

12 March 2019

Homelessness

Ward(s) All

Portfolios: Cllr A. Andrew – Deputy Leader and Regeneration

Report:

Joint working for Money Home Job and Public Health came about after the night shelter closed in 2017. At that time the night shelter provision was located at the Glebe Centre and supported 62 rough sleepers for 1 month. Money Home Job worked proactively with the rough sleepers including the Eastern European groups which formed approximately 25% over the overall number.

As part of our evaluation process a decision was made to scope out relocation of the night shelter to a more central location, that the shelter would be open for a longer period of time (initially 3 months but was extended to 4 months due to severe weather) and that we scoped out a housing first model pilot with housing partners. This was jointly funded and co worked with Public Health. The joint working resulted in us supporting 150 rough sleepers with 25 of the most complex entrenched rough sleepers securing accommodation through the housing first model.

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 significantly reformed England's Homelessness legislation by placing duties on local authorities to intervene at earlier stages to prevent homelessness in their areas. It also requires housing authorities to provide homelessness services to all those affected, not just those who have 'priority need'.

Nationally the figures for rough sleepers as increased by 2%, however in the West Midlands the number has reduced. Here in Walsall over the last 3 years we have seen our count submissions reduce year upon year from 26 to 20 and our last reporting figure being 11. We currently receive funding via MHCLG (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) and part of the project we have to submit bi monthly submissions of rough sleeper street counts. Our most recent submission was January 2019 which Identified 3 rough sleeper's 2 of which had accessed the night shelter earlier that evening.

The night shelter opened 15th October 2018 and will close on the 31st March 2019. During this time and to date we have supported 123 rough sleepers of which 43 have secured accommodation via various housing providers and 55 have utilised the night shelter less than 5 nights of which 24 only 1

night. We will continue to work with remaining cohort and support them into the most appropriate accommodation available. Currently 13 have been profiled for Housing First Project. Alongside the Housing First we have the New Beginnings project which supports up to 10 rough sleeping sex workers.

Moving forward we have secured funding of £1.3 million via WMCA in partnership with Public Health to deliver Housing First to 88 complex individuals. Our support provider is Fry Accord who will work in partnership with local housing providers to secure suitable accommodation in the right location. We are also waiting for further funding confirmation via various funding streams which will enable us to continue and expand our support team as well as reopening the night shelter from winter 2019.

Our aim is to build upon our current model and to support individuals further onto training, education, employment and other opportunities. A result of our journey so far as seen 1 individual employed by the Local Authority and local businesses offering opportunities to individuals supported by this project. Our aim also sees us piloting prison pre release support for a better transition back into community life.

Recommendations:

That, subject to any comments Members may wish to make, the report be noted.

Contact Officer:

Paul Gordon
Head of Business Change
 07792 920257
Paul.Gordon@walsall.gov.uk

Case Study

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| Organisation: | Fry Accord |
| Service: | Housing First – Client A |
| Date: | 06/12/18 |

Background: (E.g. reasons for referral, customer history and complexity of need)

A has either been street homeless or sofa surfing since the age of 15. He has a drug addiction, having both a methadone script, but also lapses into heroin use. He also has an offending background, and can be prone to fits of rage if he does not have access to drugs.

A was referred to us for assessment to access our Housing First project. He was assessed and a one-bedroomed property given to him on 5th April 2018.

A needs intensive support in managing his tenancy, accessing benefits and managing money, and with his substance addiction

Actions taken by the service:

Since A moved into his property, he has settled well. He is accessing the Beacon Centre to receive support for his addiction and is keen to get into employment. He particularly enjoys the outdoors, which we are building on to help him find work and usefully occupy his time.

A is intimidating to look at (tall, well-built, tattoos etc.) and this has caused some problems in the block where he is living. Several complaints have been received regarding noise and behaviour. However, we have visited A at various times of day and evening, including weekends, and have found no evidence to substantiate the complaints. We are working with A and local housing staff to log any incidents, and A is determined not to be provoked into reacting in a bad way, as he desperately wants to hold onto his property.

Before we managed to deal with the neighbour issues A was unfortunately arrested and subsequently remanded in custody for several weeks. A was fully supported during his time on remand and after a very lengthy discussion with A he agreed to move to an alternative property upon release to avoid the neighbour issues from escalating

As we were able to support and provide accommodation for A he was given early release, with a tagging device.

He is now determined to keep out of trouble and will require intensive support to regain some stability.

Outcomes achieved for the customer:

- 1) Maximised income
- 2) Maintained accommodation and avoided eviction
- 3) Avoided negative peer groups from when on the streets
- 4) Engaging with all support services to improve health and wellbeing
- 5) Engaging with other external agencies involved with support
- 6) Fully supported whilst on remand
- 7) Progressing well in his new property
- 8) Managing his substance misuse with a methadone script

How does the customer feel that the service has impacted on their wellbeing? (Include relevant customer quotes)

A feels that his well-being is improving. He has stated "all I want to do is make a better life for myself" and welcomed the support given whilst he was in custody.

He is happy with his new flat

He believes that he is feeling healthier and happier and is looking forward to identifying some employment opportunities.

Case Study

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| Organisation: | FryAccord |
| Service: | Housing First – Client D |
| Date: | 07/12/2018 |

Background: (E.g. reasons for referral, customer history and complexity of need)

D became homeless in 2015 as a result of alcohol misuse and the breakdown in his marriage.

D lived in various temporary accommodation and hostels until eventually becoming street homeless. D became alcohol dependant as he felt rejected by family, friends and society. He drank to excess to ease the pain he suffered; however, this also affected his mental wellbeing causing him to become depressed, anxious and very angry.

D used the night shelter in Walsall from November 2018 to March 2018 and was referred to housing first by Walsall MBC.

D was assessed and accepted for a one bedroom flat, he vowed to change his life stating he has hit rock bottom and it is the worst place to be and can never go back there

D started his tenancy with on 27th March 2018. He has made an incredulous change to his life since moving into his flat.

He promised to never to touch alcohol ever again in his life and he has remained abstinent for some 9 months.

D was raised in Christian faith and is very dedicated to his local church, he does some volunteering work during the week

Outcomes achieved for the customer:

- a) Since D has been housed he has re-established ties with his family
- b) Since his new life transformation he attends All Saints Church 3 times a week
- c) Engages well establishing trust with his support worker
- d) Settled well into his new accommodation managing his tenancy well
- e) Registered with the local GP
- f) Abstinent for 9 months
- g) Considering looking for work during 2019

How does the customer feel that the service has impacted on their wellbeing? (Include relevant customer quotes)

D is very thankful to have received permanent accommodation stating a new place means a new beginning for him.

He appreciates all the support he receives from staff and feels without the support he may have continued to live on the streets.

He says he knows he is no longer alone; that we are always there to help and support him when he needs it and he appreciates everything that is done for him.

He often comments that, if HF didn't exist he wonders what would have become of him.

Case Study

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| Organisation: | Fry Accord |
| Service: | Housing First – Client B |
| Date: | 07/12/2018 |

Background: (E.g. reasons for referral, customer history and complexity of need)

B has been street homeless for two and a half years. Prior to this, she was in an abusive relationship, where all aspects of her finances were controlled by her partner. Having taken the courageous step to leave her partner, she became withdrawn after separation and was unable to maintain her tenancy, which resulted in her being evicted.

We assessed and accepted B on 9th February 2018. When we were assessing her, she informed us about her son, who had also spent time with her on the streets, but was currently due to be released from prison. We agreed to house both the client and her son in a 2-bedroomed property.

B suffers from depression, blood pressure and arthrosis, and has attempted suicide in the past. At the time of accessing our service, she was occasionally seeing a visiting GP at the Walsall Homeless Hub (the Glebe Centre) and was on prescribed medication for her health conditions. However, the GP only attends the centre one day per week, and ability to see the GP is often down to demand on the day.

B also has a chronic alcoholic dependency and is a heavy smoker

Actions taken by the service:

The staff team provide intensive support for B, and are also supporting her son who, after having been recalled to prison for a short while, continues to live with his mother.

B has been registered with a GP, and we have supported her to apply for a medical assessment. We have also supported B to apply for the benefits she is entitled to in order to maximise her income.

Staff have tried to encourage B to maintain good standards of cleanliness – both of herself and the property. Several multi-agency meetings were held resulting in B being issued with numerous warning letters for failing to maintain her property and anti social behaviour issues.

At this moment in time we appear to have had a substantial breakthrough with B, she is maintaining the property to a good standard. She is engaging with the support staff in relation to her support plan. In addition, she is paying her weekly service charges via direct debit.

Initially we were dealing with almost daily neighbour complaints; due to the intensive support given to B around anti social behaviour issues and managing her tenancy we haven't received any neighbour complaints for several weeks.

B has successfully held her tenancy with us since 9th February 2018,

Outcomes achieved for the customer:

- 1) Maximised income
- 2) Maintained accommodation and avoided eviction
- 3) Living skills gained positively
- 4) Registered with a local GP
- 5) Continues to maintain a healthy better life for herself
- 6) Management and understanding of her alcohol intake
- 7) Not allowed visitors who are loud and offensive into the property
- 8) Engaging with all support services to improve health and wellbeing
- 9) Engaging with other external agencies involved with support
- 10) Motivated for the first time in her adult life to change her circumstances
- 11) Has successfully sustained her tenancy for 11 months

How does the customer feel that the service has impacted on their wellbeing?

B acknowledges that moving into a property after so long has been challenging. However, she does say that she feels happier and more secure in having a place to call home.

She is also grateful (reluctantly at times) for the persistence of the support team in helping her to improve her lifestyle and maintain her home to an acceptable standard. B states she thought we would give up on her like other people have; she now realises and accepts we are here to support her as and when she requires it.

Case Study

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| Organisation: | FryAccord |
| Service: | Housing First – Client C |
| Date: | 06/12/18 |

Background: (E.g. reasons for referral, customer history and complexity of need)

C has been street homeless for 7 years. He is alcohol dependent and started drinking at the age of 12. His past has been traumatic and he has been a victim of abuse.

C was referred to the Housing First project in October 2017, where we assessed and accepted him, and have placed him into a self-contained property.

C needs intensive support to manage his tenancy, develop his financial skills (including applying for Benefits), access appropriate health services (including his alcohol dependency) and with his general day-to-day living skills.

Actions taken by the service:

On commencing with the Housing First project, we jointly developed a support plan to help address his needs.

Staff have helped C register with a local GP and arranged for an optician to visit him at home as his sight was poor and he had no spectacles. Staff have also helped C to open a bank account and educated him on how to use a bank card. As C has difficulty with his mobility and balance, and is often confused and suffers from short-term memory loss, we have provided support to him to complete a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) application. Staff have fully supported C in attending appointments, including his assessment. C is now in receipt of appropriate benefits

His health is now deteriorating somewhat, he is extremely unsteady on his feet and as such is no longer able to shop or cook for himself safely.

C has recently been assessed by Adult Social Care, which was very positive; an appointee for his finances is currently being arranged along with an OT assessment and carers for two hours per day five days a week.

C still needs intensive support and receives daily visits. However, he has built a positive, trusting relationship with his support worker. He continues to be supported with visits to the GP. He is no longer receiving support from the Beacon Centre to help with his alcohol in-take as he feels he is able to manage and reduce his alcohol in-take himself. Through our support he continues making good progress adapting to living in a home, which he keeps neat and tidy. He still requires a lot of support in relation to budgeting, but is very motivated to engage and learn.

We haven't received any neighbour complaints for some several months, C has been in his home for 12 months

Outcomes achieved for the customer:

- 1) Maximised income
- 2) Maintained accommodation and avoided eviction for 12 months
- 3) Living skills gained positively
- 4) Continues to maintain a healthy better life for himself
- 5) Management and understanding of his alcohol intake
- 6) Avoided excess drinking so not to be harmed
- 7) Avoided negative peer groups from when on the streets
- 8) Engaging with all support services to improve health and wellbeing.
- 9) Caring and respecting person

How does the customer feel that the service has impacted on their wellbeing? (Include relevant customer quotes)

The past 12 months have been really challenging for C, but he can see his own progress and welcomes the opportunity that this Housing First project has given him. He acknowledges he still has a long way to go, particularly with regard to his alcohol dependency, but is accepting of the support we are able to offer. With continued intensive support the outlook is very positive.

C only agreed to the assessment from ASC providing we continue to support him

C states that without the support and accommodation he would probably have died months ago