

Experts by Experience Response to Homelessness and Housing Draft Housing Strategy 2019-2024

This response to the Draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy has been written by Experts by Experience. Experts by Experience are people with lived experiences of using services.

Ayriss Recovery Coventry (ARC) CIC are an important part of the local system. Their mission statement is to restore hope and help support those affected by addiction to rebuild stable and secure lives. They founded STEPS for Change in the City Centre which is a drop in facility where Street Homeless and those at risk of homelessness, can seek support from a variety of partner agencies.

Coventry are one of twenty seven local areas across England that are using the MEAM Approach. The MEAM Approach is a framework to help local areas develop effective, coordinated services for people facing multiple disadvantage, and promote lasting, embedded change to local systems.

The Expert by Experience feedback has been split into the four themes of the Draft Strategy.

Theme 1 – Preventing Homelessness and Supporting Homeless Households

- 1) The Group were positive about the opportunities Housing First will provide to support individuals with Multiple Complex Needs
- 2) The Strategy should include reviewing the pathways into housing options at Coventry City Council to simplify the process.
 - a. For example, delays in getting rough sleepers of the street happen as people need to provide a number of documents, including birth certificates and medical information. The majority of rough sleepers do not have this information to hand. Birth certificates can be ordered, from the Registry Office at CCC, but to expedite this process costs £25 for a 48 hour turn around. Could, in this example, Housing and the Registry Office link to each other so Housing can check the birth data, without there being a cost? Individuals cannot be housed until this information is provided, resulting in delays and additional nights on the street.
 - b. Where individuals are known to MEAM practitioners who are able to verify their identity, can they be allocated accommodation and the paperwork provided within a few days?
- 3) Housing access points
 - a. The access points for Housing should accommodate those with Multiple Complex Needs, for example, by providing quiet areas.
 - b. The wait should be reduced for all clients
 - c. Could a fast track service for seeing STEPS clients in housing be implemented?
- 4) The importance of Making Every Adult Matter should be highlighted. Those working closely with MEAM to help clients with MCN should be given recognition by the Council and Partners to help them to fulfill their role.
- 5) ICAT System in Birmingham shares data across services involved in supporting those with MCN. Would like to see this adopted in Coventry.
- 6) The role and profile of STEPS for Change should be highlighted and raised as well as looking for opportunities to provide stability and sustainability, to support those who are homeless and prevent homelessness.
- 7) The strategy should look to build relationships with partners across criminal justice, physical and mental health, and substance misuse to prevent homelessness and signpost services for the homeless, including the support offered by STEPS for Change.
- 8) The Group would like to see at least multiple homeless providers in the City. They would also like to explore options for a specific provision for women.

- 9) There is a challenge around individuals being made homeless following release from hospital/prison/rehab as tenancies are only held for 12 weeks. Looking at ways to prevent homelessness. Need to look at accommodation prior to discharge/ release to avoid homelessness and at ongoing support to maintain tenancies.
- 10) STEPS have found individuals who are homeless as a result of not having a local connection, or coming from elsewhere in the UK where the housing rules are different. How can this be addressed?

Theme 2 – Housing Development

No comments

Theme 3 – Improving the use of existing homes

- 1) The Group raised concerns about the quality of Private Rented Sector accommodation available to house people. They would like to see more enforcement taken against Landlords who continually provide poor quality accommodation. The group emphasised they would like to see an proactive approach taken by the Council to check accommodation as often people are too scared to complain about poor conditions for fear of reprisals and eviction. If they were to leave or to be evicted, they would lose the right to help as would have made themselves intentionally homeless.
- 2) Private Landlords also offer supported accommodation, however, what this comprises of is often patchy – there needs to be a clear, consistent and managed approach to supported accommodation. Supported accommodation also needs to support the individual to sustain their tenancy and empower them to develop new skills.

Theme 4 – Support for people and communities

- 1) The Group were positive about the opportunities Housing First will provide to support individuals with Multiple Complex Needs (also in Theme 1).
- 2) The importance of Making Every Adult Matter should be highlighted. Those working closely with MEAM to help clients with MCN should be given recognition by the Council and Partners to help them to fulfill their role (also in Theme 1).
- 3) One of the key roles of MEAM is to flex the system to help individuals. By promoting MEAM and its ethos as part of the Housing Strategy, it will help the group to get more rough sleepers into accommodation.
- 4) There is an issue as to how those without recourse to public funds are helped. The Council is excluded from providing housing support in these cases and we'd like to see how we can work in partnership to find some solutions, for example by building a contingency fund, to support these individuals.
- 5) The Group would also like to review how enforcement is used by the City Council. Rather than fining homeless people, STEPS would like to work with the Enforcement Team to resolve issues without resorting to fining and court action.