

Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission Briefing

**Temporary relocation of the Wet Day Centre
(Anchor Centre)**

Lead directors: Tracie Rees/ Ruth Tennant



City Mayor

Ward(s) affected: Castle

Report author: Julie O'Boyle Consultant in Public Health

Kate Gallopi Head of Commissioning Adult Social Care

Author contact details: Julie.oboyle@leicester.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of Briefing

To provide the Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Commission with an update on the plans to temporarily relocate the wet day centre from Dover Street.

2.0 Background

The Anchor Centre is a wet day centre for entrenched drinkers in the City providing services for people with alcohol and drug problems such as primary health care, housing & benefits advice, day time activities and general support.

Many of the clients accessing the centre can be described as street drinkers. In the context of this report, a street drinker is someone who drinks heavily in public places and appears, in the short term, to be unable or unwilling to stop or control their drinking. Street drinkers often have a long history of alcohol misuse, and frequently drink in groups.

The activities of some street drinkers and in some cases just their presence can adversely affect other members of the public, causing noise, litter and general nuisance. Street drinkers usually have multiple vulnerabilities including drug use, mental health issues, physical health problems and homelessness. Street drinkers are at risk of arrest for public drunkenness, shoplifting, begging and other public order offences as well as being at increased risk of being the victim of assault.

People who have severe alcohol dependence need to drink alcohol every day; sudden abstinence without medical support has serious health implications and can be fatal. Traditional treatment services require clients to be abstinent whilst on the premises; this is not always appropriate for this group who either fail to engage or are effectively excluded from mainstream services.

The service at the Anchor Centre is provided by Inclusion Healthcare, via an external contract, which is due to expire on 30th June 2016.

The service uses a harm reduction approach to encourage individual clients to achieve specific goals related to their alcohol consumption. Evidence shows that for this particular client group this approach is effective in terms of reduced societal costs, reduced utilisation of public services and decreased alcohol consumption. It also has the advantage of taking street drinkers away from public places where they are perceived by the public to be problematic.

Other cities that do not have a wet day facility rely mainly on enforcement, which has

shown to be of limited impact. Formal enforcement on its own has been shown to have unintended consequences, for example just moving people from one place to other; it has also been demonstrated that the threat of confiscation can lead to street users drinking more quickly for fear of it being removed and if their alcohol is removed, turning to shop lifting or aggressive begging to replace the money and the drink.

Leicester has increased its ability to deliver enforcement through the roll out of a city wide public spaces protection order (PSPO) to tackle street drinking. This came into force on the 5th January 2015. A new approach to managing persistent street drinkers based on the Integrated offender management model of shared responsibility has also been implemented. This approach has delivered significant reductions in the numbers of visible street drinkers and the number of complaints received about street drinkers. The Anchor centre is an essential and integral part of this model.

3.0 Current Accommodation

The service is currently located in Dover Street in a council owned property. The building is in a poor state of repair, with associated risks to service users and staff.

Surveys undertaken by Property Services show that significant expenditure would be required to bring the current accommodation up to a minimum standard to support the operational delivery of the service and it has previously been agreed that this is not cost-effective.

The service provider, Inclusion Health, has raised ongoing concerns about the difficulties of providing the service from Dover Street, as they are not able to provide key facilities such as life skills training, which are specified in the contractual arrangements. Inclusion Health have registered their concerns with the City Council and have stated they may terminate their contract if the service is not located to more suitable premises.

We are now in a position where we need to relocate the service on a short term basis until the end of the current contract. The long term future of service provision for this complex and vulnerable client group is subject to a separate review.

4.0 Review of property

Property services have conducted a number of exercises to identify suitable alternative accommodation for the service including a review of council owned properties and private sector properties. Early reviews included the option of relocating the centre to 96 New Walk.

A more recent review has highlighted some potential properties not previously available which are currently being considered.

A number of criteria have been used to judge whether a property is suitable as a short term solution. These include;

- Appropriate planning permission
- Health and safety considerations – including;
vicinity of major roads,

number/condition of stairs

- Location – within easy access to other services, preferably not a shared building
- Outdoor space – to obviate the need for clients to leave the premise to smoke
- Indoor space – sufficient facility to accommodate group work, healthcare space, private interview room, sufficient toilet facilities, kitchen space, preferably shower/bathing facilities
- Cost including the extent and cost of any refurbishment

Many of the properties scoped have been rejected for health and safety reasons including steep enclosed stairways, small rooms, limited access and limited toileting facilities.

The substance misuse lead commissioner is working with property services to review those properties identified as being potentially suitable.

5.0 Conclusion

The poor state of repair of the current premises means that an immediate relocation of the service is required. At the current time a number of premises are being reviewed to identify if they are a suitable.

The long term future provision of services for this complex and vulnerable client group is the subject of a separate review, due to report in October.

Details of Scrutiny