

HSVP 04

Cymorth tai i bobl sy'n agored i niwed

Housing support for vulnerable people

Ymateb gan: Cyngor Sir Ceredigion

Response from: Ceredigion County Council

As part of the Committee's continued commitment to scrutinise issues relevant to our priority area of appropriate housing, we have agreed to undertake work on housing support for vulnerable people. The initial focus of our work will be a short inquiry on housing-related support services, funded by the Housing Support Grant (HSG). The terms of reference for this inquiry are to examine:

- How effectively the Welsh Government is planning for the future of HSG in light of rapid rehousing transition and the forthcoming Homelessness Bill;

It can be difficult to plan for changes with limited forewarning of grant awards or for example changes to outcomes framework. Due to the nature of the funding being allocated to third sector through commissioned contracts, these can take time to change or recommission. An annual award sometimes leaves the LA trying to introduce single year pilot services for example. A longer term financial commitment would aid future development.

At times also, the guidance and parameters of the HSG are unfavourable to local conditions, and the ability to utilise the funding more flexibly would be welcomed.

The LA has developed a RRH and HSG Programme Plan and is working towards the key objectives identified within both pieces of work, ensuring they complement one another. Re-commissioning of all HSG services is underway with the aim to complete in the coming months.

The forthcoming Homelessness Bill has provided a large element of uncertainty around the proposed changes and/or their envisaged implementation date, how this will impact the LA and the providers. Significant changes within the Bill could lead to unintended consequences, resulting in greater pressure and demand for services within already stretched budgets, coupled with further financial challenges, i.e. NI changes from April 2025.

Overall we feel the Welsh Government is considering how Housing Support can aid with Rapid Rehousing and the Homelessness bill, however it seems to be a reaction, rather than planned approach. HSG is only a part of the overall strategy and solutions for homelessness, capital investment being the single most important factor to generate capacity. and align to the 4 year Programme Plan and HSG Strategy developed and required by WG.

- Current and anticipated pressures in the delivery of HSG-funded support services, including pressures on the workforce;

Building on the points raised above:

Feedback from all providers is that budgets are stretched, and staff recruitment and retention is a constant challenge.

Acknowledging the recent uplifts in HSG over the recent years, this has not resulted in increased resources due to staffing pay increases and cost of living trying to catch up from years of stagnation prior to the Pandemic. Consideration should be given to resetting realistic funding according to identified needs, particularly for complex support. where the commitment to staff welfare and development of the P.I.E. approach includes review & reflection support.

- How much is known about service performance, including data on outcomes.

A recent change and implementation of a central point of entry into HSG services via a 'Gateway' has enabled the LA to monitor these 3 points. Alongside these, they've also enabled the LA to work with the providers

during periods where resources have been a challenge but also it has enabled the LA to ensure Value for Money.

We can now monitor all aspects of the providers performance, outcomes, length of time on support, waiting lists and repeat presentations.

- How effective is joint working between housing support services and public services such as health and social care; and

The HSG Service works closely with Social Care colleagues and commissioning to support the delivery of independent living and maintain independence. E.g. for Supported Living settings, quarterly reviews undertake to ensure any HSG funding allocated falls within the guidance.

Housing and HSG sits within the LA's 'Through Age Well-Being' model which has seen a significant move away from 'silo' approaches. It has provided greater opportunities for partnership working with a strong sense of collaboration at that centre of all its functions. As a result, the re-commissioning activity all tender specifications have been developed in partnership with the relevant services to provide a strategic, through age and preventative approach.

It's recognised that partner Agencies are under similar public funding pressures, though the service models may need some consideration to deliver the aims of MDT working for Complex/Co-Morbid cases, especially when applying Housing First principles.

There remain barriers with working jointly with health services, and these relationships are undeveloped. In part this is due to differing priorities, organisational demands and organisation structures. We have a reliance on our social care colleagues to develop relationships for any jointly commissioned services, where housing support is usually a minor part.

- What services should be commissioned in future to effectively support people with complex needs to find and keep a home.

There is an increased demand for move on accommodation to meet the needs of a more complex cohort, that don't meet statutory thresholds within Social Care. We have continued difficulties in securing settled accommodation (to move out of temporary accommodation) for those experiencing in particular; substance misuse, poor mental health and prior antisocial behaviours, including past criminality. When social care assessments are undertaken, they are often deemed to be suitable for community support and accommodation. The housing first principles are an appropriate model, but need commitment from health services to aid delivery, including particularly substance misuse and mental health services, and the commitment of funding for increased staffing at any identified projects.

In terms of the Minister's Statement and Welsh Government's agenda to ensure a 'real' buy in across all services that 'Homelessness is not just a Housing issue' with guidance and clarification as to how this should be implemented, to ensure equal share of responsibilities. This clarity should be driven through Regional Partnership Boards as well as Public Service Boards, with clear strategy and responsibility for action.