



thewallich
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Glanrafon Emergency Bed Provision



About

The Wallich took over the Glanrafon Emergency Bed service on the 17 February 2020.

It was apparent that there was a growing need for homelessness services in Flintshire. At this time, the service was a night service, open from 8pm to 10.30am and provided somewhere warm and safe for 10 individuals experiencing homelessness.

The capacity could be increased to 15 during SWEP conditions.

The project provided practical support such as a hot evening meal, breakfast, bathing and washing facilities.

The Wallich also provided support with trying to address an individual's homelessness situation, or any support needs they may have with regards to mental health, substance misuse, medical conditions, finance, relationships and so on.

Adapting to COVID-19

In March 2020, this all changed. In response to COVID-19, the project changed overnight into a 24-hour service for people to stay safely inside, off the streets. Despite the challenges this presented, both the project and service users soon became accustomed to the new provision. This additional time also provided more opportunities to offer support.

As the time went on, an increase in capacity was needed to meet demand. At the beginning of November 2020, seven cabins arrived on site. The Wallich was able to increase capacity to 19 individuals at this point. Again, the service responded overnight to accommodate the increased number of individuals. This would not have been possible without the brilliant support and communication from the team at Flintshire County Council.

By mid-November and with the arrival of more cabins, capacity was increased to 21 individuals. By the beginning of December, Glanrafon could accommodate 23 individuals on site. With the increased cabin accommodation, those accommodated in a cabin had their own bathrooms, a kettle and TV / DVD player and aerial which provides some entertainment. Most also had their own microwave and fridge.

With the COVID-19 situation ongoing, this meant that the vast majority accessing the service are not sharing facilities. The Wallich still accommodates up to three individuals within the main building, however they have their own room and access to their own bathroom. Due to the size of the building, there is more than enough space for social distancing. The accommodation within the main building is generally used for those with more complex needs or who may require additional support.



Outcomes

Since the service began on the 17 February 2020, there have been more than 215 referrals to the project.

Individuals requiring emergency accommodation have reported that some of the reasons for their homelessness were:

- relationship breakdowns, either with family or spouses / partners;
- prison leavers;
- street homeless;
- sofa surfing;
- leaving hospital; and
- asked to leave other accommodation.

The below is list of the types of issues the staff on-site have supported service users with at this time (this not an exhaustive list):

- Liaison with DWP
- Gaining ID
- Citizenship Cards
- Opening bank accounts
- Referrals to supported accommodation or specialist accommodation such as refuges
- Support with private landlords
- Employment
- Training
- Reconnection with family members
- Social services
- Registering with a GP and dentist
- Attending health appointments
- Attending court and so on.



Diversionsary activities

Keeping busy is a challenge but the outside space has been brilliant for service users to be outside and spend time in the garden.

The overgrown beds were weeded and replanted with flowers, salad, strawberries and potatoes.

The tatty shed and benches were painted to brighten up the area. There was great pride was taken from these achievements.



Partnership working

Due to the restrictions all services were required to adhere to, the vast majority of support from other agencies, such as mental health, probation, SMS (substance misuse service) was provided over the telephone.

With two laptops available to service users, the facilities are available for them to apply for universal credit, property searches, job searches and keep in touch with family and friends.

In becoming accustomed to the new way of working and updating risk assessments, the service was been able to safely facilitate some meetings and appointments on-site with other agencies, who are able to provide more specialist support to service users.

Due to the availability of a large room and following strict guidelines with regards to social distancing, wearing a mask (and other PPE as required), taking temperature and regular cleaning routines, the following agencies currently have regular weekly visits on-site:

Harm reduction team – To provide advice and support with substance misuse issues and health issues which may be apparent as a result of this.

Housing Options – To provide housing support and advice.

The Wallich counselling service – Individuals can be referred to the Reflections Network counselling service where they will have a weekly appointment with a trauma-informed counsellor.

Mental health worker – Hafal / FCC worker attends the service weekly to meet with individuals and offer mental health support.

Hepatitis clinic – During this clinic, service users are offered to be tested for hepatitis and the vaccine is also offered. Advice and support is also offered during this clinic.

Probation – The Probation Service visits individuals and are working with to meet the requirements of the service, also offering advice and support.



Other agencies who also work closely with the service and do attend on a more ad hoc basis or offer telephone support are: the SMS, Kaleidoscope, DASU, Mental Health assessments and appointments, police, Communities for Work, CAB – with financial issues and also settled status queries. This helps with better engagement and stability for the service users leading to better outcomes.

The team also had a lot of community support from Flintshire Food bank, ASDA, the local school and individual citizens.



People supported

Flintshire Emergency Bed Provision

2020	Beds available	Beds occupied	% Occupancy	Male %	Female %	Gender fluid / Transgender%
April	375 (cabins came mid month)	252	67	88	16	0
Capacity 15						
May	465	234	50	93	7	0
June	450	283	63	90	6	4
July	465	305	66	93	7	0
August	465	374	80	91	4	5
Sept	450	356	79	71	21	8
Oct	465	306	66	78	16	6
Nov 1-5	75	55	73	91	8	0
New cabins – capacity 19						
Nov 6-30	475	439	92	82	12	6
Capacity 21						
Dec 1 - 6	126	119	94	82	13	5
Capacity 23						
Dec 7 - 31	575	465	81	76	19	5

The emergency bed provision has supported many individuals to achieve positive outcomes and the staff team work hard to provide a safe and supportive environment for those accessing the service.

Many individuals have moved on to more secure accommodation, returned to family, accessed specialist accommodation such as refuges, young people's supported accommodation, detox units and so on.



Case studies

**Names have been changed to protect the identity of the client.*

Ryan's* story

Ryan* first accessed the Glanrafon service in mid-May 2020. He was reluctant to engage with staff and had a substance addiction which led him to beg. He had a chaotic lifestyle. He didn't have basic items set up, such as a bank card.

His only goal was to acquire substances. He made a self-referral to a Substance Misuse Service (SMS) and staff supported him with this. By the end of May, he had started engaging and had been allocated an SMS key worker.

The Wallich's staff supported him with a Universal Credit claim and to get ID to open a bank account. By the beginning of June, he had moved into one of Glanrafon's seven on-site cabins. During these first few weeks, we were liaising with housing options, police and SMS as part of his support. Unfortunately, he became ill in June and spent a short time in hospital. This led to outpatient appointments. We were able to provide bus passes to attend these appointments until hospital transport could be arranged.

Once his income was more secure, and due to SMS support, he began to spend his money on other items such as food, a TV, a games console and trainers. This was a huge achievement for him. By August, he was talking about and considering detox.

He is now proud of his cabin, the outcomes so far and continues to be on a positive journey. We are still supporting him with his health condition and goals for the future, as well as with positive contact with his family.

In his own words:

"[I was] couch surfing. Sub-letting my mates flat, £90 a week. That's what started all this off. Wasn't nice not having my own space and my own roof over my head. That's why I like it here. I wasn't well at times, up and down.

It's been alright [here] yeah. I was helped with my hospital appointments. I do feel comfortable with the staff here. When I was first here, I was hiding away but after a bit I come out myself a bit. I've got myself an Xbox, which gives me something to do. Eventually when I move into my own place, I'll have all my stuff. Instead of wasting my money on drugs, I have my telly, soundbar and Xbox.

(When asked about rehab)

[There's] no pressure to go to rehab, no one pressures me. It's when I'm ready. It's nice to know I've got here to come back to.



I've done really well, I've cut down a lot. I smoke weed now and again but it's better than the other stuff. That's why I got my Xbox it keeps me occupied. A computer game is better than the drugs. It's a good distraction. I'm always watching films. Okay, I do use, but you can't switch it off overnight. I can't remember the last time I have had a can of beer or vodka.

I need to be in a place where there's people supporting me. I'm worried about going to a place where no one is there and I'll be on my own. They're looking into supported housing for me. I just want something when someone is checking up on me, general stuff like that, kind of like here. I wanna be round here, local. I prefer speaking face-to-face with people.

(When asked about where he'd be without the service)

It would have been never ending. I would've been locked up begging for my drugs. I was begging, basically homeless yeah. I got discriminated against and people putting videos of me on Facebook. I did know what I was doing, begging the money for drugs. Didn't want food. I wanted money. I got in a lot of trouble over all of that.

[I] want to get my health sorted now and then try and get a place where I'll have support."

Ali* and Stefan's* story

Ali and Stefan spoke together in conversation with their support worker about their experiences.

The below is a transcript of their authentic conversation, which involved Ali translating some questions for Stefan.

Stefan: "I live on the street all of the time. Without any friends at this moment. Live alone all the time on the street."

Ali: "Similar really on the street but I have friends. So, I could sofa surf for a couple of nights in a house. The last three years was a struggle for me. Living on the streets or in a tent."

Stefan: "I feel safe, more safe. I get good support. It allows me to get more sleep."

Ali: "When I first accessed, I was drinking a lot. Some things I don't like, like the being back before 10pm, but I do understand why they're in place because there's a lot of different people here. It is still COVID, so I hate just staying in the cabin all the time, I prefer to be out. Generally, I am happy with the support I receive here, and I am grateful for it."

Stefan: "I am now in a routine, because I have to be back by 10pm. I feel more happy. Before I was here I didn't have nothing like universal credit but now I have all these things. I feel like things are starting to get sorted. Time will show what happens next."



Ali: “I feel more calm inside. I was living day by day. I had no phone, no money a big debt as you know. But now it's starting to come together. I don't want to say my problem with alcohol as gone, because its not, but now I feel more stronger, more positive compared to a few months back.”

I'm going on the street now like a normal person, shaving, showering, sleeping. Without this, I think I would've killed myself. I feel more safe here because staff working all the time, day and night. So, if I have some problem with my neighbors, someone arguing with me - someone's here.”

Stefan: “I lived three winters on the street. First time was a tragedy. The next time I knew what I had to do to keep safe on the street. Sometimes, I struggled with mental health. I don't believe people who say they lived 12 years on the streets, it's hard. I sleep in the winter in the streets without a sleeping bag. I would wake up and cry because I was so cold. I'd wake up and sit on the bench and walked around because I couldn't keep walm.”

Ali: “Every day is a fight on the streets. Someone tried to burn me. If someone walked past, you'd wake up.”

Stefan: “It's more comfortable here, this is my place. I don't think much about future honestly, but I'd like to go back to normal job. Maybe after COVID. When COVID finish, I'd like to go see my brother in Ireland. No one knows in Poland that I am homeless. Before COVID and I was on the streets, every time I rang home I said everything was fine, nobody know nothing. Maybe one day in the future, I could move to my brother in Ireland.”

Ali: “[I've] experienced racism on the streets. I've been to a few countries but here people can be very nasty. My dream of the future is to speak better English, find some job, live with my daughter in Scotland, go on to some holiday. This is my dream.

Maybe in the future meet someone, settle down - not right now it scares me, but maybe in the future everything change.”



