

Homelessness Action Group
Thursday 14 November 2019 10:30 – 13:30
Maes Y Dderwen, Grosvenor Road, Wrexham, LL11 1BX

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
John Puzey	Chief Executive, Shelter Cymru
Glynne Roberts	Programme Manager, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Gaynor Toft	Corporate Manager, Housing, Ceredigion Council
Lindsay Cordery-Bruce	Chief Executive, The Wallich
Clarissa Corbisiero	Director of Policy, Community Housing Cymru
Tamsin Stirling	Freelance Housing Expert
Nick Morris	Policy & Communications Manager, Crisis
Emma Williams	Deputy Director, Housing Policy Division, Welsh Government
Sarah Rhodes	Head of Homelessness, Welsh Government
Mark Price	Project Lead & Group Secretariat, Welsh Government

Apologies:

Frances Beecher	Chief Executive, Llamau
Bonnie Navarra	Lead Change Maker, Future Generations Office

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

Update on Local Authority Round Table Meetings

EW updated the group on the four local authority round table meetings, which were positively received. Health and police representatives have attended all meetings, as have a selection of statutory and non-statutory service providers. There are action points from each of the meetings, including signing up to the Cymorth Cymru assertive outreach principles, assertive outreach training (dates currently being finalised for all areas) and filling of posts for the rough sleeper case co-ordinator and case manager roles. Agreement in all four areas for personalised budget provision for outreach workers (equally available in both statutory and third sector areas).

Workshops

The majority of the meeting was held in workshop mode with the Action Group split into smaller discussion groups to address question 1 that the Group has been asked to consider: *what framework of policies, approaches and plans are needed to end homelessness in Wales?* The purpose of the workshops, as detailed below, was to consider the challenges by looking at the evidence at a national strategic level and considering what tools are needed to enable change.

Workshops on Universal Prevention

The Group split into three sub-groups with each group spending equal time considering: the impact on homelessness from poverty; availability & affordability of accommodation; and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Points raised from the workshop session on availability & affordability of accommodation:

- Requires a needs based approach to ensure everyone is housed through an approach of “the right home for the right person” that is safe and secure.
- Issues regarding supply and affordability of housing stock and are they in the right places (e.g. for people who want to be in areas with local connections) and of the right type (e.g. are there enough three-bed family homes) of suitable quality.
- Planning issues re consideration of affordable housing that are informing local development plans (ie development plans need to be more ambitious in considering supply and demand issues).
- Need to tap into the Affordable Housing Review to enable social housing to be built at pace and scale.
- LHA rates – affordability and rent related interventions.

Points raised from the workshop session on poverty:

- Consideration of someone (e.g. could be an independent commissioner) to work across Government and hold organisations to account re homelessness prevention.
- Needs more concentrated work evidencing child poverty.
- Affordability of accommodation and people being pulled into and kept in a cycle of Homelessness.
- Perceptions of poverty itself and changing behaviours.
- Needs better employability and employment solutions (e.g. recognising the value of work) including in-work poverty and helping areas flourish.
- Equal pay for both genders ie single female more at risk of homelessness.

- Decent education – more likely to get a stable and rewarding job. And looking at how education considers homelessness ie life skills, budgeting.
- Reviewing existing spending and what works well in certain areas but is not available universally.
- Legislate to end child poverty (as per Scotland).

Points raised from the workshop session on ACEs:

- People have been trained in ACEs but what does this mean in terms of policies and practices and the response required.
- Need to upskill all frontline service providers and identify the important people in children's lives and upskill them.
- Importance of a whole organisational approach i.e. change policies and practices following training.
- A child rights approach to this would say that the child should have "a right to be noticed" when affected by ACE trauma events in their life and have something done about it.
- "No wrong door approach" and identifying when is an appropriate juncture to intervene.
- Taking a person-centred/universal approach when considering child safety and having a "what matters" conversation and bringing homelessness and housing into the conversation. And changing culture.
- Are there enough free and/or easy to access support services available to prevent ACEs occurring in the first place.

Next Steps – the discussion points from the "starter for ten" workshop sessions will be reviewed and an update will be provided at the next meeting.

Workshops on Targeted & Crisis Prevention

The Group split into two sub-groups to consider targeted prevention and crisis prevention to consider the relevant groups to target, and to also consider the appropriate risks, triggers and interventions. It was recognised that there are existing "off the self" solutions to address homelessness including: critical time interventions, "no wrong door" policy approaches, adopting a personalised/PIE led approach, zero evictions into homelessness, and a partnership/ case conference approach to maintain tenancies or find alternatives.

Points of discussion – is zero evictions the right approach:

- This is also about no discharge into homelessness from hospitals, prisons etc and not just a housing issue.
- Needs a tailored multi-agency person centric approach (e.g. could include 24hour care provision for a small number of people) to ensure safeguarding always in

place to reduce risk of evictions. Need an early flagging system for case co-ordinator intervention.

- Should be an expectation or duty that health and police colleagues are actively engaged in the multi-agency solution.
- Issues about how we frame “the ask” in a safeguarding approach-centric manner to ensure all organisations are fully engaged and have a responsibility to work together to ensure people are not evicted into homelessness.
- Lack of availability of suitable accommodation may lead to evictions, e.g. person not housed in the right environment and therefore should be moved before eviction is considered.
- How to provide better and more stable working conditions so people feel safe and stay in their employment.
- Can the approach be extended to the PRS i.e. better provision of tenant help and support for people to keep their tenancy and how can we incentivise landlords accordingly.
- What support and advice is available regarding relationship breakups and people being able to access services without paying privately.

Points of discussion – do we have the right list of target groups and are there other interventions to consider:

- Need to ensure all interventions are considered equitably and ranked accordingly.
- Physical and mental health provision should be separated out as will have different needs.
- Critical Time Interventions are key.
- Gender specific approaches need to be improved (e.g. for the LGBT community).
- Use of predictive analytics (understanding the risk factors and how to offer early support to people at greater risk).
- Better use of information and data – who is going to do that analysis and what are the practicality.
- Link in with prison discharge and ensure no discharge into homelessness.
- We need to look at what already exists and then build in housing and homelessness across each area.
- Needs to make reference to the refugee resettlement programme.
- Need to consider resources and how pathways are being implemented in practice and the barriers that are preventing the system operating efficiently (ie to be a trusted pathway).
- Issues regarding prisoner eligibility to DWP services and benefits – UK Government issue re devolved criminal justice.
- MOD should be working with personnel before they are discharged from the forces for the issues they may have after discharge for supportive care needs after sourcing accommodation.

The feedback from these sessions will help to inform a framework for where the gaps are and the action that can be taken to address them, to feed back into the next meeting.