

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

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Date: Wednesday 6 December 2006

Time: 09.30am – 12.30pm

Venue: Senedd, Cardiff Bay

Paper From Barnardo's Cymru On Youth Homelessness In Wales

Introduction

Barnardo's Cymru has a number of services across Wales involved in the support of young homeless people. The information within this report comes from our services in Cardiff, Newport, Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea and Wrexham and service managers from each of these areas will be available to speak to the report and to take questions on the 6th December.

Information provided is in three parts:

1. an outline of our service activity in each area
2. reference to specific "good practice"
3. identification of key issues around youth homelessness

Service Activity

Cardiff – Barnardo's Marlborough Road Partnership

Provision of supported housing to young families; parents aged predominantly 16-18 years with a high proportion of the children on the Child Protection register. Support is delivered in partnership with Social Services.

Provision of supported housing to young single homeless people aged 16-21 years, including specific provision for young bme women suffering, or at risk of, domestic violence.

Housing provision is delivered in partnership with local Housing Associations.

Newport – Barnardo's Marlborough Road Partnership

Provision of supported housing to young families; parents aged predominantly 16-18 years and with a high proportion of the children on the Child Protection register. Support is primarily through Barnardo's staff.

Housing provision is delivered in partnership with a local Housing Association.

Merthyr – Barnardo’s Merthyr Partnership

Four elements of service for single young people:

- a fledgling supported lodgings scheme
- a floating support service for care leavers aged 16-21 years and for single young homeless people "in need" aged 16-18 years; the service is delivered in partnership with a local Housing Association
- a tenancy support service for 16-18 year old young people "in need"; the service is delivered in partnership with the local authority Housing Department
- a Bond Board and private tenancy support service for both care leavers and other young people "in need".

Swansea – Barnardo’s BAYS Partnership

The Barnardo’s BAYS Youth Homelessness Service delivers statutory support to young homeless people on behalf of and in partnership with the local authority Social Services and Housing departments. The service supports young homeless people 16-17 years who are "in need" as well as older (18-21 years) young homeless people. During the period January 2006 – October 2006, the service directly supported 244 young people aged 16 – 17 years presenting as homeless.

In addition to direct support of those young people who are homeless, a home support family mediation scheme aims to lessen the risk of homelessness by working to prevent family breakdown and also to repair damaged relationships post breakdown. The work of this service contributed to the prevention of homelessness in 149 of the 244 presenting young people.

Wrexham – Barnardo’s Compass Partnership

A number of different elements of service for young people aged 16-25 years

a housing advice service enabling young homeless people to access appropriate services and to exercise their rights; April 2005 to March 2006 – 162 users

a bond guarantee scheme enabling access to appropriate and affordable private sector housing for homeless young people; currently ten live bonds in Wrexham

an emergency accommodation scheme providing crisis accommodation to young homeless people; April 2005 to March 2006 – 159 nights provided to 16 young people

tenancy support to single young people and support to young parents to enable the maintenance of tenancies and minimise the risk of eviction; April 2005 to March 2006 – 28 evictions were prevented the leaving care advisory service supports over 60 care leavers in a range of accommodation types.

Good Practice

Participation of young people – making the young people with whom we work active participants in decisions made at every stage of our intervention.

Tailored support packages – addressing the individual needs of each young person/young family rather than taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach; particular success noted around integration into training/employment opportunities.

Family mediation – as noted above.

Supported Lodgings – as an appropriate medium term environment, providing individually focussed support as well as ‘family type’ accommodation for vulnerable young people.

Advice and support from within a user friendly environment – the importance of service provision from within user friendly surroundings is emphasised to us by young people.

Multi agency Young Peoples’ Housing Forum – operating in Wrexham and of great value in addressing individual issues for young people – future funding uncertain.

Office hours beyond 9.00-5.00 – offers greater access to services for young people.

Provision of practical services – for example, access to showering, laundry facilities, food and refreshment – eases crises.

Key Issues

Addressing ‘rooflessness’ does not mean addressing ‘homelessness’ – evidence of young people being encouraged/cajoled to return to home/other environments from which they originally left for reasons of personal safety.

Homelessness tends to be multi stranded – problematic aspects exist in the lives of young people beyond their lack of permanent accommodation – typically to do with child sexual exploitation, substance misuse, health, education, personal safety, emotional well being, juvenile justice.

Hidden homelessness – we do not know the full extent of the issue – how many young people who are staying in hostels, with friends and in B&B are we not aware of?

Lack of preventative work – the impact of the mediation work at the BAYS in Swansea is a positive

indicator of the need for more preventative interventions; for example in schools, on the streets, in youth service environments.

Housing Benefit and the disincentive to work – the impact on Housing Benefit eligibility rights for those young people in work is a major disincentive; also in relation to Housing Benefit levels, single room rent is a restrictive factor.

B&B: an inappropriate environment: – whilst meeting basic needs, B&B environments can typically be a risk to personal safety for the more vulnerable young homeless person and are often not environments from within which it is practicable to maintain work/education placements; there is a lack of appropriate direct access accommodation for the young and vulnerable.

Heavy focus on the heavy end of need – whilst focus on the greatest need is necessary, the lower, often equally long term, need can be sidelined or given overly low priority.

Increase in rough sleeping – noted amongst young people in Wrexham.

Limited access to move on accommodation – continues to hinder work with young people.

16-17 years old being viewed as "intentionally homeless" – contradicts the principles of being "in need".