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Ymgynghoriad ar ddigartrefedd – Hydref 2022

Consultation on homelessness – Autumn 2022

Ymateb gan: Byddin yr Iachawdwriaeth

Response from: Salvation Army



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Digartrefedd

Tel/ Ffôn:  
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Dear John Griffiths

Re: Request for Evidence

Thank you for your letter dated 13<sup>th</sup> October, which invited us to provide evidence and respond to several enquiries raised by the Local Government & Housing Committee in respect to the use of, its quality and suitability of temporary accommodation.

About The Salvation Army;

The Salvation Army is a Christian church and registered charity present in 700 communities across the UK. We have worked with people with experience of homelessness for over 130 years. We believe that only by adopting a holistic approach to people's needs can we ensure that individuals and society as a whole achieve health in its fullest sense. We consider health is a wide concept meaning 'wholeness'. Pertaining to soundness of body and mind; including physical, mental, moral and spiritual welfare.

Today, our services include:

- The provision of over 2,200 units of supported housing in Lifehouses (residential homelessness services) across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Housing First services in Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil, Glasgow, South Lanarkshire and Inverness offering intensive support to people with experience of sustained and recurrent periods of rough sleeping.
- Non-residential services offering Outreach to people who are currently rough sleeping and Floating Support for people living independently in their own homes.
- Church and community-based programmes offering practical support, including meals, cold weather shelters, opportunities to share fellowship and ease possible isolation, and the provision of information on social security and immigration.
- A Families Ministries Unit that exists to empower, equip and enable people of all ages to journey together, building appropriate relationships with others, having the intention of bringing them to faith in Christ and spiritual maturity.

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- Social enterprise opportunities, such as a bicycle repair shop and a sandwich-making and selling project in Booth House Lifehouse, Swindon.

Reflecting now on the questions you posed here are our expressions of our research and experiences both from an organisational view point and quotes from those who have lived through temporary accommodation.

### **1. The supply, suitability and quality of temporary accommodation currently being used to house people experiencing homelessness and the support services made available to them;**

#### **Support Services;**

As an organisation who have been supporting people for over 130 years. We are acutely aware of the need to offer personalised, safe, dignified, 'home like' environments, within our accommodation services. We recognise the need to offer people a variety of different housing & support solutions.

We currently deliver a portfolio of services across Wales that reflects this diversity, from our accredited Housing First project to our residential adult services, to our street based outreach.

Throughout all our services we hope to create communities within our Lifehouses that are psychologically informed spaces. We recognise that everyone who walks through our doors has at some stage in their life experienced trauma.

We have a specialist training pathway to develop our staffs knowledge and skills. Our psychologically informed approach to leadership and management enables us to support and develop staffs resilience and wellbeing, enabling professional development, progression and retention for all.

Within our portfolio of Lifehouses, we offer a bespoke bio psycho social programme to everyone. Our programmes range encompass a holistic approach to empowering individuals to have safer relationships with substances and alcohol. Our programmes offer stabilisation, detoxification, structured and unstructured group work and a variety of supporting and nurturing activities including; cooking, yoga, art, walking, education, and volunteering.

In the past 12 months we have positively supported 270 individuals in our Cardiff based adult Lifehouse. We have successfully supported 83% individuals out of the temporary accommodation system.

We have welcomed the resource of the new multi-disciplinary approach, to support within Cardiff and Merthyr Tydfil for those to whom access to statutory systems is restricted. This includes collaborative working between housing, mental & physical health, criminal justice and substance use teams.

#### **Supply/Suitability/Quality;**

Throughout the last two/three years we have seen an increase in the need for temporary accommodation, mainly as a direct response to COVID, lock down and the need to bring everyone in side for the health and wellbeing of all. We have seen an increase in the use of hotels, B&B and new residential accommodation across Wales. Further there has been an increased pressure and recognition that existing residential homelessness provision needs upgrading to meet WG COVID Phase 2, the need for self-contained units. We recognise the need to move towards these measures, however they come with a significant financial impact.

I think we would all agree that the use of hotels and B&B were always a temporary measure and a resource that was needed at the time. However, it is necessary to also note that some of these accommodation are still in use in some areas of Wales the cost associated with these accommodation types is high, the pressures of these

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financially on local authorities will only increase next year when we understand WG will ease payment to local authorities for the use of these styles of accommodation. The question would then lead us to consider how will these financial pressures impact current provision, innovation, adaptation and developmental work in line with WG Phase 2 and any future commissioning building requirements.

Further the introduction of the Renting Home Act and how this has impacted homelessness presentation and frontline provision classified as supported accommodation ultimately means that services will need to ensure there is enough administrative support to ensure the processes associated with the legislation is enacted.

To conclude I feel there are excellent support provisions within our homelessness residential services, however some of the older accommodation buildings are tired and need investment for future sustainability. We are aligned with Welsh Government's vision to create a safe, dignified and cohesive place to live and work. However, this must be appreciated within the difficulties of our current financial pressures, shortage of accommodation and increased homeless presentations.

## **2. The impact living in temporary accommodation has on individuals and families;**

Living in any multi-occupancy accommodation with people who have experienced complex lives will have an impact over time on someone's own mental health and wellbeing.

Within our own 'Seeds of Exclusion' research (2008) it was highlighted that the trauma and complex life experiences create an interplay of factors which impact on the health, happiness and wellbeing of society, as a whole.

We currently live in a challenging economic climate, where more than ever individuals in our communities are at risk of homelessness and destitution. The Bevan Foundation (July 2022) recently reported that 11% of people are worried about the prospect of losing their home over the next three months.

43% of people in Wales have seen their mental health deteriorate as a result of their financial position, whilst 30% have seen a deterioration in their physical health (Bevan Foundation, July 2022).

Therefore, people who do enter temporary accommodation have most likely already experienced high levels of social exclusion and trauma.

Every month around fifteen hundred newly homeless people are placed into temporary accommodation (Welsh Government, 2022). We currently have around eight thousand families and single people across Wales housed temporarily.

The experience of residing within temporary accommodation is incredibly challenging. Some of the individuals we have worked with who have resided in temporary accommodation shared the following experiences...

*"I have lived in my temporary flat with my husband and baby for 8 months now. We are so grateful for the help but our flat is on the second floor of a house. We only get to our front door to the flat from the outside metal (fire escape) stairs. I don't take my baby out because I am scared of carrying him down the stairs. I cannot carry him and the pram, so we just stay at home. The flat is very cold and we cannot afford to heat it as much as we want to. My baby is often crying. Sometimes I feel like I can't cope"*

**Irena\*\*, Salvation Army Floating Support Cardiff**

*"I have always found it hard to cope, to manage, in hostels/TA. When you have your own problems, it's hard to be around other people who have got those problems too. It just made things so much worse for me. I was using more drugs and I just couldn't cope with all the noise, people banging my door asking me for money. That's why I started rough sleeping".*

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The individuals we support are experts in their own lives and understanding their experiences can help us to provide better more impactful support, and a wider understand some of the key issues affecting the health of society as a whole. This will also enable us to develop more effective preventative approaches, that stop homelessness before it happens.

However, the continued financial pressures placed on services and local authorities only enable us to meet the immediate demands of homelessness, including homelessness presentations, service delivery, implementation of the renting homes act and the WG Homelessness Action Plan. Further financial investment is needed to enable services to expand their focus beyond immediate firefighting.

### **3. The impact of the ongoing demand for temporary accommodation and support services on local authorities, their partners and communities;**

Across our portfolio we work in close partnership with a number of local authorities, who are experiencing significant difficulties in accommodating an alarming increase in homelessness presentations.

#### **Demand;**

In Cardiff the demand for temporary accommodation has increased significantly and waiting lists for all Gateways (families, single and young persons) combined are up 350%, higher than in previous years (Cardiff Council, 2022).

Across Cardiff, 83 families are waiting to be placed in temporary accommodation with a projected shortage of accommodation estimated at 126 units by end 2022/23. This is without the potential impact of Ukraine schemes. There has been a 247% increase in cases presenting with a Section 21 "No Fault Notice" from their landlord (*increase compared January 2022 - August 2022 against the same period in pre-pandemic 2018*).

Notices where the landlord is selling the property are up by 127 (254%) and could be a consequence of high property prices in the market.

The rapidly increasing demand leaves the local authority and its charitable partners in a position where families and single people cannot be effectively supported because there is simply nowhere for them to go. The impact societally is devastating, with families spending long periods of time in unsuitable temporary settings, negatively impacting their welfare and wellbeing.

Our other key local authority partner, Merthyr Tydfil Borough Council have shared that there are currently attempting to support 160-170 homeless people in Merthyr Tydfil with 60 plus in B+B's. Merthyr Tydfil is an area that already experiences deprivation, poverty and inter-generational unemployment and homelessness. These additional pressures create a mountain that can feel impossible to climb.

#### **Ukraine;**

The complexities of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, and the uncertain global picture continues to add additional pressure to our already overboiling systems. In the past year 8,759 visa applications have been made in Wales. Of these 5,340 families and single people have now arrived.

In Cardiff, 414 individuals are currently residing in Welcome Centres/ Hotels and 396 are living with private sponsors. It is estimated 150 individuals are living with family via the family visa scheme route. Approximately 994 individuals therefore may need permanent housing in Cardiff.

#### **Outreach and Housing First;**

Our Outreach services continue to play an essential role in meeting the needs of rough sleepers on the streets and helping to empower and support individuals away from homelessness.

Our First Response Outreach Team in Cardiff support around 300 individuals every month who are rough sleeping or engaging in street based life styles (Salvation Army, 2022). The team deliver a wide variety of interventions supporting with wellbeing, advocacy, specialist advice and referrals whilst also empowering and enabling individuals to move successfully into accommodation. In the past three months the team have delivered over seventeen hundred separate interventions to individuals seeking support on the streets.

Our Housing First model continues to struggle with demand, the service currently operates significantly over capacity, with around 6 new requests to refer every month, 8 clients supported on an outreach basis and 25 already in accommodation (Salvation Army, 2022). Due to shortage of appropriate social housing, Housing First clients on average wait 6 months to be allocated a property, a waiting time that far exceeds the principles of the model.

#### **4. Options to increase the supply of affordable and appropriate housing in the short to medium term to reduce the use of temporary accommodation;**

According to Jonathan Baxter, 2009/2010 report, figures indicated that Wales does not have enough homes. Research commissioned by the Welsh Government estimates that over 14,000 new homes are needed every year in Wales for the next 15 years, to meet demand. This is in addition to existing unmet need and far in excess of current levels of supply.

The Ending Homelessness High Level Action Plan also indicates a need to increase housing supply, indicating a roll out of a tenancy Leasing Scheme and a commitment to build 20,000 new social homes for rent.

Our experience also confirms this from the lower number of positive move on we have from our current services and the slower pace that properties have become available to our Housing First clients.

Despite these challenges we do continue to see expressions of creativity, aimed at reducing time in temporary accommodation, and providing more effective overall support. We have recently seen a new innovate project come on board from United Welsh offering young people the ability to move into a shared accommodation at a very low rent.

This project is aimed at young people who are able to live independently and who are accessing education and training. It will be good to see how this initiative works and what learning can be taken forward to other potential projects.

The Salvation Army support working with registered social and private landlords to understand and work through barriers to accessing accommodation. Our work in Floating Support and Housing First has enabled us to critically evidence that with the right level of support independent living is achievable for everyone, no matter their complexity of need.

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In summary, there are currently many economic and social factors which are contributing to the increase need for affordable and appropriate housing solutions. We believe it is essential to balance the provision of low threshold rapid and affordable housing, against projects that support longer term and sustained support. Again, our focus on providing safe and dignified accommodation for all is our key agenda.

#### **5. Progress implementing Ending Homelessness in Wales: A high level action plan 2021-2026, and in particular the move towards a rapid rehousing approach.**

We have attended consultations and presented learning from our Housing First models in possible design and implementation of some local authorities rapid rehousing approaches. Furthermore, we are part of the pilot group who are working through the new outcomes framework utilising our knowledge from a range of projects which include floating support, and young person's residential services.

We provided support to those residing in emergency temporary accommodation following the public health response as part of our existing Housing First services within Merthyr Tydfil and adapted our outreach services within Cardiff to support the move for 'Everyone In' during the pandemic years. This has ensured that no one was left without support. We also initiated a not asked to leave policy in our frontline provision and continued to operate our Reconnection Services within Cardiff, throughout lockdown.

As an organisation we have always been committed to the development and training of our staff team. This is a core element of our services and one in which we have continued to thrive and share our own internal resources and knowledge with local authorities and partners agencies. We pride ourselves on our organisational growth and imbed academic learning from the ACEs research, and trauma informed interventions, within all our services.

Over the last four years we have introduced a bio psycho social programme across all of our residential services. We embed harm reduction and the ethos 'to do no further harm' to all those who seek support from us. We offer a bespoke role within our adult homeless service of a Clinical Key Worker, which is designed to support those individuals to work towards a detoxification goal of their choosing.

This service also offers a stabilisation programme reaching people where they are at within their own substance use journey, working at their pace. We work collaboratively with health, Cardiff & Vale Alliance, housing and multi-disciplinary teams throughout Wales.

All our residential services have an Early Intervention Worker. Our adult service within Cardiff also has an Outreach Worker supporting those from street to home whose lives have been impacted by substance and/or alcohol. Our Young Peoples Service have two staff members trained in mediation, offering a further enhanced support to young people and their families.

Our Housing First services also operate with a key outreach role engaging with those considered hard to reach. Furthermore as described earlier in the letter we have adapted our assertive outreach model to now operate 7 days a week service to those residing on the streets of Cardiff, offering a critical safety net to those who may find themselves homelessness on a night. We have continued to support those in the community through our Floating Support and Tenancy Rescue services. Together with our churches we are now also supporting the warm welcome initiative.

Our commitment to offering consistent high quality support to people experiencing or at risk of homelessness, creates our commitment to the actions set out in the Ending Homelessness Plan. Through offering a wide portfolio of accommodation services we hope to form part of the rapid rehousing model, enabling safe, home-like spaces for individuals in need of accommodation.

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Thank you in consider the evidence we have presented, and I look forward to representing our views in person at the next committee.

Kind regards

Emma Shaw  
Regional Manager Wales & South West

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