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Ymgynghoriad ar ddiartrefedd – Hydref 2022

Consultation on homelessness – Autumn 2022

Ymateb gan: Llamau

Response from: Llamau

## **Local Government and Housing Committee**

**Chair: John Griffiths MS**

## **Llamau Response to Homelessness Consultation**

### **About Llamau**

Llamau is Wales' leading homelessness charity.

### **What We Do**

We believe that we all have the right to fulfil our potential, and to feel safe and secure, despite the difficult circumstances we sometimes face.

Llamau is the leading homelessness charity in Wales, supporting the most vulnerable young people and women. We are particularly well known for working with those most at risk - care leavers, people who have been involved with the criminal justice system, people who have experienced domestic abuse and people who have had chaotic and disadvantaged lifestyles. They need high levels of individual support to help them gain the skills necessary for them to live independent and purposeful lives in their communities.

At Llamau, we never give up on anyone.

**"When I feel depressed or sad I talk with my worker and I feel good when I talk with them. They are helpful and give me loads of support and advice."**

Our support is flexible and tailored to individual need; underlined through strong values and culture and a psychologically and trauma informed response.

Llamau is daring to imagine a world without homelessness. We are determined to create a Wales where no young person or woman ever has to be homeless.

We focus our support in three key areas in order to bring about an end to homelessness.

- 1) **Early Intervention and Prevention:** this means preventing homelessness before it happens and not waiting until people reach crisis point before they get the support they need. This involves going 'upstream' of the issue and in the long run is a much more cost-effective way of tackling homelessness.
- 2) **Safe Accommodation:** this means providing homely and safe supported accommodation and refuges, and not institutional hostels. These are places that people can genuinely call home and which give people a safe platform from which to rebuild their futures.
- 3) **Support to Move On:** this means recognising that with the right support everyone can move on to live independently in their communities. We focus on supporting people with mental and physical health issues which have developed from the traumas they have experienced and on supporting people into education and training so they are able to move into sustainable jobs, which allow them to move on from homelessness for good.

## **Early Intervention and Prevention**

Llamau is committed to the principle that targeted early intervention on the common causes of youth homelessness can sustainably prevent the harm, hardship and costly long-term crises it invariably causes. Between 6,000 and 7,000 young people in Wales ask for help with homelessness each year – up to a quarter of all presentations and likely a large underestimate of the true figure in need – with key drivers shown to be family relationship breakdown, educational disengagement and the impact of traumatic experiences on wellbeing. To address this Llamau run a wide range of Early Intervention and Prevention services aimed at making youth homelessness rare, brief and non-recurrent wherever possible.

Youth Homelessness particularly is a complex social issue with those at risk difficult to identify at first. It can often stem from a young person being exposed to difficult social settings, family conflicts, to becoming less engaged in school activities. In the end, the young person faces unavoidable life patterns, and are trapped in unsafe environments without someone to turn to. Youth homelessness can be challenging to tackle, but anything is possible to achieve with prompt intervention.

Llamau believes that far more can and should be done with Early Intervention and Prevention. Examples of excellent practice are below:

### **Upstream Cymru**

Our school-based early intervention programme, Upstream Cymru, has been designed by specialists to address research gaps into key homelessness risk factors for students aged 11-16 and intervene at the earliest possible stage. The accessible data is essential to create safe environments for **young students who spend most**

of their days in a school facility, and help them seek support when facing a crisis.

It is of concern to Llamau that a programme highlighted through research by WG, now is largely ignored by WG, at times being shown negativity, when its benefits and Llamau's expertise is recognised across the UK and Europe. We would urge the committee to ask the question why WG is uninterested in supporting the Upstream Pilot and unaccepting of its stark difference to and how it can complement and enhance the YEPT. It is frustrating when Scotland and England have accepted this great pilot and learning from Llamau, we are unsupported in this potentially vitally important tool to identify young people at the very earliest opportunity. The implementer of the YEPT framework has been open in saying Upstream lends itself perfectly to being part of that framework

The first of its kind in Europe, Llamau's innovative early intervention project **Upstream Cymru** aims to identify young people at risk of future homelessness through running carefully developed surveys within participating schools across Wales. These surveys identify key underlying indicators of homelessness such as educational disengagement, family conflict and poor wellbeing; providing a vital starting point to offer a range of targeted support before they hit a crisis point. Ultimately, we aim to develop a deeper understanding of the underlying factors influencing youth homelessness in Wales and work with our partners to prevent it from happening wherever we can.

To date, **the project has surveyed over 1800** pupils with **1 in 7 being deemed at risk of future homelessness**, including over **500** not known to statutory services who would otherwise have slipped through the net. We will continue to support those identified to strengthen their connections within school, family and other natural support networks and remain safely in the family home where appropriate. This process, already trialled successfully in other countries, has seen a dramatic reduction in those becoming homeless or needing crisis interventions in later life.

**The project has also reached over 400 pupils in participating schools through delivery of specialist PSHE lessons**, with colleagues sharing awareness-raising resources, challenging perceptions and facilitating open conversations about what causes youth homelessness and where to get help.

## Family Mediation

Llamau's Family Mediation services have successfully supported young people and their families across Wales for over 20 years, identifying and resolving issues that have led to relationship breakdown – the no 1 driver of youth homelessness. Working with a range of local partners, our highly skilled, experienced mediators

work with everyone in the family home to identify the causes of conflict from all sides. We seek to provide a shared understanding whilst providing the tools, resources and support to overcome their issues amicably, and giving families the skills to resolve future issues together. Where sadly this is not safe or possible to achieve, our teams aim to improve relationships with appropriate family members and support moves from home.

**369 young people** were supported to achieve positive and sustainable housing outcomes through our Family Mediation services last year. **8 in 10 were enabled to remain safely within their family homes.**

We would ask the committee to examine why there has been **0% uplift** over the last 12 years from WG. Consequently, WG are handing over to local authorities programmes (LA) that do not even cover a basic salary. Consequently, mediation is greatly at risk, with LA already saying they can't afford to meet a 12 years deficit.

## **EMPHASIS**

EMPHASIS outreach project is a successful model of enabling young people at risk of homelessness to re-engage with education and address wellbeing issues such as anxiety. The project was developed over 15 years ago through consultation with young people we supported in our services who told us that help with key issues had been lacking at a crucial early stage in their lives.

EMPHASIS support initially deals with urgent crisis issues before progressing to preventative steps at a pace suited to the young person. Building a respectful and trusting relationship, we identify the underlying reasons for any barriers faced and provide a platform to overcome these together. Our colleagues work with the whole family, offering advice, advocacy and access to pathways for each young person to achieve their aspirations.

**Nearly 100 young people were supported by our EMPHASIS projects across South Wales last year, with 94% of young people supported over the last 2 years engaged in employment, education and/or training at the end of support**

## **VAWDASV Homelessness Early Intervention and IRIS**

Our refuges work alongside a wide range of targeted and specialist programmes that **reached over 1500 women, young people and families last year.** Early

intervention is a crucial element of our mission to prevent domestic abuse and alleviate its impact on individuals and families.

**IRIS (Identification & Referral to Improve Safety)** is a flagship service across GP surgeries in Gwent to prevent domestic abuse. Research shows that health practitioners are often in a unique position to identify domestic abuse at an early stage and support people affected to access the right help and support. Since its inception in summer 2021, **we have identified and supported over 250 women at risk, with nearly 500 health professionals accessing training through the programme.** This vital service has seen **99% of professionals reporting a better understanding of health conditions associated with domestic abuse** and **100% of women supported reporting feeling safer after our intervention.**

Llamau would ask the committee to look into recommending the IRIS programme is disseminated across Wales, by early identification and support, thousands of women can be prevented from having to leave their homes and becoming homeless.

## **LGBTQI+ accommodation: Ty Pride**

LGBTQIA+ young people are a staggering **four times more likely to experience homelessness than their heterosexual and/or cisgender peers.**

Llamau are very proud of '**Tŷ Pride**'; Wales' only LGBTQIA+ supported accommodation for young people who are homeless and identify as LGBTQIA+.

Tŷ Pride provides 24hr supported accommodation and dispersed flats in partnership with Denbighshire County Council and Viva. We provide a safe and therapeutic environment for LGBTQIA+ young people, where they can access the bespoke support required to develop the skills and confidence to live independently. Psychotherapy is available from an LGBTQIA+ counsellor and personal budgets enable bespoke help including access to transitioning services.

Tŷ Pride has already received over 60 referrals and enquiries from around Wales and our aim is to replicate this service in other areas of Wales. However, despite positive responses from LA's and RSL's, there is still only one Ty Pride in Wales. Even Ty Pride is under risk as it was funded by the innovation funding which is soon to end.

We would ask the committee to recognise the startling and unacceptable factor that LGBTQIA+ young people are a four times more likely to experience homelessness.

We would also ask the committee to recommend that there are at least four Ty Prides across Wales.

**100% of those moving on from Ty Pride are sustaining their own independent accommodation or living back safely with family following support successfully rebuilding those relationships.**

Quote: 'Llamau saved me from being on the street, supporting me to become more independent and a better person, made me believe in myself more.'

## **Cost of Living**

One of the biggest threats to the sector is the COL crisis. Recruitment and retention in the sector is at an all-time low, with skilled experienced and dedicated colleagues being able to earn more with less stress in a supermarket. In 12 years there has been just one COL given by WG, other uplifts have been for services. This is now a serious and high risk to the entire sector.

Research published by Cymorth Cymru has shone a light on the shocking impact of the cost-of-living crisis on frontline homelessness and housing support workers in Wales. Evidence from over 720 frontline workers has revealed the huge financial pressures they are facing as they provide critical support to tens of thousands of people across the country.

Despite delivering essential face-to-face services during the pandemic, putting the health of themselves and their loved ones at risk, the report Struggles from the Frontline details how low wages combined with higher rents, energy costs, and fuel costs are putting extraordinary stress on their lives.

We would ask the committee to recognise the unviable climate, which homelessness services are working in.

## **End Youth Homelessness Cymru**

EYHC first began as a coalition of homelessness charities that came together to challenge inappropriate and dangerous placements of young people in unsupported and unsuitable accommodation. Following the momentum of a successful campaign, former First Minister Carwyn Jones, pledged to end youth homelessness in Wales by 2027, which led to the creation of End Youth Homelessness Cymru. EYHC brings together organisations and individuals from across range, from a range of backgrounds and sectors, who all believe ending homelessness in Wales is the responsibility of us all.

EYHC's work focuses on four key areas: fostering and encouraging collective impact, the amplification of youth voice, research into the causes of youth homelessness and experiences of young people in the homelessness system and, championing innovative approaches, both within Wales and from our international partners.

In the last year EYHC have:

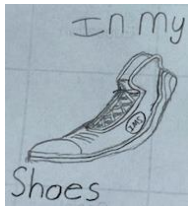
Launched our 'Roadmap to Ending Youth Homelessness in Wales'. This sets out what we know about youth homelessness in Wales AND explains what we should do about it. The roadmap uses a 5 step prevention model and calls for a number of approaches to either be implemented in Wales, or to be scaled-up. The Roadmap was launched in the Senedd in March this year, and gave a platform to two young people to talk about their experiences and what they'd like to see changed.

Current research is looking at identifying ways in which neurodivergent young people can be prevented from becoming homeless, to improve the accessibility of youth homelessness services for all young people, and, to amplify youth voice. This research has been fully co-produced with young people, working with a great team of peer-researchers, who have been instrumental in shaping the direction of the research from its inception. An online workshop has been held with the peer researchers and practitioners to co-create recommendations for the report. Preliminary findings have been presented to Youth Homeless Co-ordinators and a number of Local Authorities in Wales.

The EYHC Youth Action Group (YAG) aims to provide a platform for young people to use their voice to influence the work of EYHC, to ensure that we are truly representing and speaking on behalf of the young people of Wales. Throughout the year the YAG have discussed a number of different topics, most recently the cost-of-living crisis, and have provided comments that have fed into a number of



EYHC consultation responses. We look forward to the YAG continuing to grow in 2023.



**YExLS** (Youth Experimental Learning Simulation )

This year EYHC have put together a simulation session, together with their American partners

There is a clear gap between what systems are intended to provide for young people and how young people actually experience those systems. This is especially true for youth in care, youth justice, and homelessness systems, who frequently have to navigate myriad referrals, rules, cultures, and biases to access the services they need in education, social services, courts, behavioural health, employment, and more.

The Youth Experiential Learning Simulation (YExLS) is an attempt to help bridge that gap. Developed by professionals who have worked in youth serving systems for decades in collaboration with youth with lived experience of those same systems and further refined through the participation and feedback of judges, social workers, teachers, probation officers, and more. YExLS seeks to help participants get a better sense of what it is like to be young person navigating public systems while also pursuing their own dreams, following their own interests, and surviving their own traumas.

Because of the strength of the partnership formed between the YExLS team and EYHC, we have an internationally unique opportunity to ensure the legacy of the simulation. The YExLS team have not only agreed to re-run the simulation here in Wales, but they have also agreed to undertake their first ever-accredited 'YExLS leader' training with a team from Wales.

**We would ask the committee to importance and necessity of having EYHC A Way Home Wales.**

EHC works closely with A Way Home Canada, A Way Home Scotland and many others including FEANSA, to ensure best practice and ending youth homelessness in a priority across many countries. It brings back best practice to Wales.



## Our year in numbers

- Over 10,000 (10,019) young people, women and children were supported by Llamau across all our services
  - Nearly 3000 (2979) young people were supported by our range of Early Intervention & Prevention, Safe Home and Move on services
  - Nearly 950 (948) young people were supported by Llamau's specialist floating support services across Wales
  - Nearly 600 young people (577) at risk of homelessness accessed Llamau's specialist housing advice services across Wales
  - Over 1700 (1718) children and young people accessed Llamau's range of school-based engagement and awareness sessions
  - Over 4000 (4117) women, children and young people we supported by our wide range of Domestic Abuse Services across Wales
  - Over 500 (526) children and young people affected by domestic abuse were supported by our range of specialist targeted outreach services
  - Over 300 (323) Agored and Essential Skills Wales accreditations were achieved and over 150 (152) employability workshops and site visits were carried out
  - Nearly 300 (294) people engaged with our specialist internal counselling services
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- 95% of people reported our support had a positive impact on their lives
  - 93% of people reporting feeling safer following our support
  - 92% of people reported an improved quality of life following our support
  - 90% of people exiting our support this year accessed safe, suitable accommodation
  - 89% of people engaged with our support positively
  - 81% of people with emotional health issues made progress with our support
  - 80% of people experiencing issues with self-harming made progress with our support
  - 78% of learners exiting our Step into... programmes progressed positively into EET with 72% of these also sustain this progression six months after exiting support.
  - 90% of young people supported by Step into... programmes consistently report improvement in their confidence and wellbeing;

## Additional quotes

'Feels like home.'

'The best thing is everything about the support I receive. Llamau have helped me keep my life on track. I still need help and I know the support is there.'

'It's reliable and non-judgemental. My support worker is always there.'

## Case studies

Accommodation – Sam from Swansea in her own words

I grew up in Foster care and care homes. I remember my first night at Llamau, it was a wave of emotions. My room was small but to me it was like someone had handed me a 3 bedroom house.

After a few nights I was getting the best sleeps of my life, there was just peace all of a sudden, nobody could decide to move me now, and I could relax. Growing up in other people's houses, never feeling anything was yours or comfortable enough to even use the bathroom at times, I'd never felt a feeling of peace like this before, there was nothing like I was worried about.

Llamau means home, it's a stable person, it's support, it's someone that wants to and does help you, it's a safe place to find yourself, it's a time to improve yourself and your life, it's a place to learn so many things, it's a place or person that guides you and teaches you how to survive, budget, manage and be strong enough to conquer this big world, it's a place of opportunity, a place that gives you an opportunity!!

After a while I was offered a flat, never thought I'd get to where I was. When I had the keys it was a bit unreal, I couldn't believe I had my own place and it was beautiful! I'm still here now a year and half later, happier than I've ever been, settled and living a normal life. I see my support worker once a week and she still helps with everything! I definitely wouldn't be where I am without her! Anything I need I can go to her or even just for a chat she is always there and reminds me of my strength on bad days.

I am so happy and looking forward to the future, a future I couldn't see before. Everyone says I did it myself but Llamau gave me the tools and the mind-set.

Domestic abuse – woman who accessed refuge services

I started to go mentally downhill, I got counselling through work and when I was explaining things to them I started to realise how bad it was. I was really reluctant to talk about it as I didn't want to incriminate him. I was scared and I didn't want to make that first step but I spoke to someone in Women's Services at Llamau. She was really supportive but clearly told me what was happening – financial abuse, neglect with his child, emotional abuse and blackmail. It made me realise this was actually happening.

We'd been together for 9 years. Every time I said I wanted to leave he said he'd kill himself, so I stayed, I felt trapped. I wanted to leave but I was afraid. I knew if I left I would be blamed by his family and friends. I was seen as the horrible person. I was afraid he would do something to me. I started sleeping with something under my pillow to make sure I was safe.

I knew I needed to go, but I didn't know how. I blamed myself and tried to make things work. I went to the refuge whilst he was away in London so he wouldn't know I'd left.

The refuge was amazing. I was so happy to be there. Everyone was so welcoming and supportive. My support worker was so lovely. I've made friends for life. I got all the support I needed with my child and to keep my studies going. I was in refuge for around 6 months and then Llamau helped me to get my own flat and become independent. It was hard to think I'd have a life afterwards but I knew I needed to keep going for my child. I'm so, so grateful. I was supported to leave the relationship but I was able to stay with my studies and that has been the best thing for me.