

## **Regional Housing Support Collaborative Group (RHSCG) Minutes**

November 4<sup>th</sup> 2021 10:00am – 12:10pm

Meeting via TEAMS

### **Minutes**

#### **Attendees:**

Wendy Hughes – Chair	Lisa Pearson – Flintshire
Arwel Jones – Anglesey	Linda Hughes – Landlord Rep
Charlotte Davies - Probation	Lynne Evans – Provider Rep
Claire Owens – Denbighshire	Martin Cooil – Flintshire
Debbie Williams – Wrexham	Mark Conlan – Probation
Debbie Lambe – Conwy	Nigel Jones - Denbighshire
Elliw Llyr – Anglesey	Paul Firth – Area Planning Board
Elwen Roberts – VAWDASV rep (Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence)	Phil Forbes – Mental Health BCUHB
Emma Wood – Provider Rep	Sam Parry – Conwy
Gwenan Ellis – Landlord Rep	Shirley Jones – Wrexham
Gwyn Roberts – Gwynedd	Tracy Hague – Wrexham
Julie Llewelyn – Welsh Gov North Wales Relationship Manager (bar Wrexham)	Rachel Pierce-Jones – RDC (Regional Development Coordinator)

**Guest Speakers:** Mark Flack and Lesley Thomas of Anglesey HSG Team,

#### **Apologies:**

Diane Jones (OPCC – Office of Police and Crime Commissioner), Hedd Tomos – Gwynedd, and Tim Thomas – NRLA (National Residential Landlords Association)

#### **1. Welcome and Introduction and Declaration of interest:**

Chair welcomed all to the meeting and no declaration of interest were raised.

## **2. Previous Minutes and outstanding actions:**

June 10<sup>th</sup> minutes were agreed as an accurate record. All actions have been completed

## **3. Anglesey's Needs Assessment Scoring Matrix and new support plan towards the transition to Rapid Rehousing Model**

Presentation will be shared after the meeting from Lesley Thomas and Mark Flack. **(ACTION)**

Lesley shared Anglesey's new posts being recruited which will form part of the Rapid Rehousing five year transition plan; Complex Case Coordinator, Rapid Response Worker, and a Move on Officer. There have been new processes internally for the RR transition plan including; new triage form, a RAG system which Mark Flacks presentation covered.

This has gone out to tender in Anglesey and a provider has been awarded.

Mark Flack presented the RAG system / scoring matrix. This improves sharing and consistency and duplication of information for the service user. Beginning stages of piloting this. There is also a Low, Medium and High guidance to be circulated with the presentation **(ACTION)**.

Questions discussed following the presentations:

- Were service users consulted? Yes, and a lot of PIE is involved for how we address and talk to customers.
- Wrexham interested in looking at this
- Homeless officers are they buying in to this? Yes being involved since the beginning, previous homeless assessments were not fit for purpose, again looking at it from a PIE element and what risks we are sharing with providers.

Thank you to both Lesley and Mark for their time today.

## **4. Ombudsman report – Overview from Wrexham**

Tracy Hague presented this item for Wrexham. Wrexham were one of the three LA's across Wales being audited by the Ombudsman, the final report has now been shared and recommendations for both LA's and WG were outlined.

Tracy shared:

- Some of the examples are Wales wide in the report and need to clarify what were Wrexham's, need to keep in mind some of the best practice shared weren't from the 3 being audited and therefore need to keep this in mind whilst reading the report.
- The 3 LA's have to take on the actions, in relation to the other 19 LA's they are not able to enforce.
- Wrexham have accepted all recommendations.
- The All Wales HSG Network have suggested they will help us on an all Wales basis with the recommendations.

- Rachel raised we can may be able to complete some of these recommendations quicker regionally and share best practice, to add to our potential list of priorities for next year's annual statement (**ACTION**)
- PIE training and the need for more of it was raised.
- Easy read factsheet was one recommendation and Rhondda Cynon Taf have a good example of best practice to utilise.
  - Easy read docs – Discussion why don't we currently have standard letters across Wales, need to also go step further and have QR codes linking to videos explaining what each bit means.
- Need for delivery on Equality and Human Rights training, Rachel suggested this could be done regionally and part of annual statement for next year to commission regionally. (**ACTION**)

## 5. Progress made against priorities in Annual Statement

Rachel updated on progress of the annual statement. Paper 2 has the full update and was shared with the agenda.

Rachel also updated the group on the recent questionnaires that went out for the consultation for the LA's HSG four year strategies. 400+ service user questionnaires were returned and 111 provider responses were received. Rachel will pull together a regional response of all service user responses at the next meeting (**ACTION**).

## 6. All Wales Meetings Updates

Shirley updated on the all Wales Work Force Development Group meeting that took place on October 17<sup>th</sup>, meeting was mainly around re-establishing itself, correcting the membership, terms of reference. Next meeting November 26<sup>th</sup> to update further then.

Rapid Rehousing Action Group, Shirley updated looking at who needs to be involved, looking at getting someone from the landlord forum to come on board, more of an update at next meeting, same as the workforce development group, setting up stages.

## 7. Homelessness update from Cell Leads

- Eiliw Llyr from Anglesey updated, the main issues are lack of access to PRS therefore unable to offer rent in advance. Access to PRS is non-existent. Behaviour within Emergency Accom continues to be an issue. Constant stream of presentations to Homelessness Assessments.
- Gwyn Roberts from Gwynedd updated, that some days they have no accommodation to offer at all, are having move on but then more clients moving in. . Officers have caseloads of 100+, trying to recruit, spending on TA is very high, agreed to home family of 9 from Afghanistan.
- Sam Parry from Conwy updated, presentations are high and numbers in EA are very high, waiting list of 1409, issues with housing larger families.
- Claire Owens from Denbighshire updated, increase in rough sleepers again, working with outreach service for this. Going back out to tender for early intervention prevention tender, and gone out for advert on the multi-disciplinary MH officer, waiting list has doubled.

- Martin Cooil from Flintshire echoed what other LA's had already updated.
- Tracy Hague from Wrexham updated, having issues with phase 2 developing / planning, had a far right political group push their way into a provider accommodation, two officers now off work due to the stress and being frightened from the incident, and Tracy mentioned it's not housing options fault they don't have the accommodation, officers putting up with a lot of abuse on phone calls.
  - Charlotte Davies from Probation reassured she is sending that message all the time to Probation that it is not housing officer's fault and they are not being difficult they simply cannot get the stock.

## **8. Ending Homelessness Plan (out for consultation)**

Debbie Lambe updated on this. This action plan is currently out for consultation until 12th November 2021. Welsh Government want to know thoughts on the themes of the plan, how effective it can be, and how it aligns with other relevant areas of policy.

On 2nd November the Housing Support Network organised a consultation event which was attended by approx. 45 people. Huw Charles was in attendance from Welsh Government and covered the Action Plan and explanation of the areas of focus and also presented the actions included in the plan

There were two breakout sessions; the first one looked at the areas of focus for the action plan which are Partnerships; Rare; Brief; Non-recurring. The second session looked at the actions themselves.

There are 15 actions and timescales and partners expected to be involved in the delivery of this action plan. Feedback from the sessions that Debbie was involved in

- Are all the partner agencies named in the delivery partners section of the action plan aware that they are part of the solution
- Not great timing for the rare; brief and non-recurring to come into place as we're still coming out of the pandemic and properties are very hard to come by due to the changing housing market
- Each local authority is at a different stage so some of the actions will be more achievable for some and not others
- Rapid rehousing – timescales too short – 5 years not achievable

Other people in attendance from the RHSCG also raised the following points from the session that were raised:

- Accountability on other services, not just housing, need to change the title as makes it a housing problem. Title to be re-looked at.
- Do the partners listed know they are listed? And lack of identification of key partners and their outcomes.

Rachel to send final response from the network once finalised (**ACTION**).

## **9. Recruitment Issues**

Rachel updated, prior to the meeting an e-mail went out to provider asking to e-mail problems they are facing with recruitment and any best practice to share on recruiting successfully. Rachel received a few e-mails back, Rachel shared the contents of these e-mails:

Pay / Salary:

- The salary is too low- Provider is a National Living Wage organisation so the lowest we would pay would be £9.50 per hour with many of our support staff on higher salaries. Equally, many projects are funded over periods of 3+1+1 years and we rarely see an increase in funding so are unable to pay higher salaries.
- Cost of recruitment and advertising is also expensive and timely
- Providers are competing for the same people
- Lack of permanent posts, 12 month contracts, commissioners unable to commit to funding beyond March 2022 – unattractive for candidates.

Training and Job Incentives:

- Training opportunities- created an academy of training for staff to make us more appealing to applicants.
- Advocate that all candidates have an informal chat with team leaders before applying for a post – this has been helpful.

Pandemic impact:

- The pandemic has caused a situation where homeworking is preferable by many individuals, unfortunately, the housing support services can't accommodate this as we need to be in the community so people are going for jobs that can offer hybrid or homeworking solutions.

Branding / Promoting:

- Employer branding and looking at what else we can offer as an organisation is something we are looking at as well.
- HR Department are currently involved in a Recruitment initiative and have employed an external organisation to help us with it.
- Commissioned a graphic designer to design adverts on social media.
- Advertised bilingual (we usually advertise in Welsh only)
- Commissioned a PR Company to run a press release on our services and post we are recruiting. (especially for male workers) Highlighting our favourable terms and conditions etc. The press release was shared with media outlets etc.
- BBC radio interview raising awareness of our provision and recruiting, terms and conditions
- Contacting Careers Wales / Communities for Work Plus
- Advertising on Indeed and other social media outlets

It was suggested to do some work from the Provider HSG Strategy questionnaire's that went out as HSG leads stated there was a lot of responses in there regarding recruitment, suggested for Rachel to pull these together and do a paper for Wendy (**ACTION**) who will then take this to the Workforce Development Task and Finish Group on 17<sup>th</sup> November .

## **10. Housing Network workload and wellbeing report**

Rachel shared with the group a recent report produced by the Housing Network which HSG teams and providers in North Wales will have had an input to. The report has been shared with the group and Rachel shared the following main points for information: Overview / standout points:

- Caseloads up 200% to 300% for some
- Huge rise in complex needs that some felt they weren't equipped / qualified to deal with
- Pros and cons of home working and getting the Home Work Balance
- Frustrations and lack of motivation due to limited move on options
- "I feel overworked, undervalued, underpaid and starting to hate the job I once loved"
- Exhaustion!!
- 54% considered leaving, as pressures were too much and aren't easing

The report shared what needs to change?

- More staff
- Accommodation
- Variety of support to offer
- Partnership working
- Clearer communication from WG

This was on the agenda to support the previous agenda item around recruitment and to show the importance why we will be having staff moral on our 2022-23 annual statement as a priority.

**(ACTION)**

#### **Any other business:**

Paul Firth asked if Llinos Edwards who is the BCU commissioning lead for mental health services, in Particular the I-CAN program could be invited to the RHSCG. Rachel to invite **(ACTION)**

Cold Weather Provision: This was raised at the meeting as to what people will be using if we no longer have night shelters, Denbighshire are starting to see a rise in rough sleepers and many LA's shared some days they do not have ANY accommodation to offer, so what can LA's do during the cold winter nights for rough sleepers.

This was a frustrating agenda item, RHSCG understands WG message of not wanting to revert back to the old ways, and that everybody should be homed, but our message wasn't being fully understood, it was felt when we are saying there are days when there is **no** emergency provision available and previously we would be allowed to spend the grant to keep provider provision open longer to provide hot meals, use the churches for the night, so when we have no options what can we offer if the churches provision or night shelter type provision is an absolute no from WG. There is the other side it is a person's choice to sleep rough for some and some members of the RHSCG felt like their hands were tied by what we could do to assist and help them on those nights they are most vulnerable.

**Date of next meeting:** February 10<sup>th</sup> 2022