



St Martin's Frontline Network – Coventry Citizens Advice: Coventry Frontline Network forum

23rd September 2020 (held remotely)

Agenda

1. Welcome, housekeeping and introductions
2. Your news – anything you would like to share about your work?
3. Everyone In, Next Steps, evictions restarting – how can we help service users?
4. Frontline worker wellbeing
5. Forum feedback

2) Your news – anything you would like to share about your work?

Kairos are now working from St Margaret's church, with a mixture of home and office working.

Coventry Job Shop provides support with employment, and run programmes to help people with barriers to employment. The Job Shop is open for face to face service, by appointment only. We noted that although the jobs market is affected by the pandemic, there are still vacancies being advertised.

Information about support and Jobs Fairs was shared – see [Appendix 1](#).

Citizen Housing work across the midlands. Services in Birmingham are under stricter lockdown, with only essential visits being undertaken, with PPE in place. Many social landlords have pledged not to evict for arrears caused by Covid-19, as long as the tenant is engaging – see [NHF statement](#) from 21st August.

- Key message – anyone struggling with rent should approach their tenancy officer.
- See [Appendix 2](#) for Citizen Housing's approach to tenancy sustainment.

Coventry Independent Advice Service (CIAS) are working remotely, providing debt and benefits advice via phone and email. Previous outreach locations are not currently being used for advice sessions. The Tanyard Farm project in conjunction with Orbit was providing home visits, but these

are suspended. We noted that someone might prefer to approach an advice agency rather than contact their landlord directly for help with arrears.

Coventry Citizens Advice are delivering advice remotely by phone and email/internet.

The Jesus Centre is rebranding as JCT Charity. JCT have been open three days a week since July, providing ESOL, arts groups, men's groups, digital exclusion and literacy, and are taking referrals.

Baobab are based in Birmingham and support women across the midlands. They can help refugee and migrant women with issues including housing and benefits. (www.baobabwomensproject.net)

Hope into Action provide short-term supported accommodation in Coventry, in association with churches.

P3 provide floating support to over 25s and families in Coventry, and also work across the wider region. Clients in TA have to be referred by the council to use this service.

- All P3 offices will close from 28th September due to new lockdown restrictions.

3) Supporting clients experiencing homelessness

We considered the upcoming impacts on homelessness – [Everyone In](#) and [Next Steps Accommodation Programme](#) for people sleeping rough, and the end of the “evictions ban”.

The group discussed women's homelessness, and how rough sleeping for women can be very different from men's experiences, being much more hidden. Attendees had previous experience of working with women's refuges and noted that the first contact someone makes with services is very important. Services need to be designed around people, rather than accommodation management.

There were concerns that women placed in TA are unable to sustain their temporary tenancies, due to the location and type of accommodation they are placed in, and the lack of appropriate support. This can lead to a “revolving door” of homelessness. The group noted that women were sometimes placed in HMOs when these were unsuitable.

Statutory homelessness services were noted to be sympathetic and understanding, but not necessarily aware of clients' full support needs. The group have seen problems where someone applies as homeless and is placed in Interim Accommodation, before having had a full homelessness assessment. Support agencies are expected to support the applicant during this period, although client needs have not yet been identified or planned for.

- It was noted that there are housing law caseworkers at Coventry Law Centre; if a homelessness duty is disputed between the homeless applicant and the council, CLC can intervene. See: www.centralenglandlc.org.uk/Pages/Category/coventry

Lockdown has meant that people previously supported with IT needs on-site are now unable to access UC claims etc, which is increasing workloads for support agencies.

- Post meeting note – UC claims do not have to be managed online; it should be possible to operate a claim by phone.

We noted that the Next Steps Accommodation Programme (NSAP) includes funding for councils to accommodate those already “In” (through funding announced 17th September). There will also be funds for longer-term accommodation provision (not yet announced).

The group discussed the new accommodation available from Prospective Pathway Futures, confirming that some clients have used this new supported accommodation provision. The shared houses do not include a female-only house; such provision would be useful in Coventry.

4) Frontline worker wellbeing

We discussed wellbeing and how the pandemic, lockdown and remote working had impacted on this.

Workloads had been impacted especially at the start of lockdown, with increased caseloads and the need to adapt to different ways of working.

Some people find it harder to work remotely when it is more difficult to pick up on normal cues when talking to people, whether service users or team members. Team leader roles can be more difficult without face to face contact.

We noted the importance of informal, unstructured conversations, which are missing when working remotely, making it harder to connect as a team. As remote working has become seen as a longer-term approach, some teams have found it helpful to schedule informal time to talk about non-work subjects.

There was positive feedback about a session from the Frontline Network and Directory of Social Change – “Calming A Worrying Mind” training.

- The FLN training fund is available if in-house or group training would be helpful:
www.frontlinenetwork.org.uk/funding/training-fund/

Wellbeing survey

The Coventry Frontline Network would like to gather input on frontline worker wellbeing, through a short survey.

The group felt this would be a useful way of collecting evidence, which could be used to present to decision makers and commissioners to show the importance of supporting frontline wellbeing.

All frontline workers are invited to have their say: www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QHQN56T

Discussions on frontline wellbeing from previous meetings are in [Appendix 3](#).

5) Forum feedback

For those who attended the forum, thank you for joining us! To help make our meetings relevant and useful, please tell us your thoughts about the meeting here:

www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/QJ2V6TM

Next meeting – Wednesday 25th November (*likely to be held online*)

Appendix 1 - Job Shop information

The Job Shop is now open to customers with pre-booked appointments. Stringent measures are in place to ensure social distancing is adhered to and The Job Shop offers a safe and welcoming environment for those requiring support to find their next positive destination, whether that be employment, education or training.

Just a note: I have attached some guides on how to use MS Teams for new and current customers – Due to most of us working from home, this will help provide more of a 1:1 with your customers and to book meetings with them, please feel free to send customers this document to help them and will also give them access to the majority of our Virtual events!

Please check out our social media pages for updates on how to book an appointment

Email: jobshop@coventry.gov.uk – Please use this where possible

Twitter: @covjobsupport

Facebook: [Coventry City Council Job Shop](#)

Website : <https://www.coventry.gov.uk/jobshopvacancies>

These are unprecedented times for us all, however we are committed to continue to provide the best support we can to our job seekers.

We will continue to monitor and follow advice from the Government and the World Health Organisation and will keep our customers updated on our services via our various digital communication channels.

Contact Details:

Job Seeker Support: 024 7697 8065

Employer Support: 02476978062

(continued)

Please see support that is still ongoing and vacancies we have sourced:

- Telephone appointments for employment support
- Any required evidence can be sent digitally, where possible
- CV submissions for vacancies will be able to be sent to a dedicated mailbox
- All new vacancies will be advertised online through our social media channels & website
- Benefit advice through our expert money advice service (telephone based) – please note this service is expected to be extremely busy.

In addition to the Job Shop resources we've also been made aware of the following additional services:

- The National Careers Service (Prospects) are offering telephone appointments - please call 0800 100 900
- Coventry Citizens Advice have advised people not to turn up at their offices but to call Adviceline on 03444 111 444 between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday or visit www.advicebuddy.org for local online advice.

DWP have advised that all who are looking to make a claim for benefits should visit www.gov.uk/apply-universal-credit (if you are already in receipt of benefits, please seek advice from the Job Shop specialist Money Advisors via telephone)

The Information required to make a claim is:

- National Insurance Number
- Tenancy agreement with actual housing cost/rent including service charges (if any)
- Email address
- Bank Details
- Number of dependants in the household
- Partners need to make separate claims

Our September Virtual Jobs Fair is now LIVE!!

Please visit the following links to the available opportunities:

[Training providers - September 2020](#)

[Employment opportunities - September 2020](#)

[Employment support services - September 2020](#)

(continued)

Next Month!!

Keep a look out for updates on our October Virtual Jobs Fair – Wednesday 7th October

Q&A Sessions will be on Thursday 8th & Friday 9th October which will include:

Job coach session – 10:00-10:30am (Thursday 8th)

Pet – Xi – 10:30-11:00am (Thursday 8th)

Special efforts to help jobseekers in the 'Ghost Town' of the Midlands | ITV News

“We’re in Coventry where 50,000 workers - one in three workers - were furloughed at the height of lock down.”

<https://www.itv.com/news/2020-09-15/special-efforts-to-help-jobseekers-in-the-ghost-town-of-the-midlands>

Appendix 2 – Citizen Housing tenancy support

Please find below some details of the service we provide for our Citizen tenants:

1.1 This Service Description outlines the approach Citizen Housing will take to support tenants to sustain their tenancies and live fulfilled lives.

1.2 Citizen Housing will provide holistic support to tenants who are in in complex situations, with a focus on early intervention where possible. The aim of the service is to support tenants to:

- Understand the conditions of their tenancy
- Understand their rent payment and assist them in the best way to pay
- Access all the right benefits /debt advice/budgeting/find the best deal for their fuel costs
- Set up home, including furnishing
- Find a job/training /voluntary work
- Access any specialist support services/care packages
- Live fulfilled lives

1.3 Tenancy Support is a free service aimed at those who already hold a tenancy or who are soon to begin such a tenancy, who require help and support to ensure that their tenancy succeeds.

1.4 The support is allocated on a need basis and is not available as a right. The service is intended to last no longer than 2 years. Most clients receiving Tenancy Support, however; find that after 12 months or even less they no longer require the support as they have established themselves in their home and have control over the management of their affairs or issues that caused them to seek support.

1.5 Tenancy Support does not replace the work of a nurse, social worker, drug/alcohol adviser, Probation Officer or other statutory agency. It compliments and fills in some of the gaps that the support from elsewhere does not cover.

1.6 Tenancy Support Officers do not provide care and do not do tasks such as shopping. However; if required they may go shopping with you to support you in gaining confidence in what to buy, where to go and what you can afford to spend. Support will principally be through sign posting residents to appropriate services that will enable them to –

- Claim the right benefits

- Access debt/money advice
- Deal with anti – social behaviour/neighbourhood disputes
- Set up utilities accounts and find the most economical fuel tariff
- Budget and manage their household expenses
- Request maintenance and repairs to their property
- Liaise with neighbourhood officers and other housing staff
- Learn life skills
- Become integrated into their community and combat social isolation
- Improve their health and deal with any on going health conditions sometimes including attending medical appointments
- Advice, advocacy and liaison
- Access to local community organisations
- Culture-specific counselling/emotional support
- Help in finding other accommodation including management moves
- Emotional support, counselling and advice
- Help in establishing personal safety and security
- Help in establishing social contacts and activities
- Help in gaining access to other services
- Help in setting up and maintaining a home or tenancy
- Liaison and advocacy support from the same ethnic group
- Peer support and befriending
- Risk Assessment
- Sign posting to culture specific health/treatment services
- Sign posting to culture specific legal services
- Attend case conferences regarding clients

- LGBTQ+ specific advice and support

1.7 Our Tenancy Plus/ Sustainment Officers will have specialist knowledge and experience to support tenants who will benefit from more intensive involvement, on a case management basis.

1.8 Citizen Housing will provide a holistic approach to support tenants who hoard, to address hoarding behaviour and to reduce the hoard and associated fire, health and safety risks. We may take a flexible approach to tenancy breaches in order to resolve the situation.

1.9 We will link across multiple agencies when providing early and comprehensive interventions, to achieve shared objectives.

Appendix 3 – previous frontline wellbeing discussions

Supervision and reflective practice are talked about but don't feel embedded.

Morale is very low, perhaps the lowest it has been, with reduced funding if any for staff recognition, eg year end celebrations, Xmas thankyou's.

Services are focussed on meeting targets, with supervisions concentrating on workload rather than wellbeing.

Workers can be reluctant to take sick days, knowing extra pressure will be put onto colleagues.

Don't feel able to raise concerns in supervision, afraid problems will be seen as poor performance.

Have had wellbeing services in the past which are not affordable now, including physical de-stressing activities, gym membership etc.