

Social Justice and Regeneration Committee

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Date:	Wednesday 25 January 2006
Time:	9.30am to 12.30pm
Venue:	The National Assembly for Wales

Cymorth Cymru Presentation To the Social Justice and Regeneration Committee 25th January 2006

Background Paper:

Supported housing's contribution to preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness

1. Purpose

In light of the recently revised National Homelessness Strategy and its greater focus on prevention, this paper is being submitted to provide the Committee with an overview of the contribution supported housing makes to preventing homelessness and repeat homelessness (or primary and secondary homelessness).

2. Background

The prevention of homelessness is regarded as desirable and pragmatic: There can be no doubting the benefits of effective strategies that prevent homelessness. Homelessness prevention is good for individuals, families and sustainable communities. It can also result in significant savings in public expenditure (Homelessness Directorate, 2003).

Cymorth Cymru concurs wholeheartedly with the above statement and supports the Welsh Assembly Government in its promotion of preventative work in this area. A whole range of supported housing organisations in Wales contribute directly to preventing homelessness: the two presentations being made today to the Committee demonstrate successful, different and innovative approaches and other examples

of projects being carried out across Wales are briefly set out in the Appendix on page 4. Cymorth Cymru believes supported housing has a central role to play in this agenda as these examples and presentations demonstrate.

3. Defining "prevention"

Although it is widely acknowledged that as a general approach in social policy, "prevention is better than cure", it isn't always clear what the term means.

A useful definition with regards to preventing homelessness might be: activities that enable a household to remain in their current home, where appropriate or that provide options to enable a planned and timely move and help sustain independent living

It's also important to note that the prevention of homelessness refers both to the prevention of primary homelessness, i.e. preventing homelessness from occurring in the first place, and to the prevention of secondary homelessness – the prevention of recurrent episodes. Projects run by supported housing organisations respond to both issues.

4. Factors behind homelessness

There is now greater understanding of the individual and structural causes of homelessness and the characteristics of homeless people. A range of factors and types of behaviour that place individuals at risk of homelessness have been identified including: relationship breakdown, domestic violence, physical and sexual abuse, a lack of social networks, and substance misuse. Consequently, funding has rightly been targeted at identified factors and groups at risk, such as: care leavers, ex-offenders, young people, and people identified as vulnerable.

5. The contribution of supported housing

Looking at the factors and groups above, the central role of supported housing is clear in that the work the sector does responds directly to the identified factors, and the groups considered to be most at risk are included in the client groups supported housing works with. The sector provides support to a wide range of people who without it are at risk of homelessness. These include:

- People fleeing domestic violence.
- People who have misused drugs or alcohol.
- Young vulnerable people.
- Older vulnerable people.
- Ex-offenders.
- People with mental health problems.
- People with physical or learning disabilities.
- People with HIV/AIDS.

- Refugees.
- Vulnerable people from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups.
- It carries out a wide range of activities which can lead to homelessness if not tackled:
- Support with personal and emotional issues.
- Practical help to make a home and develop independent living skills.
- Support to maintain independence and personal wellbeing.
- Advice on welfare benefits and debts, rent and other payments.
- Help to set up and furnish a new home.
- Help to access community care and other specialist services.

By carrying out these activities, it not only helps the individual create a better life for themselves, but promotes more cohesive, safer and wealthier communities by facilitating the re-engagement of the individual with the community in which they live.

6. Conclusion

We welcome the revised National Homelessness Strategy's focus on prevention and hope that it will help us maximise the contribution supported housing makes to tackling homelessness in Wales. A key function of Cymorth Cymru is raising awareness of the role supported housing plays in achieving wider policy objectives and we hope this paper has outlined how the sector is central to creating a better Wales through its prevention of this extreme example of social exclusion.

Cymorth Cymru is the representative body for supported housing providers in Wales and as such has two overarching objectives:

To improve the links between policy and practice by ensuring those working in front line service delivery understand the wider policy context, and those working in policy development understand and are influenced by the experiences and knowledge of those working on the ground.

To ensure that supported housing maximises its contribution to the lives of service users and the communities in which they live by helping to build and develop the sector's capacity and professionalism.

7. Appendix

GISDA is a Gwynedd based project. It provides supported housing for 28 places for young single homeless people and 28 for young single parents, all aged between 16 and 25 years of age. This service comprises hostels, move on schemes and landlord guarantee schemes. In addition to general support needs it also offers an innovative accredited training programme for service users working alongside pupils who have been excluded from local schools. The training programme enables them to develop skills to be able to live independently and successfully within the community. For more information contact either Mair Richards or Simon Glyn on 01286 671153 or email mair@gisda.co.uk

Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd provide a housing support scheme for Travelling and Gypsy families who are waiting to be housed, or who have already been rehoused by the Association in the Wrexham area. The Traveller and Gypsy's unique culture and way of life is taken into consideration in the provision of support which enables families to settle into a house from a caravan. Help is given to increase and develop the skills needed to live successfully within the housed community, and to prevent repeat homelessness. For more information, contact Eluned Jones - eluned.jones@taiclwyd.com

Denbighshire County Council has commissioned a "GIFT" Generic Intensive Floating (support) Project which is a joint partnership between the local authority/ homelessness services and the voluntary sector (Cais, Nacro, Tai Hafan, and Women's Aid). Support staff are co-located alongside homelessness services within the local authority. Capacity will be increased in January 2006 through secondments arrangements with the Probation Service. The main aim of the project is to provide a responsive housing related support service to people who are homeless, potentially homeless or living in temporary accommodation. For more information contact Jenny Elliott, Supporting People Team Manager. Tel: 01824 712300 or email jenny.elliott@denbighshire.gov.uk

Cartrefi Cymru's Floating Support Service provides support to 21 individuals with learning disabilities who live in their own tenancies across Powys. The service provides housing and tenancy support and advice which enables them to manage and maintain their home and tenancies as well as acquiring skills which contribute to the development of increased independence and autonomy within the community. For more information contact Anne Morgan (Area Manager) email anne.morgan@cartreficymru.org

The British Red Cross has developed a Supported Discharge Scheme in Swansea. The project helps to prevent homelessness by working with clients who are leaving hospital where it has been identified that their living conditions and/or personal situations could result in homelessness if left unresolved. Help can include maximising personal income and debt management; finding more suitable accommodation; sourcing furniture and white goods; building confidence and life skills; and signposting to other agencies and services. For further details contact: Joanna Fowles, Tel 01792 772146 or (Direct Line)784917

JFowles@redcross.org.uk

The Wallich Clifford Community manages Tenancy and Floating Support projects in Swansea, Carmarthenshire, Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent, and Aberystwyth. The projects provide support to over 300 people who have their own accommodation but for whatever reason, are having difficulty in maintaining their tenancy.

For more information contact: 02920 668464, gareth.corbin@wallichclifford.net or visit www.wallichclifford.com.

Riverside is a Cardiff based project developed and managed by the Wallich Clifford that provides support and accommodation for 8 homeless people who are committed to taking part in training,

education or voluntary work.

For more information contact: 02920 668464, gareth.corbin@wallichclifford.net or visit www.wallichclifford.com.

The Community House Team (CHT) is a Cardiff based project developed and managed by the Wallich Clifford Community. CHT accommodates 33 homeless people with a dual-diagnosis in shared houses or self-contained flats. Residents receive support in managing mental health problems and substance misuse issues. For more information contact: 02920 668464, gareth.corbin@wallichclifford.net or visit www.wallichclifford.com

Ty Bronna is a Cardiff based project developed by Cadwyn HA and managed by Church Army. It provides 13 young people who have either been or are at risk of being homeless with a temporary home and the support they need to develop life skills that will enable them to live independently and successfully within the community. Church Army's additional projects in Cardiff include Ty Danescourt (6 units), Ty Carlile (4units), DC2 resettlement scheme and the Amber Project working with young people who self harm. For more information contact: Rev.d Jon Durley, Claudia Donovan or Susan Way on 02920556 929.

Nightingale House is a brand new hostel for homeless families in Cardiff developed and managed by Cadwyn HA. It provides 26 families with a temporary home and the support they need to tackle the issues that may have led to them becoming homeless in the first place. It facilitates a range of training and development opportunities to enable residents to develop the skills and confidence to live successfully within the community. For more information contact: Helen Armstrong by email at helen.armstrong@cadwyn.co.uk