Expert
Frances Beecher	Chief Executive, Llamau
John Puzey	Chief Executive, Shelter Cymru
Lindsay Cordery-Bruce	Chief Executive, The Wallich
Bonnie Navarra	Lead Change Maker, Future Generations Office
Glynne Roberts	Programme Manager, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Gaynor Toft	Corporate Manager, Housing, Ceredigion Council
Emma Williams	Deputy Director, Housing Policy Division, Welsh Government

JS welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Homelessness Action Group and apologies were noted.

This was a workshop style meeting. Members were split into two separate groups with both groups asked to consider the following questions for circa 45 minutes each before rotating between questions:

Question 1: What can we now in the short term (between now and next March) to reduce rough sleeping?

Question 2: What tertiary prevention measures should be adopted to look to stop people falling into rough sleeping?

The following feedback was provided during a plenary session in the final section of the meeting.

Question 1

i/ What areas should we focus on

- Consider all areas but look to concentrate resources in particular areas of high rough sleeping but also some rural areas.

ii/ Outreach workers

- Enable a sense of empowerment through personalised budgets.
- Element of mobility required.
- Requires a philosophy of “if it is legal, moral and ethical – do it”, to encourage creativity.

iii/ Emergency accommodation

- Important to get the right type of accommodation but recognising there are shortfalls in certain areas eg lack of safe space for women, separate dry & wet areas.
- Tap into faith based or charity accommodation provision.
- Consider a wide range of accommodation types – eg chalet, but not shipping containers or pods.

iv/ Barriers around the law

- Consider priority need rehousing duties and if there is a way to pilot different approaches in certain areas.
- Recognition that the legislation is “the law” and not an enabler ie you can do more than the minimum requirements.

v/ Multi agency co-operation

- Adopt a daily case conference approach.
- Consideration of funding for a dedicated co-ordinator post.
- Co-location of teams.
- No discharge into homelessness and what that may mean in the short term ie better referral systems.
- Provision of assertive and persistent outreach focused on building trusted relationships to house people and providing the resources to enable that.

vi/ Public attitudes and working with the local community

- Supporting people to do helpful things in their community and tap into local resources.
- Better community involvement eg giving out tents to homeless people.

vii/ Links to police and other enforcement agencies

- Link to agency co-operation.
- Use of the Vagrancy Act and PSPOs
- Addressing attitudes.

viii/ Housing stock

- Link to emergency provision and better use of LA/RSL voids over the winter.
- Consideration of what happens to temporary accommodation after the winter ie can accommodation provided for the winter be the catalyst for longer term provision.
- Acceleration of Housing First and other housing led projects.
- Appropriate support and training for service providers.
- Consideration of diversionary methods eg provision of courses.
- Better data provision and evaluation, including monitoring of outcomes.

Action Point: PM and TS were asked to consider potential evaluation options.

Question 2

i/ Longer term funding

- Move away from 1 – 2 year funding cycle commitments.

ii/ Pathways out of homelessness

- Public sector agencies should never move people into homelessness.
- Dedicated housing officer in prisons and other places with vulnerable people.
- Longer term multi-agency co-funding.

iii/ Rapid support

- Support for people who are not yet homeless but have things that are starting to go wrong in their lives – should be a referral duty to accommodation providers.
- Better training and more multi-agency signposting and working together.

iv/ Rapid housing

- Adopt a policy of not placing people into hostels, and strategic decommissioning of hostels longer term.
- Requirement for more stock and also to make better use of existing stock.
- WG housing funding provision to include housing vulnerable people.
- Planning permission changes to be made easier.

- Better tenancy support provision to help people into tenancies and move them into something more suitable and not eviction ie if inability to afford rent in one area and may be better suited affordable accommodation in a different area.
- Identify money already in the system that can be better spent on prevention.

v/ Priority need

- Consideration of legislative changes to enable better supply of the right type of accommodation.
- Challenge of devolved and non devolved service provision.
- Consideration of different housing models (eg single unit housing) linked to more flexible models of funding.
- A homeless bill of rights.

JS thanked everyone for their contribution and said that the output narrative from this session will be used to produce a first draft report which will be circulated to the group in readiness for the next meeting. The lived experience work, operating in parallel, will also need to feed in to the report.