

Denbighshire Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

Contents

1. Introduction	3
Our vision	4
Our mission statement	4
Our key principles	4
2. People's stories	7
3. Our five strategic priorities	8
Co-production & Citizen Involvement	8
The DCC Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021	8
The sustainability of housing related support	8
Tackling Poverty	9
Joint- Commissioning / Collaboration	9
4. Shaping our services	10
5. More people's stories	11
6. Our priority areas for development	12
6.1 General Support Needs and Demand (including generic services for people with a range of needs)	12
6.2 Welfare reform	16
6.3 Education, Employment, Training & Volunteering	16
6.4 Young people aged 16-25	17
6.5 Domestic abuse	18
6.6 Mental health	19
6.7 Families	21
6.8 Prison leavers and people with a history of offending	23
6.9 Rough sleeping	24
6.10 Drug and alcohol use	26
6.11 Learning disabilities & difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and acquired brain injury	27
6.12 Older people	28
7. More people's stories	29
8. Well being impact assessment	30

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

Introduction

Homelessness means being without a safe, secure place to live. This includes things like living in unsuitable, unsafe or temporary accommodation, 'sofa-surfing', accessing emergency beds or night shelters, and sleeping rough. For many, it can mean having to face and deal with a number of difficult and traumatic experiences.

Homelessness or risk of homelessness can happen, and continue, for many different reasons, including evictions (not necessarily because of any fault of the tenant), relationship or family breakdown, being unable to cope because of experiencing traumas or other support needs, and people just not having enough money to keep their home, perhaps because of a job loss or changes to benefits.

Homelessness can affect anyone, including families, single people, and young and old – though it will often go hand in hand with poverty, and it is likely to have the greatest impact on people with more limited support networks, and people experiencing multiple disadvantage.

“Homeless people are not socially inadequate they are just people without homes” (Citizen).

Supporting People is a Welsh Government Programme, funding support projects for people 16+ who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In Denbighshire we have a range of projects, including fixed-site supported housing and floating support (where a support worker is based out in the community), supporting over 1,000 people at any one time. For full details of these projects, please see our directory of services on the Denbighshire County Council website.

Denbighshire Supporting People is aligned with statutory homelessness, as the Denbighshire Homelessness Prevention Team. We aim to prevent homelessness wherever possible, taking person-centred approaches and working with the community and our partners to identify and tackle its causes, and empower people to live as independently as possible.

This Plan gives an overview of our priorities and plans for 2019-22; why we're doing what we're doing, and what this means for the people it affects.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

Our vision

An end to homelessness in Denbighshire.

Our mission statement

We will work together to deliver quality support, empowering people to live independently and prevent homelessness.

Our key principles

- Everyone deserves a safe place to live
- Early intervention and prevention of crisis point wherever possible
- Co-production and meaningful involvement – people with lived experience at the heart of all we do
- Psychologically informed ethos and approaches
- Focus on person-centred outcomes – not process
- Transparency and equality of access to the right support
- Continued learning and development – developing and promoting best practice to end homelessness

Support is always person-centered, but can include help with things like:

- Achieving safety, security and better quality of life
- Developing independent living skills
- Taking control of finances, e.g. support with budgeting, addressing arrears, accessing money advice
- Accessing other helpful support and opportunities, including employment / training / education / volunteering

“I don’t think I could have done without the support. I feel like there is a light at the end of the tunnel now.” (Citizen)

“The support I received has helped to give me the confidence and the strength to deal with life.” (Citizen)

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

We play a vital role in the delivery of key support legislation:

The Housing (Wales) Act 2014, and **Social Services & Well-being (Wales) Act 2014**

have brought about real changes to the ways people are supported. Early intervention and prevention, and empowerment of people to take control of their own lives are central to both Acts.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 means that plans must be sustainable and increase wellbeing. This also means a prevention focus, looking at short and long-term needs, and partnership working.

The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse & Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 highlights the importance of early intervention to prevent victims of this kind of violence and abuse becoming homeless in the first place, as well as the importance of supporting survivors to stay in their own homes wherever possible.

The Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 means some new rights and responsibilities for tenants and landlords - so it's important that people can access good advice and support where needed.

We also support other national and local plans and agendas, including:

National and regional plans/strategies, including;

- Crisis' 'Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain';
- the Supporting People Regional Strategic Plan;
- the Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales 2009-2019;
- the North Wales Domestic Abuse Strategy;
- the Together for Mental Health in North Wales Strategy,
- and the WG Rough Sleeper Action Plan

Denbighshire plans/strategies, including;

- the Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy,
- the Housing Strategy,
- the Corporate Plan,
- the Wellbeing Plan,
- the Supporting Independence in Denbighshire agenda,
- and the Care and Support at Home Strategic Plan.

Equality and diversity, including;

- Denbighshire's Strategic Equality Plan,
- the Welsh Language Standards,
- we also support the 2025 movement, with its aim of ending avoidable health inequalities in North Wales by the year 2025.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

Crisis' Definition of Homelessness Ended

- No one sleeping rough.
- No one forced to live in transient or dangerous accommodation such as tents, squats and non-residential buildings.
- No one living in emergency accommodation such as shelters and hostels without a plan for rapid rehousing into affordable, secure and decent accommodation.
- No one homeless because of leaving a state institution such as prison or the care system.
- Everyone at immediate risk of homelessness gets the help they need to prevent it happening.

See Crisis' website article ['Everybody In: How to end homelessness in Great Britain'](#)

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

1. People's stories

The 'Jones family' had already experienced facing homelessness when their landlord had decided to sell the property. With support they'd found a new home, but with the introduction of a new benefit cap in 2016, this home became completely unaffordable – with Housing Benefit dropping from £535 to £91 a month. The risk of rapid rent arrears and homelessness became very real. Existing mental health support needs worsened, and the whole family's wellbeing was suffering.

With a Supporting People project's help, working in partnership with key agencies, the family were able to explore their options and make the decisions which were right for them. Part of this was a successful claim for PIP, and this also meant that one of the parents, having been put in touch with the Opus project, found secure employment - not only boosting the family's income, but greatly increasing their confidence and self-esteem. With much increased security and wellbeing, including better mental health support in place, the family are now in a much better place; however, they remain acutely aware, in a time of austerity and welfare reform, that circumstances can quickly change - and with this in mind they continue to look at ways to secure their financial future as much as is in their control.

When 'Amy' discovered that her mother was very ill, she decided she would move in with her, to help her out and allow Amy and her children to spend some quality time with her.

Having made the move, and looking to get things in order at her new address, Amy discovered that, because of welfare benefit rules, her living with her mother was going to have a significant impact on her mother's income. At the risk of facing poverty, the family reluctantly agreed that Amy and her children would have to move back out of her mother's home.

Following initial questions around intentionality of homelessness, with the help of Shelter Cymru Amy secured help from Statutory Homelessness, and was offered temporary accommodation. In uncertain and stressful circumstances, including sometimes being accommodated far away from her children's schools, the Homelessness Prevention Team will continue to try to find somewhere suitable for Amy now, and support her to achieve safety and security for her and her children in the long term.

Availability of suitable, affordable accommodation is a barrier not just for Amy, but for many in similar circumstances.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

2. Our five strategic priorities

Co-production & Citizen Involvement

People with lived experience must have meaningful opportunities to shape support delivery and development. Guided by our Citizen Involvement Policy, we'll continue to work to offer informal and formal opportunities to ensure that co-production and involvement is at the heart of all we do. This will include creating better informal and formal arrangements for citizens to be involved in service planning, e.g. via the Homelessness Prevention Planning Group.

The DCC Homelessness Strategy 2017-2021

The vision of the Strategy is simple: To end homelessness in Denbighshire. Doing this through early intervention, prevention, and providing quality accommodation and support is central to our priorities. We worked closely with our partners to develop the Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy, and accompanying action plan, which sets out all of Denbighshire's priorities and plans for tackling and ending homelessness. This Commissioning Plan focusses on the commissioned service development aspects of implementing the Strategy. For the full Denbighshire Homelessness Strategy 2017-21, please see the [Denbighshire County Council website](#).

The sustainability of housing related support

We face a number of current and future challenges in keeping our support affordable and effective, including public spending cuts, welfare reform and uncertainty around how the new Housing Support Grant will work in practice. We must work together to be creative and resourceful, and ensure our approach is needs-led for both the short and long-term. Alongside Cymorth Cymru and our other partners in the sector, we must also have a strong voice in campaigning for policy reform and developments, to make sure support continues wherever needed.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

Tackling Poverty

We know that homelessness and poverty will often go hand in hand, and that each bring their own stresses and traumas. With new challenges brought by welfare reform, it is vital that we focus on supporting people out of poverty in new and creative ways.

We must work closely alongside specialist employment support and money advice services, and explore opportunities through groups including the Tackling Poverty Strategic and Operational Groups.

Joint- Commissioning / Collaboration

With imminent changes to Supporting People funding, with the introduction of the new Housing Support Grant from April 2019, we must carefully plan to ensure we maximise the opportunities more flexible funding may bring, while making sure that vital homelessness prevention support is protected.

We'll also continue to explore opportunities for pilot regional projects via the Regional Collaborative Committee, supporting the implementation of the Regional Strategic Plan.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

3. Shaping our services

We look at lots of information to identify needs and demand, and develop our support. This includes:

The views of people with lived experience – With our Citizen Involvement Officer working closely with projects to make sure that people have meaningful opportunities to feedback and shape support.

The views of our other partners – Including project staff, and other people we work with.

Formal consultation – Including as part of service reviews and decommissioning decisions, and consultation on each Commissioning Plan.

Information from our Single Pathway Team – Who coordinate all support referrals, ensuring equality of access to the right support.

Project monitoring and reviews – All of our projects are regularly monitored and reviewed, to identify any areas for improvement, and learn from good practice.

Other information - Including Outcomes and PMR data, Statutory Homelessness figures, the Population Assessment, and other studies and reports.

The Annual Event - Every year we put on an annual Homelessness Prevention event - an opportunity for people with lived experience, our projects and other partners to gather together to talk about what matters to them, and contribute to what this Plan looks like. In 2018 the event was co-produced for the first time, and named 'Homes and Hopes'.

We also look at potential unmet need, including:

- Changing our needs mapping process – replacing the previous 'Needs Mapping' form with a more comprehensive and dynamic approach to investigating need and demand.
- Piloting of an annual Unmet Need survey in 2017
- Reviewing supported housing needs – with a case study approach, investigating individual needs and circumstances of people in supported housing, to ensure we're offering the right range of services to provide needs-led support.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

4. More people's stories

In 2018 our Citizen Involvement Officer carried out a piece of work to help us better understand people's experiences throughout their journey, from the point that they first approach Denbighshire Homelessness Prevention, through to living in temporary accommodation and planning for move-on – how they felt, what was working, and what needed to change.

These are some of the key words people used to describe how they felt when they had to initially present as homeless;

- Embarrassed
- Scared
- Stressed
- Nervous
- Upset
- Worried
- Ashamed
- Not confident
- Low
- Judgement
- Anxious
- Lost
- Breaking point
- Hopeless
- Terrified
- Failure
- Labelled
- Frustrated

We know that experiencing homelessness can be extremely traumatic.

To best support people, including ensuring our services are approachable and that people seek help before crisis point, we must work to understanding people's traumas, and focus on people's strengths.

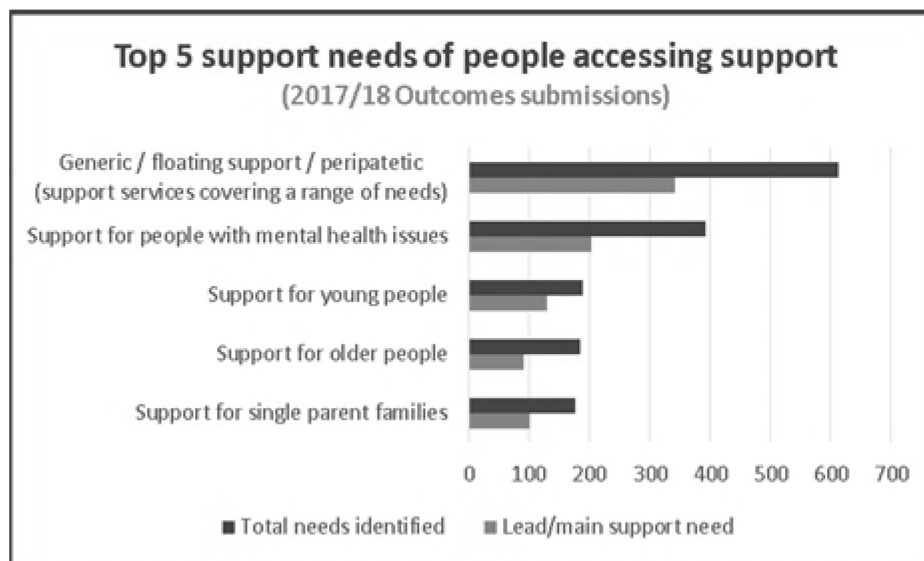
Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

5. Our priority areas for development

6.1 General Support Needs and Demand (including generic services for people with a range of needs)

What we know

- Demand for support is high. Our Pathway Team has had to keep an unprecedented waiting list for support over the last year.
- There is highest demand for 'generic', multi-disciplinary support.



- There are numerous barriers to securing accommodation, including a lack of affordable and/or adequate standard accommodation, discrimination against people in receipt of benefits, and because of other characteristics (e.g. age, having children), and landlords requiring guarantors.
- We're seeing increasing complex needs/ multiple disadvantage.

"The problems are probably the same but on a larger scale, e.g. lack of finances, substance misuse problems... We have had to adapt to taking people with more complex needs, who have poor finances." (Support provider)

- People are really struggling to manage their money.
- We need better communication and coordination between services. Too many people slip through the net. Improving awareness and communication between services and citizens is vital.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

- Some of our emergency temporary accommodation is not fit for purpose, and people are also staying in temporary accommodation for too long - because of a lack of suitable move- on accommodation, including supported housing (where appropriate).
- 'Traditional' floating support doesn't work for everyone, and/or at each stage of a person's journey. We've seen a need for urgent crisis support, as well as services that can offer more flexible, ad-hoc support (which isn't necessarily time-limited). People also want peer support, and to be able to build their own support networks.
- People who are LGBTQ+ are disproportionately affected by homelessness (particularly younger people who may have recently told their family), and risk of homelessness due to domestic abuse, and discrimination.
- Evidence shows us the massive successes people can achieve when support services work in a psychologically informed, and person- centred outcomes focussed way. Many services are currently too process driven – as support commissioners we've had to recognise our role in creating process driven environments.

"All the paperwork – it can feel like you're signing your life away." (Citizen)

- Activities to improve wellbeing, helping people to stay motivated, feel valued, and have hope, are highly valued and highly effective elements of support.

"It gives you something to do, I've always been interested in growing plants and stuff like that when I was a kid... basically it helps you fit in with society again." (Citizen)

What we'll do

- i. We'll continue to develop risk-based reviewing and greater flexibility in contracts, shifting the focus from process to outcomes, to ensure support is maximised and proportionate, and available where needed most. This will also include promoting activities to increase confidence and wellbeing as a key element of support. We will also consider opportunities to develop payment by results.
- ii. We'll develop services that are complementary to more 'traditional' floating support, for example flexible services that people can dip in and out of, short-term crisis support, and opportunities for peer and community support.
- iii. We'll work to ensure that supported housing is available where it is needed most – that priority is given to people who are homeless, in the greatest need. We'll learn from work undertaken in 2018 to map people's journeys through supported housing,

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

- and consider how we can achieve greater consistency in assessing need and priority, e.g. through exploring opportunities such as the 'Mainstay' system.
- iv. We'll learn from work undertaken in 2018/19 to review and complete an options appraisal for our use of emergency temporary accommodation, to inform future temporary accommodation commissioning and development of move-on options.
 - v. We'll work with our partners in the private and social rented sectors to support move-on into quality accommodation. We'll learn from pilots in 2018/19 with DCC Housing Enforcement and Crest Cooperative around ensuring the quality of accommodation, as well as helping us to better understand the barriers to move-on into quality accommodation. We'll also continue to roll- out Renting Ready training.
 - vi. We'll take a progressive stance, ensuring that our support is always available and designed to best meet the needs of people with protected characteristics. We will continue to work with the Ending Youth Homelessness Group to ensure we are offering the right support to people who are LGBTQ+. We will also review our assessment paperwork to ensure we're asking the right questions, in the right way, and we'll ensure all staff have access to up to date training.
 - vii. We'll continue to embed psychologically informed ways of working, supporting staff to work in a trauma informed way, including recognising and understanding the impact of adverse childhood experiences, focussing on relationships and person-centred outcomes (not paperwork, processes etc.), and maximising people's own strengths and resources. Developing psychologically informed environments is a journey, which we know requires dedication and investment – there must be buy-in at all levels.

What are Psychologically Informed Environments (PIEs)?

PIEs involve helping people to understand where behaviours come from, allowing people to work more creatively and effectively. This means thinking not only about what our physical environments look like, but how we communicate, respond to challenging situations, and shape our support.

There are 5 key elements to consider when developing PIEs:

- Relationships (quality relationships, not processes, are at the heart of PIEs)
- Developing a psychological framework (e.g. trauma informed, CBT, eclectic)
- The physical environment (e.g. colours, light – non-institutional & welcoming)
- Staff training and support
- Evidence-based practice

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

- viii. We'll work to improve coordination and knowledge of other key support services, re-launching the Denbighshire Homelessness Forum, and exploring opportunities for hub or one-stop-shop style day services.
- ix. We'll also explore opportunities to develop a MEAM (Making Every Adult Matter) approach to coordinating support for people with complex needs.
- x. We'll develop better ways to commission 'off-the-shelf' projects, to make sure that any underspend identified can be used most creatively and effectively.

The difference a PIE makes

"Getting the confidence to confront your own demons and your own past. It's scary to think about doing it - if the project worker hadn't been there and helped me, pushed me towards it, I wouldn't have bothered, wouldn't have done it. I hope if I confront my past, then my future will be a lot better. Just trying to concentrate on that, and hope that in the future, I can get a nice flat, get a job, I can live a better life."

"She came to the GP with me - but the most important thing about this is not that she came, but she thought about it beforehand. She knew I'd struggle to sit in the waiting room, so she didn't just sit with me, she brought a crossword book to distract me. We did crosswords together whilst I was waiting, and because of that I made it, and was seen by the GP."

Young person, describing what it can feel like in a project where approaches, including paperwork/recording, aren't yet psychologically informed: "It feels like you're in prison. I feel like a 'Sim', from the game"

We're working closely with this project to develop it into a PIE.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

6.2 Welfare reform

What we know

- Changes to welfare benefits in recent years including the ‘bedroom tax’, the cap on family allowance, and the shared room rate for under 35s have all impacted on people’s ability to find/maintain an affordable home.
- The introduction of Universal Credit has had a huge impact nationally. We know there are pros and cons to UC, and while campaigns have achieved some successes in addressing some problems, challenges remain.
- We’ve seen some real successes in a Supporting People funded early intervention pilot at Rhyl Job Centre, offering advice and assistance around UC, to prevent crisis point.

What we’ll do

- i. We’ll learn from the Job Centre pilot to inform future commissioning, and look at how we can reach more people earlier on to prevent crisis point.
- ii. We’ll support our projects to make sure they’re geared up to help people understand and manage new benefit arrangements, and are able to prevent any difficulties from escalating. An important part of this is training – we offered UC training to all project staff in 2018, and we’ll keep an eye on the need for refresher training.

6.3 Education, Employment, Training & Volunteering

What we know

- Most people want to be able to develop and be active in their community. When people experience homelessness and/or related support needs, especially poverty and complex trauma – coupled with a tough job market - this can be far more difficult to achieve.
- Outcomes in this area achieved by people accessing Supporting People services are at the lowest levels, compared with other Outcomes areas.
- It can be difficult for people in supported housing where enhanced Housing Benefit is claimed (the majority of cases) to work full time, because of Housing Benefit rules.

“You feel like you want to work, but you’re being held back.” (Citizen)

- It’s vital that education, employment and training is accessible for everyone - not least because it can open the door to affordable, quality accommodation.
- This is a high priority area for DCC corporately.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

What we'll do

- i. We will work with our projects to review options to better allow and encourage people to take up employment when in supported housing. Nobody in any of our project should be discouraged from taking up employment, or excluded from the support they need if they do find work.
- ii. We'll work closely with employment support partners including Working Denbighshire, to develop opportunities and address barriers.
- iii. We'll support the development of DCC work experience placements.
- iv. We'll support the sharing of volunteer opportunities available via our provider organisations – looking at opportunities for collaboration.

6.4 Young people aged 16-25

What we know

- Young people are amongst the most disadvantaged in our society when it comes to affordable housing options and general welfare benefit entitlement.
- Young people are presenting with increasing complex needs and multiple disadvantage.
- Many young people can only afford to share with others. This can have its pros and cons.
- DCC have committed to further developing a Young Person's Positive Pathway model (see information on the [St. Basil's website](#)), which has been strategically adopted by Welsh Government. The Positive Pathway Project, a partnership between Children's Services, Homelessness Prevention and Youth Justice, has achieved some real successes over the last year, offering interventions at the point of presentation to DCC Homelessness Prevention - taking a strengths-based approach and diverting young people from the need for formal services.
- Prevention of youth homelessness is a huge priority. Interventions such as family mediation to allow a young person to remain at home wherever possible can achieve the best outcomes for all involved.

What we'll do

- i. In partnership with Clwyd Alyn Housing Association, we'll continue to develop the remodelled Dyfodol project, ensuring it offers the most appropriate and psychologically informed support offer for young people with a range of needs.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

- ii. With a full staff team in place from 2018, we'll continue to embed and develop the Positive Pathway project. This will include development of the Young People's Pathway shared house.
- iii. We'll explore what opportunities there might be with Children and Communities Grant partners to develop better, more joined up early intervention.
- iv. We'll make sure young people continue to be involved in all of our Positive Pathway model developments, including being informed by the DVD made by TAPE and young people in our supported housing in 2017.

"Living in supported accommodation, it's quite hard because I miss my family. I miss my dog as well. On my first day I didn't really speak to anybody, as I didn't really know what to do, how people were. But it turned out everyone was quite sound, and I started speaking after a couple of days." (Young person, one of the stars of the 2017 Young People's Supported Housing DVD)

6.5 Domestic abuse

What we know

- Survivors experiencing multiple disadvantage, particularly those with substance use issues, are not always able to access refuge services.
- There are very limited refuge spaces for men in Denbighshire.
- While there's a lot of evidence highlighting the need for support for children of parents experiencing or fleeing domestic abuse, this support is very limited in Denbighshire.
- Many survivors have mental health related support needs. Symptoms of PTSD can often be mis-diagnosed or missed.
- Courses such as the Freedom Programme and Recovery Toolkit can achieve extremely positive outcomes, particularly around confidence, coping mechanisms and independence – as well as offering an important forum for peer support.

"I would truly recommend the programme to anyone who was wanting to progress with their future and wellbeing". (Survivor who completed the Recovery Programme in 2018).

- Victims are not always able to be supported to remain in their own homes when they would like to. This can come down to a lack of resources and joined up working to adequately ensure their safety.
- There's a lack of awareness of domestic abuse support services.
- Funding arrangements are changing. There is a big focus on regional commissioning.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

What we'll do

- i. We'll look at options to develop existing provision so that it is accessible and appropriate for people who may currently be excluded (especially survivors with multiple disadvantage and men). This will include consideration of developing further self-contained refuge units – both dispersed and semi-communal, to meet a range of support needs and allow greater choice.
- ii. We'll support partnership working between mental health and domestic abuse services, including looking into training needs.
- iii. We'll explore what opportunities there might be, particularly with Children and Communities Grant partners, to develop much needed support for children.
- iv. We'll support the further rolling out of the Freedom Programme and Recovery Toolkit.
- v. We'll promote awareness of available support, including the Live Fear Free helpline.
- vi. We'll support regional working, and the strengthening of links between VAWDASV forums and local Homelessness Prevention planning – to ensure joined up approaches to service development. This must also include developing better provision for allowing survivors to remain in their home when they wish.
- vii. We'll also make sure we and all project staff are trained up in line with the National Training Framework.

6.6 Mental health

What we know

- Approximately a third of all people accessing our projects identify that they have mental health support needs. Support needs tend to increase for people in the most chaotic circumstances, for example, rough sleepers. We're also seeing generally increasing complex/high level mental health needs and crises.
- Suitable accommodation can be critical in promoting recovery. But people with mental health issues may face additional barriers to finding/maintaining accommodation, e.g. if unable to share, and because of stigma. Mental health issues are also strongly linked to social inequalities. People living in poverty are more exposed to a number of risks that can seriously impact on mental health, including poor housing, homelessness and debt.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

- The impacts of many mental health issues, including experiencing suicidal thoughts, PTSD, personality disorder and dual-diagnosis, are not always well understood in homelessness prevention (and other) services, including in relation to the impacts for engagement with support, and assessing needs.
- There are barriers to accessing mental health services, which are exacerbated by experiencing homelessness/chaotic circumstances, and stigma.

“I want to be assessed by the Mental Health Team, but need to sort out a GP first... [When homeless] they don't want to know. You end up coming out of there feeling worse.” (Citizen)

- Partnership working and communication is vital. Communication from the earliest possible stage (e.g. if a person is being discharged with nowhere to stay) gives the best chance for planning the best support/accommodation. This doesn't always happen in reality.
- Greater integration and flexibility is needed in housing related support services to best support people at various stages of their journey, e.g. people leaving secure units with higher level needs, and people who may dip in and out of services.
- With funding secured from Welsh Government we've developed two successful, psychologically informed mental health temporary accommodation flats. Delivered in partnership with Health, the service offer works to prevent delayed discharge, and hospital readmissions.

What we'll do

- i. We'll develop closer working relationships with Community Mental Health Teams, to share learning and improve day to day communication, to ensure we're better able to respond when people are in crisis, and best able to support people with a variety of mental health issues. This will include exploring options for possible co-location.
- ii. We'll support the 2025 movement, with its aim of ending avoidable health inequalities in North Wales by 2025. We'll also promote a strength-based approach to supporting people with mental health issues, working to address stigmas and promote compassionate mental health.
- iii. We'll review options for (re-)developing a hospital-based homelessness post, considering what opportunities there may be for regional commissioning.
- iv. We'll also work to raise awareness amongst ward staff around homelessness prevention – the need to ask the right questions and share information at the right time.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

- v. We'll evaluate options to develop more integrated support (particularly with Health). Alongside this we'll consider remodel opportunities to ensure projects are accessible to those in greatest need, e.g. looking at the balance of primary/undiagnosed and secondary mental health support – but ensuring that flexibility doesn't compromise the ability to meet particular needs.
- vi. Building on the success of the dedicated mental health flats, we'll look to further develop this provision, exploring funding opportunities and working in continued partnership with Health.
- vii. We'll take a close look at training needs, particularly to make sure we're able to ask the right questions, e.g. in relation to suicide, and understand how to assess risk and respond. As part of this we'll also need to look at our assessment paperwork.
- viii. We'll support the delivery of the North Wales Together for Mental Health Strategy, including via the Local Implementation Team.

6.7 Families

What we know

- Families represent a relatively high proportion of people accessing our support projects. Single parent families support is in the top 5 lead/main needs identified.
- According to our PMR (Performance Monitoring Returns) the number of households with dependent children accessing our projects has risen by around 27% in 2017/18.
- Some families have been hit massively by the benefit cap introduced in late 2016. The new benefit rules mean that some families will lose all entitlement to Housing Benefit, with some others receiving a negligible amount. This has left many families simply unable to afford their homes – facing a real risk of debt and poverty, and having the difficult task of sourcing alternative, affordable accommodation.
- Families often have to spend too long in temporary accommodation, which isn't always fit for purpose. This can be because of a lack of suitable housing for families. This includes a lack of supported housing, especially larger families.
- Taking a holistic view of family support, including coordination of support services, is vital to prevent problems from occurring and re-occurring, including in relation to ACEs (adverse childhood experiences).

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

What we'll do

- i. We'll continue to develop better supported housing options for larger families.
- ii. We'll also ensure that all of our floating support is accessible to people with dependent children – to meet increasing demand, and ensure that there is equality of access for families.
- iii. We'll learn from work in 2018/19 to review and complete an options appraisal for our use of emergency temporary accommodation, to inform future temporary accommodation commissioning and development of move-on options for families.
- iv. We'll promote partnership working with specialist advice services such as Citizens Advice and the Benefits Advice Shop – to ensure that families affected by the benefit cap can access the right advice and guidance to prevent crisis point.
- v. We'll explore what options there may be, particularly with Children and Communities Grant partners, to develop greater coordination between family support services, to enable a more holistic and needs-led approach.
- vi. We'll ensure that all projects have had quality training around ACEs.

ACES Include:

- Physical, emotional & sexual abuse
- Physical & emotional neglect
- Being exposed to violence & substance abuse
- Parents going through divorce
- Relatives with mental health issues
- Incarcerated relatives

Risks include:

- Homelessness
- Missed work
- Alcohol/substance abuse & smoking
- Criminal justice involvement
- Mental health problems & suicide attempts
- Various health issues, including diabetes, cancer, STDs, stroke, heart disease, COPD, broken bones & obesity

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

6.8 Prison leavers and people with a history of offending

What we know

- The importance of suitable accommodation and support in helping to reduce the likelihood of re-offending is well established. A National Pathway for prison leavers is in place, which has supported more effective resettlement - but there remain challenges, often linked to a lack of coordination and information sharing between key services.
- Approximately 13% of people referred for Supporting People support in 2017/18 had a history of offending. This is an increase of around 5% against the previous year.
- People leaving prison are no longer automatic 'priority need', therefore are less likely to be offered accommodation via statutory Homelessness. When they are, they are most likely to be offered B&B type accommodation, at least in the short term. Supported housing is not always immediately available for people leaving prison, which may be because of a lack of suitable spaces, or because of a lack of planning.
- People leaving prison can have a variety of needs, but are particularly likely to have mental health and/or substance misuse support needs, and are also likely to have experienced unsettled life circumstances before entering prison.
- Research commissioned by the Regional Collaborative Committee in 2017 found that people leaving prison felt they needed this wrap-around community of support:
 - Pick up from the gate by peer mentors or agencies
 - Distraction: employment, volunteering and / or training after a period of stabilisation
 - On release, access to a half-way house and support to re-establish links, attend appointments and to prepare for living independently
 - Access to peer mentoring service and peer support
 - Access to rehabilitation or detox services and Narcotics Anon or Alcoholics Anon
 - Access to housing with continuing support to address issues such as substance misuse or mental health, and to live independently
 - Support for daytime activities such as classes, trips, support groups, volunteering and employment
 - Access to a day centre or community hub that could signpost to services and host activities, meetings and initiatives
 - Option to move area and make a fresh start with the support elements listed above

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

What we'll do

- I. Following the recruitment of a dedicated prison resettlement Homelessness Prevention Officer in 2018, we'll work to create better opportunities to prevent homelessness for people leaving prison. This must include supporting better, joined up planning, so that supported housing is a viable option for people on release.
- II. We'll also continue to attend the North Wales Prisoner Resettlement Group, supporting the ongoing development and embedding of the National Pathway.
- III. We'll review training needs, and promote strengths-based risk assessments and support plans, as part of our development of PIEs. We must also support particularly close partnership working with substance use and mental health support services, as well as promoting employment and other wellbeing support.

6.9 Rough sleeping

What we know

- Many rough sleepers face a combination of problems, in addition to homelessness, which can often include mental health issues, substance use problems and challenging behaviour. Issues can be complex and mutually reinforcing, often having their roots in entrenched disadvantage, and leaving people socially and economically excluded.
- While we have seen a rise in rough sleeping nationally, demand for our emergency beds project (Ty Golau) has remained high, though quite steady. The profile of people accessing has however slightly changed – more young people are using the emergency beds, and we are seeing increasing complex needs/multiple disadvantage.
- Traditional support services do not work for all rough sleepers, given often chaotic circumstances and more complex needs. Rough sleepers can often find themselves furthest away from the support they need most, and rates of re-presentation to services amongst rough sleepers are high. Responses to rough sleeping must therefore be creative and assertive.

“[What's needed is] somebody there linking you in and saying 'look, this guy really needs this help - is there any way we can cut the red tape?’” (Citizen)

- Prevention of rough sleeping wherever possible is a key priority. Where a person has had to sleep rough for whatever reason, rapid intervention to provide them with a safe place to sleep offers the best chance to prevent further rough sleeping and trauma.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

- Housing First is founded on the principle that housing is a basic human right. It means secure accommodation is provided as soon as it's available (rather than after a period of support, e.g. in supported housing) – then holistic wrap-around support is put in place. Evidence shows that Housing First works, and - following the feasibility study completed in 2018 - that Housing First can work in Denbighshire and Conwy. Working with key partners including Health will however, be vital to the success of the project.



What we'll do

- I. We'll commission a Housing First pilot, in collaboration with Conwy County Borough Council, and in partnership with key partners such as Health. We are committed to developing at least an initial 5 units of Housing First accommodation and support in Denbighshire by the end of 2019.
- II. We'll enhance existing services to ensure they're best placed to respond to need, including considering the possibility of a 'sit up' service, and coordinating responses to StreetLink rough sleeper reports. We'll also promote the use of StreetLink.
- III. We'll continue to fund the Ty Golau personal budget, offering creative and bespoke ways to support move on and recovery from rough sleeping.
- IV. We'll work to develop a 'No First Night Out' approach, including targeted intensive support where people are at risk of spending a first night on the streets.
- V. We'll continue to contribute to work to review day services - to ensure a best practice, consistent approach to ending rough sleeping.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

6.10 Drug and alcohol use

What we know

- Not everyone who has problems with alcohol or drugs becomes homeless, and not every homeless person has problems with drug or alcohol; however, homeless people disproportionately experience drug/alcohol use related support needs.
- Drug or alcohol problems can sometimes play a causal role in a person becoming homeless – but at the same time, people will use drugs or alcohol to help them try to cope with the traumas of homelessness.
- Approximately 15% of people accessing Supporting People services identify that they have alcohol or other substance use related support need.
- Support needs tend to increase for people in the most chaotic circumstances, for example, rough sleepers. ‘Street drinking’ (of which those who participate may or may not be homeless) has also been an issue in Rhyl in particular for some years. For these individuals, support referral patterns can point to a ‘revolving door’.
- People with drug or alcohol issues can become excluded from the support services they need, because of behaviours and difficulties in engaging with traditional support. Exclusion from services can also be a particular issue for people with co-occurring mental health issues, who can end up feeling stuck in the middle of mental health and substance use services. Without the right support, it can be even more difficult for people to deal with their homelessness situation.
- Evidence shows us that properly managed safe drinking environments can have a significant positive impact on an individual’s drinking/drug use and other support needs (including homelessness), as well as levels of anti-social behaviour and crime.

“If an area lacks wet provision, its response to street homelessness is likely to be incomplete.” (Shelter)

- ‘Cuckooing’ can have a devastating impact on a person’s safety and ability to keep their home. Victims of cuckooing do not necessarily have their own drug/alcohol related support needs, but we know that transient drug dealers, running their drug trading routes known as ‘county lines’, will target vulnerable people – taking over their homes, threatening their safety, and potentially forcing them out.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

What we'll do

- I. We'll ensure that nobody is excluded from our support because of drug or alcohol issues. This will include the continuing shifting of focus to person-centred outcomes (rather than process), and ensuring that our services can offer flexible, multi-disciplinary support to people with a variety of support needs (e.g. co-occurring mental health and substance use). We will also work with our projects to review drug/alcohol use policies, to ensure that risk measures are proportionate and not exclusionary. Promotion of an underpinning harm reduction approach will be key here.
- II. We'll continue to offer support in tackling street drinking issues, working closely with the Police and other partners to ensure that Denbighshire's response is not limited to criminal justice - that we respond to the root causes and support needs of individuals experiencing these chaotic, and often traumatic lifestyles and circumstances.
- III. We'll continue to push for consideration for local safe drinking environments. We will build on our existing evidence base and explore options for development, working closely with the Area Planning Board and the local community.
- IV. We'll raise awareness of cuckooing and its impacts, ensuring that both staff and the people we support can recognise the signs and try to prevent problems from escalating.

6.11 Learning disabilities & difficulties, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and acquired brain injury

What we know

- Going through services, with all of the paperwork, meetings etc. can be difficult to understand. When a person has impaired cognitive ability for whatever reason, it can be even more difficult to understand and navigate the various services and expectations. There are for example some unique challenges that individuals may face in relation to communication, relationships, and physical environment. There are also a lot of adults who struggle to read. And sometimes people do not feel they have their voices heard.
- Some people may also be unable to find suitable employment because of their support needs. When a person needs to claim benefits, they may face an additional barrier to securing suitable accommodation, when landlords are unwilling to accept benefits.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

What we'll do

- I. We'll ensure that our processes, paperwork etc. are accessible for everyone. This will include co-producing new homelessness assessment paperwork in 2018 – which will be integrated, proportionate, and psychologically informed.
- II. We'll consider what opportunities there may be for advocacy type support - support for all people who may struggle to understand during the homelessness assessment process, to ensure that people are communicated with in the best way so that they understand what will happen, and always have their voices heard.
- III. We'll continue to commission and learn from the Complex Disabilities Tenancy Enabler service, recognising that specialist knowledge and approaches can be required to effectively support individuals in some of the unique challenges they may face.
- IV. Supporting People funding to the DCC Community Living service will continue to reduce every year, as agreed in 2013. This will not impact upon the support people receive.

6.12 Older people

What we know

- Older people can sometimes need some practical help and support to regain or improve independence, and ultimately remain in their own homes. Residential care is important, but not for everyone - it can be totally disproportionate for some older people's needs.
- The Supported Independent Living Service now works closely alongside the DCC Reablement service, to offer a proportionate and streamlined service to people who may have a range of care/support needs to enable them to stay in their own home.
- Older people are especially vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation – which can have a serious effect on health, wellbeing, and a person's ability to look after themselves and their home.

What we'll do

- I. We'll invest further into Reablement, recognising the importance of taking a holistic and streamlined approach to enabling older people to remain in their own homes.
- II. In our move to more person-centred outcomes-focussed and psychologically informed ways of working, we will encourage greater creativity and flexibility of approaches to combat loneliness and prevent its associated impacts on health and independence.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

6. More people's stories

It was a chance meeting in the library when I first met my Support Worker. I was asking if they had a list of landlords, but they didn't. I hadn't been sure where to turn. He overheard and asked me about my situation.

I was renting a property that was in a bad way. And it made me feel in a bad way. The kitchen ceiling was falling in. My landlord wasn't fixing anything, he just tried to intimidate me instead. I didn't feel safe. And now he was saying he was going to evict me. I had a breakdown.

My chance meeting lead to me being able to access some support around my housing situation - as it happens, from the same person I happened upon in the library. He supported me to go to Shelter Cymru for advice, where I found out that my landlord didn't have the proper registration. My Support Worker helped me to find a new place. I was even able to find somewhere where I could live close to my mum again, which was important to me. I had a bit of a battle to get my deposit back from my last place, but I got it eventually, with the help of Shelter Cymru and my Support Worker.

I'm still getting support, just to help me with getting settled, and with adjusting to Universal Credit. My Support Worker is helping me with understanding where to go and what to do if I have any problems in future. It's made a massive difference. The place where I live now is a lot better and a lot safer. I'm not embarrassed to have friends over anymore. It's been hard work. If it wasn't for that chance meeting and the support after that, I wouldn't be where I am now.

Supporting People / Homelessness Prevention Commissioning Plan 2019-2022

7. Well being impact assessment

A Wellbeing Impact Assessment is a tool we use to help us evaluate the impact of a new idea, policy, report or project.

It helps us to consider ways to strengthen the contribution we can make to the wellbeing of future generations, looking at the 7 wellbeing goals identified in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015:

- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving welsh language
- A globally responsible Wales

A Wellbeing Impact Assessment for the draft Homelessness Prevention/Supporting People Commissioning Plan 2019-22 was completed 11/09/2017.

It scored the Plan 28 points out of 30 in terms of its sustainability, and identified that it made a positive contribution to all of the 7 wellbeing goals (with strategies identified to address any unintended negative consequences).

No amendments to the Assessment were required following the close of the Plan's consultation in November 2018.