

# **REPORT**

# **Places of Change Cymru: From Exclusion to Employment**

**A pan-Wales vision for employment  
and training for vulnerable people**

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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

## **1. The research**

1.1. The Places of Change Cymru (POCC) consortium commissioned this qualitative research in order to gain information for its bid to the Wales European Funding Office for European Structural Funds in the 2014-20 tranche of funding. Service users, directors and project leaders in third sector organisations were contacted and their views were gained in focus groups and semi-structured interviews. These charities and housing associations work with socially excluded people in all 15 of the local authorities in the Welsh convergence areas. In all, 98 service users and 26 organisational staff participated in the research.

1.2. The POCC model, based on the successful Places of Change programme in England, aims to support homeless and vulnerable people by

- 1) Assisting people to overcome barriers to training and employment
- 2) Providing a wide range of accredited training
- 3) Assisting people in finding and sustaining employment, and supporting the development of micro-businesses.

1.3. It is difficult to estimate the total number of homeless people in Wales, since it is very difficult to gain an accurate picture of the number of rough sleepers. However, recent statistics show an overall trend in increasing homelessness, a situation which is likely to be exacerbated following the introduction of welfare reforms set out in the UK government's Welfare Reform Act of 2012.

1.4. A range of services have been developed in Wales, since the 1980s. Initially accommodation, and subsequently, support, were set up to help homeless people. The services have tended to be divided into those supporting 16-24 year olds and those for people over 25. Housing associations and larger voluntary organisations own properties and collect rent, whereas smaller organisations rely on short-term funding. Supporting People is now a key funder for both larger and smaller organisations throughout Wales.

## **2. The findings**

2.1. The researchers were told of a number of projects that support people at vulnerable points in their lives. A wide range of services are provided: night shelters, breakfast runs, drop-in centres and 'Night stop' cater particularly to street homeless people. Hostels and supported accommodation provide temporary accommodation while floating support works with tenants in either private or social housing i.e. in properties owned by housing associations or local authorities. The provision of accommodation was seen as the most valuable service by the service users.

2.2. Service users also valued the support that they were given by the various organisations working around the convergence areas of Wales. They told us that they appreciated being treated with respect, being offered options rather than being told what to do and by simply having someone to talk to. We found this type of support to be in depth and tailored to individual needs.

2.3. Service providers told us that sometimes it takes a while for service users to be able to engage with services: some are not ready for the service. This was particularly the case for some young people and for people over 25 with complex problems such as mental health and/or substance misuse issues.

2.4. Organisations' directors and project leaders, as well as service users, identified several gaps in service provision in the local authority areas studied. These include: lack of direct access and emergency beds in some areas as well as an acute lack of move-on accommodation. This latter provision is likely to get worse as a result of the introduction of the under-occupancy charge ('bedroom tax') in welfare reform. There is also a shortage of 'wet house' accommodation and places for people with complex needs.

2.5. It can be difficult to engage young people with education and training and people of all ages with employment. Organisations told us that it is better to offer training within projects as a useful first step. Service users are more likely to engage with training if they are in an environment they know and in which they feel safe and not stigmatized.

2.6. There is an overwhelming difficulty with finding suitable mainstream jobs due to a shortage of employment throughout Wales, especially in post-industrial and rural areas. The organisations are starting to think about how to overcome this situation and are in the process of developing links with the private sector and establishing their own schemes and social enterprises.

2.7. Both mental health services and specialist support to deal with substance misuse issues are difficult to access at any age. Young people often fall through the net as they are between child and adult mental health services. Organisations' directors and project leaders talked of service users having to experience a crisis before mental health services could be accessed. One service user told us that he felt he had to break the law, as the only way he could access detox was through prison. The provision of a nurse from a local GP's surgery at a drop-in centre in Swansea is highly valued by service users and is a service that could be replicated in other areas.

2.8. Service users can be digitally excluded. Some are finding it difficult to access IT services within their accommodation while other projects are providing the internet and access to computers to enable their service users to sign on online and also to search for jobs, as required for the receipt of benefits. Most service users found Job Centres unhelpful with regard to both provision of IT equipment and advice.

2.9. As services in Wales have grown up organically to meet local need, there is inconsistency in provision across Wales. Rurality presents challenges to organisations working in rural areas in terms of transport and staff time costs. Service users also find it difficult to access services when transport is infrequent and expensive in relation to their benefits. Some organisations have developed some innovative ways of overcoming the challenges of working in predominantly rural areas, for example in holding outreach surgeries in local towns or people's homes, and in providing travel warrants.

### **3. The Places of Change Cymru approach**

3.1. The POCC model is a three-pronged approach to combat social exclusion: 1) tackling barriers to employment and increasing self-esteem and confidence; 2) providing activities and training to engage people and give them qualifications; and 3) supporting people into work, whether this is in-house social enterprises or mainstream employment.

We were shown how it is possible for clients to move between the three types of provision – either moving forwards and even backwards where appropriate. The Cyrenians' ESF-funded drop-in centre, the Dragon Arts activity and training centre and the CESA employment service provide a good model for supporting service users at all three levels.

3.2. Most of the organisations participating in the research already have well-developed services which offer activities to their clients - such as art and music projects, film evenings, and activities outside the premises such as bowling and paintballing. They are also offering a range of accredited Agored (formerly Open College Network) courses which lead to qualifications. Examples of courses provided include independent living skills, numeracy and literacy, budgeting and cookery.

3.3. Organisations recognise that the next logical step is to move clients into employment. They have begun this process through four main routes:

- 1) Working with other agencies, such as Careers Wales, to access opportunities for work and work experience programmes
- 2) Providing unpaid volunteer positions in their own organisations in order to provide work experience
- 3) Developing new social enterprises in order to provide voluntary work experience and sometimes paid work
- 4) Initiating schemes such as peer mentoring in order to employ service users.

3.4. These initiatives are just beginning to start and the time seems right to build on these foundations through projects such as the Cyrenians Employment Support Agency. This works with public and private sector employers and has successfully found employment for over 1000 service users in the Swansea area. The Guilford Report (2013) suggests that European Structural Fund investment should be targeted at building on economic demand drivers across Wales. These are likely to encompass partnerships between the private and public sector and could include energy projects in North Wales, the electrification of the railways in South Wales, the development of a high speed broadband network across Wales and also the development of infrastructure projects, including the building of homes, across Wales.

3.5. The POCC model advocates the setting up of enterprise hubs where services around accommodation; the provision of activities; training; and support into work can be combined and centralised. Organisations suggested that hubs should be set up in the main urban centres where services are already concentrated. However, organisations working in rural areas thought that satellite hubs will also be required in order to make the training accessible to as many service users as possible.

## **4. Good practice and recommendations**

4.1. Several examples of good practice were identified during the research. It is proposed that this good practice is shared between organisations, possibly via the Rough Sleepers Cymru network or Cymorth Cymru.

Examples include:

- Facilitation of service user involvement in how services operate through a range of activities including service user forum meetings, evaluation forms, residents' meetings and tenants informing organisational strategy at housing association Board meetings.
- Preventative and advice work by organisations such as Pembrokeshire Care Society and Caer Las Cymru.
- Non-judgmental drop-in centres and hostel provision by organisations like North Wales Housing Association and the Wallich.
- Good relationships with local communities built up by organisations like Adref.
- Flexible approaches to supporting service users to get employment which already fit in with the POCC model by Cyrenians Cymru.
- The development of peer mentoring experience by organisations like Gisda.
- The initiation of the 'Nightstop' service by Digartref Ynys Môn in which spare rooms and caravans are provided as emergency cover for young homeless people.
- The encouragement of family mediation by organisations such as Solas.
- Volunteering within and from outside projects, as practised by Solas and the Wallich.
- The provision of an employment skills and development manager, as with Gwalia.
- The establishment of social enterprises, as set up by Ceredigion Care Society, Cyrenians Cymru and Gisda.
- Working with partner organisations as United Welsh Housing has done with the local authority and the Heads of the Valleys Partnership to develop a community hub in Bargoed, and Digartref Ynys Môn is doing with the North Wales Wildlife Trust to train young people in rural skills.
- The development of transnational links and cultural exchanges for service users by Gisda and Cyrenians Cymru.
- A commitment to the Welsh language as with Ceredigion Care Society's provision of bilingual leaflets and information and by employment of mostly bilingual staff by North Wales Housing Association, Gisda and Digartref Ynys Môn.
- Working with the private sector to provide accommodation and jobs, as with Clwyd Alyn's innovative scheme to provide move-on accommodation and the recent establishment of links with local businesses by Gwalia, Gisda and Digartref Ynys Môn.

4.2. Recommendations relating to gaps in service provision are that there should be provision of more:

- Direct access beds, 'wet' accommodation projects, more move-on flats or houses, together with more supported accommodation for people with 'complex needs'.
- In-house nurses and other links with GPs; more mental health services, particularly for young people, as well as better access to counselling and detox services.
- Better access to computers and advice/tuition as well as the development of communication links through the use of social media.
- Subsidised food schemes and food banks.
- Recognition that even though in accommodation for 'single people', a number of service users have children and seek access to them; they will need move on

accommodation which will allow children to stay. As Legal Aid is being cut back, there needs to be increased awareness of this issue.

4.3. The main focus for POCC bids should be in developing schemes which support homeless and vulnerable people into employment. This includes the development of work placements, social enterprises, partnerships with employers and employment agencies. Service providers and service users agree that this is the next step.

Recommendations relating to the POCC bid are to:

1. Distinguish between services for young people and those over 25; develop partnerships with Rathbone and the Princes Trust for young people.
2. Provide some projects which incorporate accommodation and training in the same venue in appropriate local contexts. This will overcome difficulties in finding accommodation and provide a safe, stigma-free environment for homeless and vulnerable people.
3. Develop more volunteering opportunities for service users and members of the wider community; develop links with local volunteering agencies.
4. Be aware of 'demand drivers' in Wales such as energy developments and the electrification of the railways; work with the private sector, public sector as well as developing social enterprises and other forms of in-house protected employment.
5. Build in mechanisms to recruit service users and ex-service users as employees in Place of Change Cymru projects.
6. Link with opportunities created by schemes such as Houses to Homes; take advantage of public bodies' obligations to consider 'social value' in procurement.
7. Develop more peer mentoring schemes.
8. Campaign for a change in benefits rules that prohibit volunteering for more than 16 hours per week.
9. Develop services in response to the welfare reforms which are expected to increase demand.
10. Be aware of how services link with EU and Welsh Government policy initiative contexts.
11. Develop partnerships with the private sector for accommodation as well as job opportunities.
12. Campaign for better services within Job Centres, in particular for the provision of computers and advice; adapt the Work Programme and assure that vulnerable people are supported effectively through partnerships with specialist agencies.
13. Create more links with prisons with regard to training, accessing benefits and awareness of local accommodation options.
14. Organisations could combine within regions in order to make bids for POCC funding; or they could combine across regions because of specialism, e.g. agencies working with young people in the South and in the North of Wales. The researchers support a regional model.
15. When shaping POCC bids, make sure that at least one bid should be tailored to young people and at least one bid should be tailored to people of working age over 25.
16. POCC funding should cover a worker/small team in each region who/which is specialized in work placements, social enterprises, links with Job Centres and the private sector.
17. Funding should also cover the development of complex monitoring and data collection systems necessary for European funding. Provision of video conferencing

- facilities should be costed into projects so that communication across geographical areas is facilitated.
18. The exchange of good practice could improve services and lead to new developments.
  19. Embed bilingualism into Places of Change Cymru services.
  20. Develop partnerships transnationally in order to transfer good practice and to provide service users with opportunities which will enhance their training and employment experiences.
  21. Consider projects which are for women-focussed in order to cater for 'hidden homeless' women. Offer women training in non-traditionally female jobs such as construction.

## 5. Conclusions

The evidence presented in this report suggests that the Places of Change Cymru approach could build on the many areas of good practice already in operation throughout Wales. Service users have commented very favourably on the accommodation and support work provided in projects and organisations are ensuring that their support work is a key aspect of their service provision. Great strides have been made in terms of tackling barriers to social exclusion through activities and training.

These successes could be built on to move, more comprehensively and consistently, to support into employment - where this is appropriate for service users' individual situations and their readiness to participate in the mainstream employment market. This must be backed up with the continued development of in-house training and employment schemes as there is a need to provide such activities in a place where service users feel safe and comfortable and thus more likely to engage. These activities, training and support into employment should create a flexible continuum of services to recognise the changing needs of vulnerable service users.

The development of hubs is supported but, in rural areas, there will be a need for satellite hubs so that more service users can access services. It is also necessary to pay attention to the need to tailor POCC services appropriately to different age groups in order that young people are able to engage and participate.

Organisations in Wales are well placed to develop links with their European counterparts by building on several Welsh organisations' membership of FEANTSA and existing transnational partnerships. There is already a successful ESF-funded scheme in the Swansea Bay area, the Cyrenians Supported Employment and Training Project, which reflects the POCC model and focusses on providing activities, training, social enterprises, and support into employment.

The POCC model also fits in well with the Welsh Government policy priorities of tackling homelessness, poverty and social exclusion. There is an enthusiasm and preparedness to participate in the POCC initiative; the timing is right to build on existing foundations. The research evidence suggests that Places of Change Cymru could make a real difference to the lives of homeless and vulnerable people and that this approach is the next logical step for services in Wales.

## **The authors**

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# **1. INTRODUCTION**

This qualitative research was commissioned in the autumn of 2012 by the Places of Change Cymru (POCC) consortium, which wanted the independent researchers to gather an insight into present service provision in European Structural Fund convergence areas around Wales, with a particular emphasis on whether the approach advocated in the POCC model could be of benefit in the 15 different local authority areas which qualify for European Structural Fund investment under the convergence programme.

## **1.1 Places of Change Cymru**

The POCC consortium is made up of organisations in the third sector dedicated to raising the accommodation, skills and employment prospects of homeless and socially excluded people in the convergence areas of Wales. It aims to combat homelessness, poverty and extreme social exclusion through a collaborative approach across these areas. The consortium comprises four registered charities and one registered social landlord: Cyrenians Cymru, Caer Las Cymru, Cymorth Cymru, Shelter Cymru and Cadwyn Housing Association.

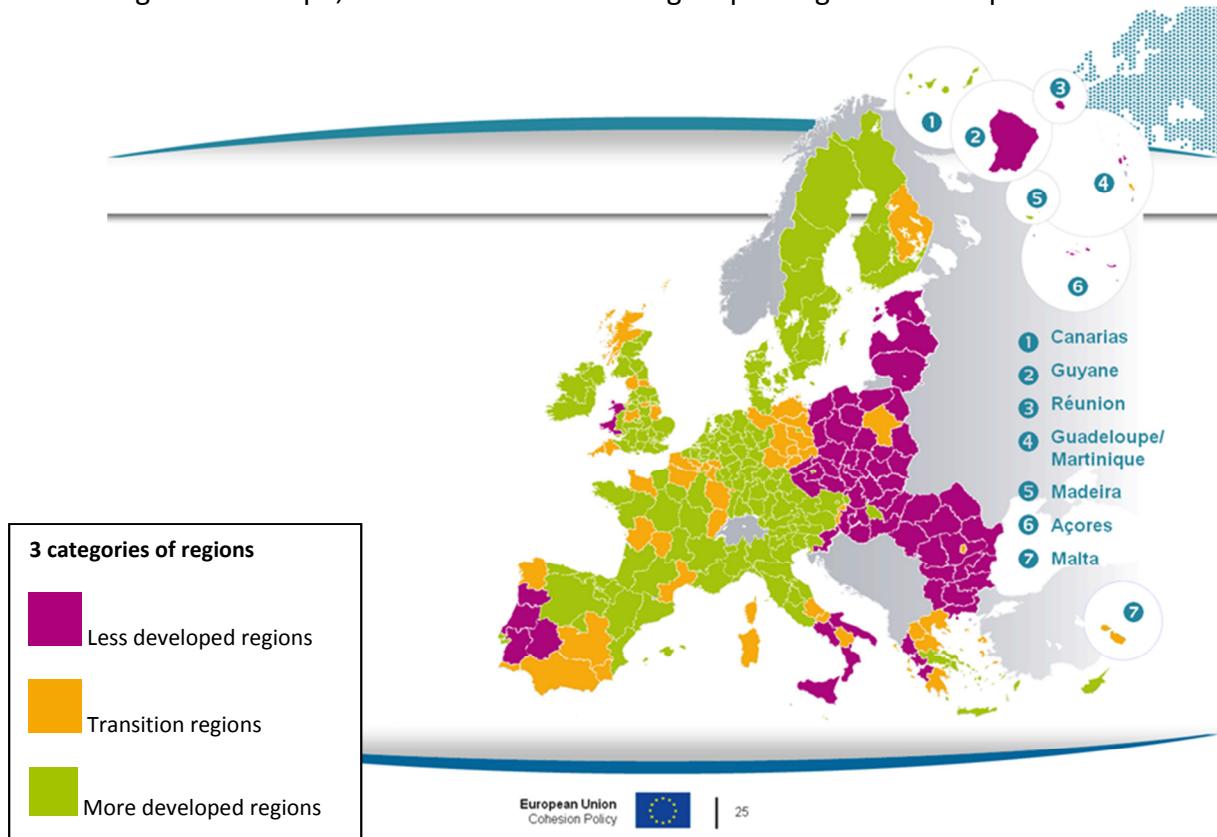
The objective of the POCC consortium is to establish accommodation, training and enterprise hubs in areas of need across Wales. The POCC model is based on these hubs' three key activities:

- 1) Assisting people to overcome barriers to training and employment**
- 2) Providing a wide range of accredited training**
- 3) Assisting people in finding and sustaining employment, and supporting the development of micro-businesses.**

The POCC consortium aims to build on the successful European Social Fund (ESF)-funded Cyrenians' Supported Employment and Training Project which has worked with thousands of

people in the Swansea area since 2009 and enabled hundreds to gain qualifications and employment (Wavehill Ltd 2012).

The consortium recognises that what works in Swansea may not be appropriate for other parts of Wales, and is keen to gain an understanding of the situation regarding present service provision throughout the Welsh convergence areas in order to inform its bid for European Structural Fund funding under the 2014-20 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the ESF programmes. The convergence areas in Wales are one of the poorest regions in Europe, as shown in the following map of regional development in the EU:



The aspirations of POCC fit in well with the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010), including the European Platform Against Poverty initiative which aims to lift at least 20 million people out of poverty. POCC also wishes to provide opportunities for vulnerable people through the EU Lifelong Learning Programme. The consortium has already made links with projects utilising exemplary practice in Europe, for example those tackling drug addiction. The enthusiasm for transnational partnerships in Wales is demonstrated by the fact that Welsh organisations make up 25% of the UK members of the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA).

The POCC initiative has grown out of the successful Places of Change programme in which the UK government invested £80m of capital funding for over 111 projects across England between 2008 and 2011. The projects in England ranged from refurbishment of hostels and day centres to specially tailored training schemes and social enterprise initiatives. The Places of Change programme in England was considered so effective by service users that the Homeless People's Commission, a Joseph Rowntree Foundation-funded committee of people with experience of sleeping rough in England, recommended that the standards established by Places of Change should be implemented in all new hostel programmes (Groundswell 2011).

The Homelessness Change programme has replaced Places of Change but continues with £37.5m of investment in England for the period 2012 to 2015, to support the building and improvement of hostels and other accommodation services to support rough sleepers, and those at risk of sleeping rough, into more stable independent living. The POCC consortium hopes to develop a similar raft of initiatives suitable for the situation in Wales.

## 1.2. Homelessness in Wales

Homelessness figures in Wales have been rising over recent years, with the number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities increasing by 17% between 2009/10 and 2011/12 (Fitzpatrick et al, 2012). The most recent statistics show a slight decrease in the number of households accepted as homeless, which is attributed to a number of local authorities' prevention work; however, there is an increase by 9% in the number of households making homelessness applications in the first three quarters of 2012-13 (Welsh Government, 2013).

The incidence of homelessness varies greatly between local authorities, as can be seen from the most recent annual figures by local authority as shown below.

<b>Ynys Môn</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>Neath Port Talbot</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Gwynedd</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>Bridgend</b>	<b>210</b>
<b>Conwy</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>Vale of Glamorgan</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>Cardiff</b>	<b>770</b>
<b>Flintshire</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b>	<b>245</b>
<b>Wrexham</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Powys</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>Caerphilly</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>Ceredigion</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Pembrokeshire</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>Torfaen</b>	<b>190</b>
<b>Carmarthenshire</b>	<b>695</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>215</b>
<b>Swansea</b>	<b>855</b>	<b>Newport</b>	<b>505</b>
		<b>Wales</b>	<b>6,515</b>

**Table 1**  
***Number of households accepted as homeless by local authority area 2011-12***

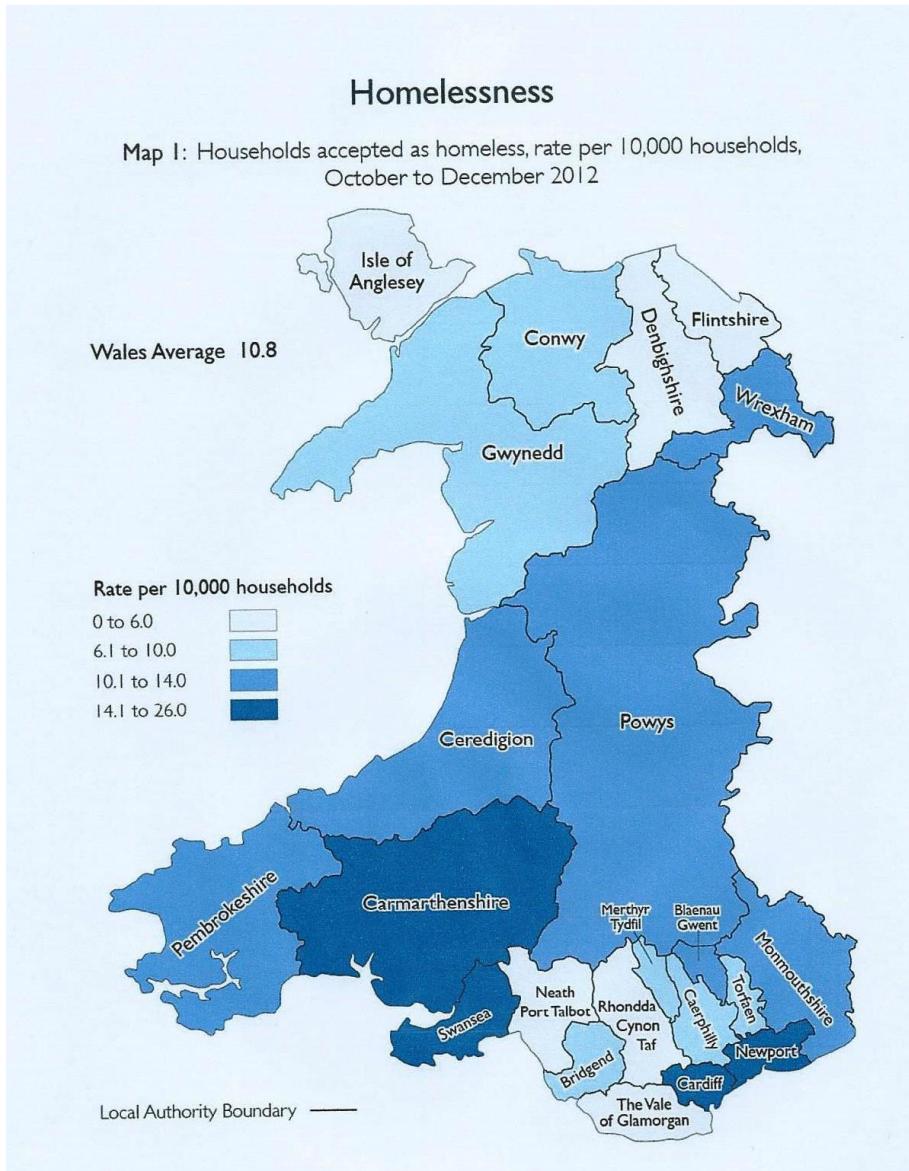
<b>Ynys Môn</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>Neath Port Talbot</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Gwynedd</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>Bridgend</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>Conwy</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>Vale of Glamorgan</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>Denbighshire</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>Cardiff</b>	<b>485</b>
<b>Flintshire</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>Rhondda Cynon Taf</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Wrexham</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>Merthyr Tydfil</b>	<b>200</b>
<b>Powys</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>Caerphilly</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Ceredigion</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>Blaenau Gwent</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Pembrokeshire</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>Torfaen</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Carmarthenshire</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>125</b>
<b>Swansea</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>Newport</b>	<b>270</b>
		<b>Wales</b>	<b>2770</b>

**Table 2**  
***Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation by local authority area 2011-12***

[Tables from: <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Housing/Homelessness>]

The most recent figures show that the convergence local authority areas in Wales in

which homelessness is most prevalent are Swansea and Carmarthenshire, as the following map shows:



Source: <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2013/130319-homelessness-october-december-2012-en.pdf>

It should be noted that the figures in the tables and map above do not include numbers of rough sleepers, who are some of the most socially excluded and vulnerable people in Wales, as it is very difficult to gain accurate statistics relating to people sleeping rough. Because of this, the Welsh Government decided to suspend 'snapshot' one night counting of rough sleepers in Wales in 2009 (Reach Supported Living 2009).

### 1.3. The Development of Services for Homeless People in Wales

Homelessness services in Wales, as in the rest of the UK, were set up in response to a rise in homelessness which was indicated by a visible increase in rough sleeping (MacDonald, 1997) and rising numbers of people reporting as homeless to local authorities in the UK, from the

late 1980s (Hutson and Liddiard 1994). Although homelessness in Wales was more visible, in terms of rough sleeping, in urban areas such as Cardiff and Swansea, the same factors were also at work in rural areas (Cloke et al. 2002; Wallich 2005).

The 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act created a distinct split between family homelessness and single person homelessness. Local authorities were required to house (most) homeless people with children. Voluntary sector organisations responded to the increasing number of single homeless people. They were concerned with local needs and set up locally based networks. In general services for younger people (aged 16 – 24) had a different focus from those for people over 25.

The Children's Act in 1990 acknowledged that around a third of young single homeless people were care leavers and, gradually, social services and housing departments provided funding, particularly for 16 and 17 year old single homeless people (Anderson, 1999).

In the 1990s, Special Needs Management Allowance funds were available for housing associations to provide tenancy support for their tenants (Tai Cymru 1991). Wales benefitted from higher levels of funds than the rest of the UK, and this led to the development of a number of new schemes within the Welsh social housing sector. Housing associations, such as Gwalia, North Wales Housing Association, United Welsh and Clwyd Alyn grew and provided accommodation and support for some single homeless people as well as their main service users, who were families.

### **Local variation in services**

Because voluntary sector organisations responded to local needs and dealt with local authorities, they, by definition, have a local emphasis. Because of this, the shape of services varies, in terms of both service user group and partnerships between agencies. Growth of homelessness provision has been organic rather than laid out uniformly across Wales. The advantage of this is that services are linked to local needs, services and economies. The disadvantage is a resulting inconsistency in service provision.

### **The use of rents for funding**

There are two models of funding in supported accommodation, which has implications for funding. In some cases the agency both owns the property and provides the support. In other cases the agency may provide the support but someone else (usually a housing association or local authority) owns the properties. The advantage to the support agency of the first model is clearly that they collect the rents which, in turn, can be used to finance support services. All the housing associations which participated in this research, together with the larger voluntary sector organisations, such as the Wallich, use rents as an important source of funding.

Some smaller organisations do not have rents. These agencies draw on smaller pots of money such as Big Lottery funding and Housing Act 1996 Section 180 funds from the Welsh Government. Adref draws on the Coalfields' Regeneration Scheme and the South East Wales Community Development Fund. These smaller funds are usually available only for 1 – 3 years which gives instability and unpredictability to funding.

## **1.4. The Impact of Welfare Reform**

The changes introduced by the UK Government in its 2012 Welfare Reform Act are the most wide-ranging amendments to the welfare system since its inception in 1946. The reforms, in brief, are:

- Housing Benefit will be paid to the tenant rather than the landlord.
- The continued restriction of housing benefit payment to single people under the age of 35 to a room in shared accommodation only in a private tenancy (introduced January 2012).
- The introduction of the under occupancy charge, also known as the 'bedroom tax'.
- Localisation of council tax support schemes to replace council tax benefit.
- Localisation of the Social Fund (Crisis Loans for living costs and Community Care Grants).
- A cap on benefits to £500 for couples/single parents and £350 for single people.
- The replacement of Disability Living Allowance by the Personal Independent Payments.
- Universal Credit will (later) replace existing benefits and tax credits and will be paid monthly instead of fortnightly. It will be paid directly to the claimant.
- Legal Aid will no longer be available for many welfare, debt and housing issue-related cases.

All of the organisations participating in this research anticipated a huge increase in the numbers of people seeking advice over changes to benefits, and/or eviction. One of the organisations in the POCC consortium reported in May 2013, only one month after the introduction of the under occupancy charge, that it had already witnessed service users being threatened with possession proceedings as a result of arrears due to the new 'bedroom tax' (Shelter Cymru 2013).

There is a danger, with these reforms, of a return to higher figures of homelessness, inappropriate accommodation in Bed & Breakfasts (B&Bs) and young people living in private rented Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). The third sector housing and support organisations discussed in this report were set up to counter this situation. Cuts to personal income and to agencies could jeopardize the gains made by these agencies.

To remind us of the vulnerability of many of the service users from projects similar to those which participated in this research, a recent survey of homeless young people in Wales (Hodgson & Skelton 2013) found that 52% of service users had run-away from home or care; the average age of leaving school was 14 and that 88% had a mental health problem.

These changes will reduce the personal income of those dependent on benefits. Currently, Jobseekers Allowance averages £56 a week for those under 25 and £71 for those over 25.

Moreover, landlords, including local authorities and housing associations, will receive lower rents from Housing Benefits and many claimants will incur debts and face eviction. Local Authorities and Supporting People teams are themselves facing cuts to services. Many of the projects in this report are part funded through Housing Benefits.

Monthly payments to service users will require training in budgeting. Support workers will have to keep on top of their service users' situations. Service users will be seeking advice from agencies for advice over budgeting and access to and help with Information Technology (IT) in order to sign on or job search. Both easy access and advice will be necessary for many claimants. This is not currently available at all Job Centres. Libraries and advice agencies will be inundated. If claimants cannot demonstrate that they have searched for job, they are sanctioned and lose benefits. But many claimants are without access to IT facilities or sufficient knowledge of how to use them, and thus will be left without any money to live on during the sanction period.

The 'bedroom tax' will not apply to supported accommodation but will come into force when tenants are moved on from supported accommodation projects into independent living. There is an acute shortage of one bedroom properties. A tenant in the more common two-bedroomed property will pay on average £11 a week more. Choice of area, close to support networks, will be limited. In some areas, people who need to move from a two-bedroomed flat will have priority over tenants looking for move-on flats.

Some of the organisations which participated in this research reported that problems were already happening such as an increase in appeals and seeing more people without enough food, as well as young people being sanctioned by the Job Centre and losing benefit for several weeks. All expect serious problems as a result of the welfare reforms.

Nearly all the service users covered in this report have been homeless, some have experienced life on the street and many have experience of 'sofa surfing', which is moving between friends and family. Many have chaotic lives. Whilst these people are housed and supported in the organisations covered in this report, the majority will be dependent on Jobseekers Allowance or Incapacity Benefit/Employment and Support Allowance.

The *Wales on the Edge* report, commissioned by a coalition of 17 third sector organisations in Wales (The Bevan Foundation 2012), concludes that:

*The changes to benefits could pull the rug from under the feet of thousands of people in Wales, often already the most vulnerable such as children and disabled people, as they face uncertainty about their income and the possibility of substantial cuts. These changes come at a time when Wales's economic situation is already weak and job prospects are extremely limited, leaving people ill-prepared to cope.*

Dr Victoria Winckler, from the Bevan Foundation, says that the report:

*... paints a pretty grim picture of Wales' current situation. The changes to benefits will affect thousands of people, some of them several times over, at a time when there are very few jobs available for people who are able to work, when household costs are rising, and when other public services are under pressure too.*

Research commissioned by the Welsh Government has a similarly pessimistic view (Beatty & Fothergill 2013; Adam & Phillips 2013; Welsh Government 2012a & 2013a). The research concluded that the welfare reforms will affect the poorest areas of Wales most. Five of Wales' local authorities are within the 25 worst affected local authorities in Great Britain: Merthyr Tydfil, the fourth worst affected, plus Blaenau Gwent, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Caerphilly. The research anticipates that low to middle income families will

be worst affected by the welfare reforms, and that Wales will be particularly badly affected because of high levels of welfare dependency. The research estimates that Wales will lose approximately £1.1 billion annually after the reforms come into full effect. In addition, income losses for some disabled people in Wales are estimated to be about £4,000 per year. The research also predicts that any positive effects on employment in Wales will be small and in any case dependent on the wider economic situation.

## 1.5 Methodology

In order to gain an understanding of service provision in the Welsh convergence areas, and how this relates to the POCC model, the researchers decided to collect data from organisations across South West Wales, North West Wales and the Valleys. We also felt it very important to gain an insight into the perspectives of homeless and vulnerable people in these areas, with a particular emphasis on how they experience the services they use. We identified third sector and social housing organisations working in each of the fifteen Welsh convergence local authorities. These comprised some relatively small charities working in one local authority area and larger charities working in several local authority areas across Wales, together with social housing associations working across local authority boundaries, often in collaboration with charity providers.

The organisations were selected for the research in order to ensure representation of all local authorities within convergence areas. Because of the budgetary constraints of the research, it was impossible to contact all service providers in the convergence areas, but we believe that we identified a wide range of organisations which work with some of the most vulnerable people in Wales in order to elicit a good insight into present service provision and possible appropriate developments. The organisations and service users should be seen as case studies rather than an exhaustive or generalizable sample.

The chief executive of each organisation was written to by the POCC consortium, following which the researchers arranged the telephone interviews, during which they asked for contact details of relevant project leaders. In all, 12 directors and 16 project leaders were interviewed. During the interviews with project leaders, arrangements were made for the researchers to meet with service users and conduct focus groups and individual interviews. In addition, the Mid and West Wales Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committee enabled the researchers to speak with service users from three local authority areas at a service user involvement meeting.

Two pilot study focus groups were undertaken in Swansea in which the researchers met Cyrenians Cymru and Caer Las Cymru service users at service user forum meetings. In Bridgend, it was not possible to hold a focus group due to service users' attendance at different times, but during individual interviews, topics usually discussed in focus groups were also covered with these service users.

Where facilities allowed, service users at the focus groups were shown a short film about the services provided by Cyrenians Cymru in the Swansea area which are currently funded by the European Social Fund. This enabled the participants to compare the Cyrenians Cymru's services with what was available locally and to consider whether such service provision would be appropriate to their needs. Leaflets outlining POCC were also made available to service users and project staff.

In the focus groups, discussions centred on experiences of service provision while the interviews, though also including questions about experiences of services, focused more on the individuals' biographical histories and aspirations. In total, 98 service users participated in the research. Between them, they had used services in each convergence local authority area. The organisations usually provided refreshments for the service users during the focus groups.

In order to maintain confidentiality, quotations from organisations' directors and project leaders used in this report are not attributed to individuals by name or job role and we have omitted service users' names. Ethical considerations, which are especially important when conducting research with vulnerable people, required that we obtained informed consent from all of the research participants.

Both in the telephone interviews with directors and project leaders, and in the focus groups and interviews with service providers, the researchers began by explaining why the research was being conducted and how it would be used. The participants were all given the option not to answer any questions they did not feel comfortable with or did not want to answer. The researchers also explained that the report would be made publicly available on the Cyrenians Cymru website, should they wish to find out about the findings of the research they had contributed to.

The research comprised four data collection components:

1. Semi-structured interviews with organisations' senior managerial staff, i.e. chief executives or directors
2. Semi-structured interviews with project leaders 'working on the ground'
3. Focus groups with service users
4. Semi-structured interviews with service users who volunteered to speak to the researchers after participating in the focus groups.

Details of the organisations taking part in the research are outlined in Table 3, details of the focus groups are outlined in Table 4 and interviewed service users' age and gender details are outlined in Tables 5 and 6 below.

In terms of gender, 35% of focus group participants and 28% of interviewees were female, a figure which accords with the fact that a third of service users accessing homelessness services are women (Crisis 2008). This can be attributed to the fact that homeless women with children or pregnant women are housed as a priority under the 1977 Housing (Homeless Persons) Act and subsequently there are fewer homeless women than men (Hutson and Stirling 2010); however it should be noted that many women are among the 'hidden homeless' (Crisis 2004) who do not access services because of various barriers, including the lack of women-only services (Crisis 2007, FEANTSA 2010).

<b>Organisation and type: registered charity (RC) / social housing association (HA)</b>	<b>Convergence Local Authority Areas Organisation is working in</b>
Adref RC	Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf
Ceredigion Care Society RC	Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Gwynedd, Pembrokeshire
Caer Las Cymru RC	Swansea, Neath Port Talbot, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association HA	Denbighshire, Conwy, Ynys Môn
Cyrenians Cymru RC	Swansea
Digartref Ynys Môn RC	Ynys Môn
Gisda RC	Gwynedd
Gwalia HA	Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea, Torfaen
North Wales Housing Association HA	Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Ynys Môn
Pembrokeshire Care Society RC	Pembrokeshire
Solas Cymru HA	Caerphilly, Torfaen
The Wallich RC	Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Denbighshire, Neath Port Talbot, Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea, Ynys Môn
United Welsh Housing Association HA	Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Merthyr Tydfil, Neath Port Talbot, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Torfaen

**Table 3 Interviewed directors and project leaders**

Age 16-24		Age 25-40		Age 41-59		Age 60+		Local authority areas in which participants are supported	Date and location of focus group
Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male		
			2	1	2	4		Carmarthenshire Ceredigion Pembrokeshire	Rhosmaen 30/4/13
		1	3		2			Bridgend	Bridgend 29/4/13
1	5		1		1			Merthyr Tydfil Rhondda Cynon Taf	Pontypridd 29/4/13
3	3							Caerphilly	Blackwood 5/4/13
4	1							Neath Port Talbot	Neath 3/4/13
			2		2			Blaenau Gwent	Ebbw Vale 27/3/13
3	4							Denbighshire	Rhyl 21/3/13
	4		2					Ynys Môn	Holyhead 20/3/13
2	4							Gwynedd	Caernarfon 20/3/13
3	3		1	1	2			Conwy	Colwyn Bay 19/3/13
1	5							Torfaen	Pontypool 6/3/13
		1	4	3	2			Swansea	Swansea 20/2/13
		3	5	6	3	1		Swansea	Swansea 11/9/12
Totals		Totals		Totals		Totals			
14	29	5	20	11	14	5	0		

**Table 4 Focus Groups participants' age, gender and local authority**

Location of interview	Gender	Age
Blackwood	F	19
Blackwood	F	17
Blackwood	M	16
Blackwood	M	18
Bridgend	F	35
Bridgend	M	36
Bridgend	M	42
Bridgend	M	45
Bridgend	M	40
Bridgend	M	40
Caernarfon	M	23
Caernarfon	M	19
Colwyn Bay	F	56
Colwyn Bay	M	19
Ebbw Vale	M	31
Ebbw Vale	M	25
Ebbw Vale	M	52
Ebbw Vale	M	54
Holyhead	M	25
Holyhead	M	22
Holyhead	M	19
Holyhead	M	21
Neath	F	18
Neath	F	17
Pontypool	M	18
Pontypool	M	18
Pontypridd	F	18
Pontypridd	M	22
Rhyl	F	22
Rhyl	M	18
Swansea	F	52
Swansea	M	25

**Table 5 Interviewees' age & gender**

	Age 16-24	Age 25-40	Age 41-59	Total
Female	6	1	2	9
Male	12	7	4	23

**Table 6 Summary of Interviewees' age & gender**

## 1.6. Summary of Section 1

Support, based on day-to-day contact, has been developed by voluntary organisations in order to complement the range of accommodation for homeless people in Wales - from night shelters to supported accommodation. The support is individually tailored with the aim of empowering service users. Its success is illustrated throughout this report. Because of past legislation and funding streams, most service users are single and the services for young people (16-24) have a different focus. Housing associations and larger voluntary organisations own properties and collect rent. Smaller organisations rely on short-term funding. Supporting People is now a key funder. Initially services were set up in response to local needs and there is still some inconsistency in what is available. The effects of the Welfare Reform Act of 2012 will bring considerable new challenges and demands on services.

Qualitative research was conducted to gain insights about existing services and how these might relate to the proposed Places of Change Cymru model for Welsh convergence areas. A total of 98 service users and 28 staff from organisations participated in the research.

## 2. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The goal of the projects visited during the research is to provide support to people during difficult times in their lives, whether this is due to being homeless, having substance misuse (drugs or alcohol) problems, or needing support to maintain their tenancies. In order to ascertain whether a POCC approach would be appropriate, the researchers asked service users what they thought they had gained from the projects they were using and what the best aspects of these schemes were.

The types of services accessed by the service users we spoke to varied but even within the wide range of service provision, there were commonalities in service users' opinions of what were the most successful aspects of the projects they were using. These can be categorised broadly into two areas: firstly practical assistance with necessities and secondly one-to-one support, including empathetic communication with staff. The latter do of course help break down barriers to social inclusion faced by service users, but as the POCC model is specifically geared towards tackling barriers through activities, training and employment, these are discussed separately in section 3 of the report.

### 2.1. Provision of accommodation

Without a stable base, it is impossible to seek other services, training and work (Hutson and Clapham 1999). When we asked service users in the focus groups: 'Which is more important – accommodation or support?' they all replied that it was the accommodation.

#### **Night shelters, breakfast runs, drop-in centres and 'Nightstop'**

The first port of call for rough sleepers are night shelters or direct access hostels. We were told about three during the research, in Aberystwyth, Colwyn Bay and Pontypridd. Managing night shelters can be challenging as service users can come in without referral or information about their needs.

We were told about three breakfast runs, in Bangor, Colwyn Bay and Bridgend. In addition, the researchers are aware of a breakfast run in Swansea organised by a local church.

Six of the organisations we spoke to run drop-in centres where laundry, showers and food are provided, together with advice. These are used by rough sleepers as well as 'sofa surfers' and people who are housed but still vulnerable. The drop-in centre run by Caer Las Cymru, for example, deals with around 500 service users in a year (this is not the total number of visits but the total number of service users, who may visit several times).

In all areas the local authority is obliged to place anyone in 'priority need' into temporary B&Bs, which is expensive and which mixes vulnerable people into shared, and often, we were told, unpleasant accommodation. Several agencies provide support to people whilst in this type of B&B accommodation.

One agency, Digartref Ynys Môn, runs a 'Nightstop' project whereby volunteers offer a room, in their house or in a caravan as temporary accommodation for homeless young people with low needs. This is acknowledged as good practice by the Welsh Government and considered suitable to be rolled out in other areas of Wales. In Ynys Môn, this scheme

provides beds for 100 service users a year. One advantage in such a project is that it draws in support from members of the wider community who might not otherwise have a commitment to homelessness issues.

### **Hostels**

The next level of accommodation is provided by hostels, with or without shared facilities such as kitchens and communal sitting rooms, as well as with or without 24 hour cover. Service users are referred to these hostels by a range of agencies such as social services, housing, substance misuse or health agencies. Hostels can cater for tenants with a mix of issues such as being an ex-offending or ex-prisoner, having substance misuse issues, having mental health problems. Some hostels specialise in one category of service user. In hostels there are rules over violence, use of drugs/alcohol on the premises, as well as rules around visitors. The breaking of these rules can lead to evictions.

A number of the organisations we spoke to were running successful hostels, for example North Wales Housing Association's Noddfa hostel and Gwalia's Foyer in Neath. The advantages of the hostel model is that support can be provided centrally and the staff presence on site is also helpful. In addition, friends can be made and support given between tenants.

Usually hostels for young people aged 16 to 24 are separate from hostels for people of other ages. The Wallich and Cyrenians are the only agencies running 'wet houses', where drugs and alcohol can be used in tenants' own rooms. This is proving a successful model and meets a need, particularly with homeless people over 25.

### **Supported accommodation/ floating support**

A third tranche of accommodation is provided by what is called 'supported accommodation' or 'floating support'. It was the favoured form of accommodation of the housing associations that played an important role in developing accommodation for homeless and vulnerable people in the 1990s. Here the tenant has a separate flat or house whilst support is given, generally weekly, from a central office. All the organisations who participated in the research provide this type of accommodation.

### **Move-on accommodation**

All the accommodation so far discussed is temporary and organisations rely on 'move-on' properties for tenants who can live independently without support. Without access to move-on properties, hostels and accommodation schemes can become clogged up. Some housing associations prioritize and move on tenants into their own 'general use' properties. However currently, all agencies are experiencing an acute shortage of appropriate move-on housing which is, most often, one-bedroom houses or flats. The organisations told us that finding move-on accommodation is becoming increasingly difficult as existing general needs tenants have been moving to smaller properties in anticipation of the under occupancy charge introduced by the Welfare Reform Act of 2012. Floating support can continue in 'move-on' accommodation until the service user is able to maintain the tenancy independently.

### **Private rented accommodation**

The development of private rented accommodation could be a valid way forward to widen move-on accommodation, particularly in view of the current shortage. Three agencies, the Wallich, Pembrokeshire Care Society and Ceredigion Care Society, run private renting schemes for move-on accommodation. However, the reputation of private rented HMOs in

the 1960s is difficult to forget because of the poor quality of some accommodation, the shared facilities and the mixing of service users.

Another obstacle to private rented properties is the need for a bond and rent in advance. This can add up to £400. A number of Bond Boards were set up to counter this problem; several of the organisations in the research have established Bond Board schemes to lend service users the money required for deposits and rent in advance. A few agencies have built up a number of 'friendly' private landlords which they work with for service users to access private rented accommodation.

## **2.2. Provision of support**

All the organisations who participated in this research are providing support to homeless and vulnerable people. Support can be provided in several ways: through outreach work to rough sleepers as in a breakfast run; through giving advice in a drop-in centre; and through providing tenancy support to tenants living in hostels or in supported accommodation/floating support schemes.

In the 1980s this support was funded through Special Needs Maintenance Allowance which was available to housing associations in Wales. By early in the millennium this money for tenancy support was separated from Housing Benefit monies and made available to vulnerable groups through Supporting People, which currently distributes money and monitors projects.

### **Day-to-day, person-centred, and preventative support**

The common pattern of this support is that it is delivered regularly, usually weekly, by support workers. In early support sessions, the tenancy is set up and benefits are sorted. Then goals and targets are set. Referrals may be made to outside agencies such as health and substance misuse. The overall aim of the support is to empower the service user to live independently and cope with their vulnerability.

The content of the support is geared to an individual's needs. It is person-centred. It is in-depth and flexible. It is based on day-to-day contact and knowledge. In some projects support workers are on-call at night. It contrasts with the support from statutory services such as given by a social worker, a housing officer or a probation officer. The support given by these agencies is less frequent and can be accessed only when a problem has been established. The support by voluntary sector organisations, set out above, can be preventative in a way that statutory support generally is not. Figures collected in this survey show that tenancy support is good value for money. A relatively small number of workers can deliver intensive support to a significant number of service users.

It should be remembered that people become homeless and vulnerable at life's transitions: leaving home, relationship break-up, health problems, redundancy or unemployment. Sometimes these combine, as in the case of one service user who told us that he lost his job, got into debt, got divorced following this and then became mentally ill due to the stress. Because he was unable to access mental health services quickly enough, he 'self-medicated' with alcohol and subsequently became homeless. These sorts of transitional events are recurring and this means that there will always be a demand for support. It also indicates that each tenant will have individual, and sometimes, a very complex range of needs.

### **Movement through a range of accommodation**

Most of the organisations participating in the research run a range of accommodation, from night shelters and drop-ins to floating support schemes. Because of this, they are able to move tenants between different types of accommodation. For example, as tenants engage and learn skills they can be moved into increasingly independent accommodation. At the same time, if tenants are struggling with less support, they can be moved back into a hostel.

## **2.3. Service providers' views on their projects**

This section briefly outlines what the participating organisations' staff said about their projects. In addition, Section 4 discusses particularly innovative methods of achieving successful outcomes for service users which the service users and providers told the researchers about.

### **Appropriate support**

The organisation chief executives or directors and project leaders explained how the services worked. A number attributed the success of the schemes to having a non-judgmental approach and to working with the individual service user in order to ascertain their need. Together they would work out a way forward that would work best for the individual service user, in order for them to become more independent. This was achieved through regular meetings with support workers, whether in residential schemes or in drop-in centres, and having staff who were well-trained and motivated.

Working with or being able to signpost to other appropriate agencies such as those providing probation, health and education or training services was also identified as a means of achieving positive outcomes. In some cases, training staff to enable them to run Agored units (formerly Open College Network qualifications) within residential or community settings was considered a benefit, particularly in instances such as a hostel for young people in Conwy run by Clwyd Alyn where the residents are not able to engage with external educational providers.

The smaller charitable organisations felt that their small size enabled them to respond quickly to needs as they arose as they are not encumbered by internal systems that prevent speedy decision-making and the introduction of new services. For example, Diagtref Ynys Môn was able to set up a food parcel service within a week of identifying the needs for this service. Making good links with the local community was seen as a means of enabling schemes to be successful, as for example with an Adref hostel for homeless young people in Merthyr Tydfil, in which residents went on litter picks. Gisda said that coverage of the work done with young people in the local media had improved the reputation of their schemes.

The organisations recognised the need to invest time in the service users and to not underestimate the levels of support required. As one North Wales project leader said:

*It can take small steps.*

## 2.4. Challenges for service providers

Most service providers did not identify shortcomings in their own services, though they recognised that the services that they provided were limited by external constraints such as funding and availability of suitable accommodation and employment. The availability of suitable move-on accommodation was seen to be a particularly difficult problem, and one that would be exacerbated by the new welfare reforms.

One chief executive of a charity working in South Wales summed up how he thought that the way in which many services, funded by Supporting People, were constrained and had been moulded to fit the Supporting People model:

*The demand for these services is so heavy; we could provide much more and still not cover the demand, most agencies are dependent on Supporting People - this is historic - we have become dependent on doing support so it is difficult to do innovative things'.*

Sometimes organisations said that they experienced problems with other agencies they work with. For example, some organisations perceived a lack of acknowledgement from other agencies that service users had changed following their engagement with these organisations; sometimes the organisations themselves felt undervalued as they were excluded from discussions by other services such as health and statutory social services.

Some project leaders reported that service users' histories were not revealed at the referral stage, which meant that the service was not the correct one for all service users, who may have had higher needs than they could deal with; some reported that neighbours objected to the service being located nearby. Another problem, identified by a charity, was that when services were taken over by them from the local authority, their staff's terms and conditions were better than those offered to existing staff members and that this caused resentment amongst longstanding and loyal staff.

Engaging service users was perceived to be a problem by some agencies, especially those working with young people. Some service users were described as 'not ready' for the service. This echoes with some of the feedback from young people who told the researchers that they did not see the benefit of their weekly support sessions. Moreover, several young people in the focus groups had left supported accommodation and returned later, often achieving success only at the second or third attempt. This is an inevitable aspect of providing services to people with chaotic lives who come from a variety of difficult backgrounds. As one project leader from a North Wales hostel stated:

*Some people aren't ready to be there; some people take a few goes.*

The lack of on-going funding was also identified as a major issue and was mentioned by nearly all of the organisations participating in the research. Often funding is gained only for a year or three years. This means that time has to be spent in framing new bids and strategic planning is difficult. It is important that Section 180 funding is maintained. Without it, new monies will end up funding existing services rather than creating new directions.

A chief executive of a charity in North Wales talked about the difficulties of funding:

*The main problem is funding and sustainability; the public cuts are making things worse; EU funding stops and starts, so the services lose momentum.*

Another said that the fact that the nature of EU funding was available only in convergence areas makes it difficult to develop work across local authority areas even though this would make sense.

In terms of the POCC goals, the view from many of the organisations was that the economic climate did not make it easy for anyone to get jobs, let alone service users who faced additional barriers to employment such as mental health and substance misuse problems, few or no qualifications and sometimes generally chaotic lives. The organisations all said that they considered the POCC model to be a valuable approach to tackling such barriers.

The gaps in other services identified by the participating organisations are outlined in Section 2.6. below.

## **2.5. Service users' views of services: accommodation and support**

The service users and ex-service users spoken to by the researchers came from a wide variety of projects, ranging from young people's supported housing to drop-in centres for rough sleepers to substance misuse agencies. The success of holistic and individually tailored support is widely acknowledged by both organisations and service users (Hutson 2012).

### **Provision of accommodation**

Not surprisingly, the researchers found that service users in hostels valued having somewhere to live while those sleeping rough appreciated provision of food. For example, a 23 year old man living in a hostel in Caernarfon, who had previously been sleeping rough, said:

*I've got a roof over my head, I've got a home.*

The hostel had provided him with clothes as well as a room. A 45 year old man with mental health and substance misuse problems, who was sleeping rough in a local car park when we spoke to him, used a Wallich drop-in centre in Bridgend to have a shower and wash his clothes. He also received breakfast and coffee every day from the breakfast run provided by the service. He was looking forward to shortly moving into a hostel managed by the Wallich as soon as he had successfully detoxed.

A 24 year old man in a North Wales Housing Association hostel in Colwyn Bay said that he found the subsidised food-share scheme provided at the hostel useful while a 19 year old in the same hostel, who had previously been sofa surfing, said that the hostel relieved the pressure of not knowing where to stay and feeling that he was in his friends' way. Young people in a Solas hostel near Blackwood were offered more for their daily breakfast after the manager had noticed that several of the residents seemed to be underweight. About living in an Adref hostel in Pontypridd, an 18 year old man said 'I feel so safe here', whereas a 28 year old using a substance misuse service in Ceredigion said that he enjoyed going for free tea and cakes once a week, not only for the food but for the opportunity to socialise with other people.

Service users identified very few problems with the services they received. A few complained about hostel facilities such as having to share a bathroom, or rules such as not being allowed to talk on the landing, and residents of a hostel for young people in a rural location did not find it easy to walk to the nearest town, so identified the rural location a

problem. In the same hostel there had been a recent eviction of somebody who had set fires in the hostel, behaviour which was understandably alarming to the young residents.

Some of the young people did complain about having to go to support sessions with their key workers, which corresponds with project leaders' comments that some young people are perhaps not ready to engage with services. In services provided to adults, however, the only areas of concern were that opening hours for drop-in centres could be extended and there should be more staff to help out as existing staff were over-stretched.

### **Provision of support**

The support aspect was clearly valued by service users. Despite their differing needs, the service users overwhelmingly stated that being able to talk to non-judgemental and understanding support workers was a major benefit of the services to them. For example, a 54 year old ex-resident of a Wallich hostel in Ebbw Vale, set up to support people with substance misuse issues, said that the staff there had an empathetic approach that he was not used to. He said:

*They are like friends, reliable friends. The hostel taught me how to shop and pay bills – everything really. They turned my life around. They give a sympathetic ear, good guidance.*

A 25 year old man living there agreed and said:

*You've always got someone to talk to, they care.*

A 35 year old man from a Caer Las Cymru outreach and advice centre said of the staff working there:

*You don't feel judged, they treat everyone the same; here it's like a family. It lifts your spirits up, lifts trouble off your shoulder.*

An 18 year old man, who lives in a Solas young people's hostel in Pontypool following the breakdown in his family relationships due to his drug use, said that he can talk to staff at any time if he wants a chat.

A 34 year old, formerly in receipt of floating support from Pembrokeshire Care Society, said that the best thing about the support he received was ...

*guidance regarding issues, contact, someone cared, taking time, two hours of listening, not judging, knowing there's somebody there, someone to talk to.*

Here a tenant compares the support given by workers with the help from counsellors which he did not value as much. He said:

*Here they talk to you. They do care. I've seen all sorts of counsellors in the past. They say 'You've got to do this whereas the Wallich people say 'Here are your options'.*

Here is an example of how support can be individually tailored:

*One family had a young son with mental health issues who was interested in doing out his room. They (the family) provided the paint and a support worker went to directly support him with cleaning brushes, using dust sheets etc. It was productive for the tenant – therapeutic and personally rewarding - and it also saved money.*

A number of tenants emphasized the way in which the support increased their confidence and their ability to talk to other people. For example, an 18 year old woman in supported

accommodation in Aberdare, who comes from an abusive family background and a history in care, said that whereas she was previously unable to talk about her problems, she said that in the scheme

*The staff know how to talk to me and give me confidence.*

## 2.6. Gaps in services and funding

There is a consistency in what organisations' staff and service users said about the current gaps in services.

### Gaps in accommodation

Accommodation is the bedrock of homelessness services. However, there are several important gaps in its provision. Firstly, there is a lack of direct access beds in some areas. Secondly there is a lack of single person (usually one bedroom properties) in social housing which means that there is a lack of move-on accommodation for tenants ready to move out of supported accommodation.

A number of organisations said that there was a lack of emergency beds/a night shelter. It was notable that, in the focus groups in Bridgend and Swansea, there were significant numbers of service users sleeping rough. Digartref Ynys Môn had been forced to close their night shelter, as they no longer got funding from their local authority.

It was pointed out that, in the rural areas of Wales, second or holiday homes raise the price of properties and make it difficult for people living in country areas to stay where they have local knowledge, social networks and support links.

Several agencies felt that there was a shortage of supported accommodation schemes for tenants with 'complex' or 'dual diagnosis' - which means people with mental health and substance misuse issues. Here staffing is needed on a 24 hour basis. It is important that these staff are not taken off day cover. If, for example, a hostel only has one member of staff during the day, it is not possible to run activities or go with clients to outside appointments.

The 'wet house' accommodation scheme is proving successful in Swansea. The researchers are aware of another successful 'wet house' in Cardiff, outside the convergence area. This type of accommodation may be the only way in which street drinkers or people sleeping rough can make their first moves into supported accommodation. If the people who are hardest to reach are going to make their ways back into homes and work, then this provision is needed.

### Contact with colleges

For young people, mainstream training is delivered by Further Education colleges. Although a number of clients from Gwalia's Foyer in Neath were in college, there is a lack of consistent links between homelessness projects and their local colleges. This requires a specialist staff member funded from the homelessness service as well as specialist staff funded from the college. The incentive for the college would be to cut the dropout rate. Gwalia have such a specialist worker but she is part of the senior management team and thus does not work 'on the ground' with service users; in addition she works across all Gwalia's geographical areas and has a remit for training and enterprise as well. Clwyd Alyn have recently appointed life skills coordinators with a special remit to liaise with Further Education providers, as well as

provide career advice and support. It is suggested that similar workers could operate on a regional basis in Wales.

In their report for the Welsh Government, Humphries et al (2007) conclude:

*There are a proportion of young single homeless people who have low needs. As needs become more complex, it is important to tackle issues such as substance misuse, abuse and/or poor mental health as well as life skills. In addition, joint working between agencies becomes more vital, effective risk assessment and risk management are crucial and there is more need for a continuum or spectrum of services within which young people can move. The needs of 16 and 17 year olds can be very different from those aged 18-24.*

This research concurs with the research conducted by Humphries et al. Young people will find it harder than others to engage with education, training and employment. A flexible approach is required with young people since their needs can change quickly. People within the age range 16-24 should not be considered as a homogenous group and furthermore, the services they need are very different from those required by older service users of working age.

### **Lack of jobs**

Nearly all agencies commented specifically on the lack of jobs in the local area; agencies in North and West Wales and the Valleys particularly stressed this. Section 1 includes an outline of the historic build-up of services, starting with accommodation and then tenancy support. Support then widened up to include training. The development of Agored units followed which were set up around independent living skills. In most agencies the support staff could deliver these accredited courses. A worker in Gisda had also became an assessor for other agencies.

Many jobs, particularly for young people, are part time and the numbers of hours each week are not guaranteed. On a 'zero contract', for example at KFC or Tesco, they may have a week with no work. It is not realistic for a person to give up his/her benefit in these circumstances. After 16 hours a week work, tenants in hostels lose their Jobseekers Allowance and, depending on their income, could lose their Housing Benefit and become liable for high rents.

Although a few agencies, including Gwalia, the Cyrenians, Ceredigion Care Society, Gisda and Digartref Ynys Môn have started to devise social enterprise schemes and work placements, there is a gap here and an acute need for firmly establishing these kinds of jobs. Many clients – particularly young people and older people with mental health or substance misuse issues – are not 'work ready' or able to gain and maintain jobs in the mainstream labour market. So, there is a gap and need which internal and protected jobs, devised and managed by the agencies themselves, can fill.

At the same time there is a serious lack of mainstream jobs which can be taken up by clients when they are ready. The need is particularly acute in areas where traditional industries such as mining and steel-making have been declining since the 1970s. The need is also acute in rural areas where farming has shed labour and tourism work, although important economically, is seasonal and low paid. The numbers of vacant shops in city centres indicate a loss of retail jobs. Moreover, Wales has a predominance of public sector jobs in which cuts have recently been deep.

There are private sector employment opportunities, however: there has been a rise in call centre jobs and Amazon is a large employer in the Swansea Bay area. It is important that plans for training in agencies should be relevant for the possible jobs created by ‘demand drivers’, which are likely to come from the private, public and third sectors: projects such as energy infrastructure in North Wales, the rail electrification in South Wales and projects emerging from the Welsh Government’s Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan (Guilford, 2013).

Pembrokeshire Care told us that the private sector is ‘the missing link’. This is so, both in accommodation and jobs and this is so throughout Wales.

### **Mental health services, particularly for younger people**

This gap was consistently highlighted by a number of agencies. They felt that there is a lack of services between child services and adult services, leaving young people between 16 and 25 in a vulnerable situation. The kind of traumas which are associated with family conflict often trigger homelessness, and can result in mental health issues such as depression, self-harming and suicide. One organisation highlighted the difficulties experienced by some service users with mental health issues in maintaining employment through the occurrence of acute episodes, which are so characteristic of mental illness. The long waiting lists for counsellors was mentioned several times. A few agencies employ an in-house counsellor (Cyrenians and Gisda), an innovation which is proving successful.

Under this heading, the long waiting lists for drug and alcohol agencies and in particular, detox, was reported. One service user told us that the only way he felt that he could access these services was by going to prison. He felt that he had no option but to break the law in order to be imprisoned and then be put on the prison’s detox programme.

### **Links with health**

The success of the nurse from a local GP practice going into the Cyrenians’ drop-in centre indicates that this service could be replicated throughout Wales (Cymorth Cymru 2007). This is a time when services from GPs are under scrutiny and are changing. This is therefore a time when links can be forged with local health agencies and services requested.

### **Lack of IT access and use of social media**

People who are on Job Seekers Allowance, and this is the case with about ¾ of the clients in this report, are increasingly required to sign on on-line and to show that they have been searching for jobs on-line. We were told that some Job Centres do not even provide computers, let alone IT advice. Access in some public libraries is time limited. Whilst some hostels and drop-in centres provide IT services, in other hostels, computer use is banned and Wi-Fi not provided. Digartref Ynys Môn have just set up an ‘information hub’ centre with IT access and advice for young people. This could be copied in other areas. At the same time there is an urgent need to campaign for IT access and advice in Job Centres.

Although Pembrokeshire Care Society exchange texts with service users and has a freephone number, generally there is a gap between the extensive use of phones and social media by young people which is not matched by the knowledge of managers. There is a need for a specialist worker covering a number of projects or the active exchange of good practice between different organisations.

## 2.7. Geographical distribution of services and issues of rurality

In terms of the projects covered in this report, there is a lack of services in the Valleys and in West Wales. In West Wales, the thin cover is explained by the rurality of the areas. Although there are a number of active projects working in North Wales, there is a feeling from them, that they are isolated from nationwide bodies, such as Cymorth Cymru and the Rough Sleepers Cymru network. Even when meetings are held at a central point in Llandrindod Wells, this is 2½ hours' drive from the North. A night's stay is required when Northern agencies come to the South, particularly to Cardiff, the capital and hence the headquarters of many organisations. It is important that new funding is distributed across all regions (see Section 5.8) and that contact between projects delivering similar services in the South, the North, the West and the Valleys is encouraged. For example Gisda and Digartref Ynys Môn could benefit from links with Swansea Young Single Homeless Project (SYSHP) and visa-versa, as they all deal with young people.

Much specialization of services for people over 25 are concentrated in the South, for example with the Cyrenians, Caer Las Cymru and the Wallich – although this latter organization has also successfully set up small projects in West and North Wales.

### Rurality

The researchers asked directors and project leaders whether their projects covered rural areas, and how this impacted on their service provision. A staff member of an organisation working in West Wales summarised the main difficulties succinctly:

*It's more expensive to live in a rural area; service users can live in rural areas, far away from services. People can't afford to come; public transport is expensive and infrequent. In a city you can invest in a nice building and it becomes a focal point; you can't do the same in a rural area.*

Staff working with vulnerable young people in Ynys Môn commented on poor transport links on the island. Staff in Gisda, Gwynedd, also working with young people, pointed out that the geography of the area meant that they had traditionally divided up their services into three localities: Arfon, Meirionnydd and Dwyfor. Lack of funding has subsequently led to having a county-wide service with a referral office travelling up and down the county. The distances and geography of the area means that one referral can take all day. Transport costs are also high: a bus pass to enable people to visit the local Job Centre costs £4, which is a large proportion of service users' benefits.

Pembrokeshire Care Society has to some extent overcome the problem of transport costs. The charity has instigated a travel warrant scheme for service users which is free for them and is funded by an administrative fee for widening the scheme out to other agencies in the county. Service users can use warrants when travelling to meetings, with the charity or for any meetings related to prevention of homelessness. The charity also holds outreach surgeries in towns which supplement the work done at their head office in Haverfordwest.

Ceredigion Care Society have tackled the difficulties of working rurally that they face, i.e. poor broadband and mobile phone reception and infrequent public transport, by holding surgeries in smaller towns and outreach work in people's homes, as well as having two offices – one based in Aberystwyth and the other in Cardigan.

## **2.8. Summary of Section 2**

These research findings set the background against which the bids for POCC funding will be made. They suggest that stable accommodation is the key service for homeless and vulnerable people in Wales. They also highlight the importance of a particular model of tenancy support which has grown up in homelessness services. This support is day-to-day, person-centred, empowering and preventative. Importantly, service users value highly this non-judgemental support.

The organisations surveyed identified gaps and a need to further develop routes into protected and mainstream employment. The lack of jobs is a huge problem here. Gaps were also identified in terms of emergency and move-on accommodation as well as in mental health services and access to IT. A huge increase of demand on projects' advice and support services is expected following cuts to welfare. The problem of getting vulnerable people, particularly young people, to engage in services was also mentioned as well as a lack of contact with colleges. This is one of the reasons for the development of separate services for 16 – 24 year olds. Sustainable funding needs to be considered, as does the setting up of projects that take local economic factors into consideration.

The good practice and gaps in services identified in this Section lead on to a number of recommendations in Section 5 of this report.

### **3. The three-pronged approach – barriers, training and employment**

One of the POCC goals is to break down barriers to social inclusion that prevent vulnerable people engaging fully in their communities. Homeless Link, the umbrella organisation for organisations working with homeless and vulnerable people in England, wrote a policy briefing (Homeless Link 2009) which summarises why tackling barriers through provision of meaningful activities, informal learning activities and training courses are so important. It said:

*... Engagement activities can equip people with the skills, motivation and 'personal space' to address the problems that have led to their homelessness and to rebuild self-esteem, personal relationships and quality of life. Informal learning activities can also lead to wide ranging improvements in mental and physical health for homeless people and support health, crime and social exclusion targets ... Structured training and education courses can help homeless people gain the skills they need to operate in the job market and find sustainable employment.*

The Places of Change initiative in England recognised the importance of meaningful activities, education, training and employment opportunities, stipulating that these should complement accommodation and resettlement support for homeless people (Communities & Local Government 2007).

The researchers asked organisations' directors and project leaders how they were already tackling such barriers, as well as asking service users what they considered to be their main barriers to engaging in training and employment.

A range of innovative methods are currently being utilised by agencies which could be built on by the POCC initiative. The Places of Change model views tackling of barriers, provision of training and employment as a continuum which people are able to access according to their own individual needs at the time. The three strands are certainly interlinked, as without firstly tackling barriers, many service users are unable to engage with training and employment.

This three-pronged approach fits in with recent research that suggests that the complex needs of many homeless people mean that their employability support requirements are also complex. The research recommends that an approach which takes into account the needs of the individual at the particular time should be adopted. The research also recognises that movement between the various strands of activities, training and work-related pursuits is to be expected (Jones and Pleafce 2005). Multiple barriers such as low skill levels, mental health problems, substance use and involvement in the criminal justice system make it harder for homeless people to move into employment; these personal barriers are set in a context of structural barriers such as employer discrimination, the welfare benefits system, inflexible and inappropriate services (Singh 2005).

#### **3.1. Tackling barriers**

The biggest barrier identified by service users was a lack of employment opportunities in their local areas. Perhaps this is not surprising as the research was undertaken during the economic recession in 2012-13 and focussed on convergence areas which have already been

identified as those which need investment in order to develop local economies, including jobs.

Service users in all local authority areas were pessimistic about job opportunities. To cite just a few examples, a service user in Colwyn Bay said:

*There aren't many jobs; they're mostly seasonal*

while a service user in Holyhead said:

*Employment is difficult; sometimes there are four hour or no hour contracts in supermarkets, but it's very difficult to find full time jobs.*

When service users in Ebbw Vale were asked about local job opportunities, one said categorically:

*This is Blaenau Gwent. There are no jobs.*

As well as structural issues which meant a dearth of available work, service users identified problems which they faced as individuals. These ranged from inexperience, criminal records, a lack of qualifications, digital exclusion, mental and other health problems, substance misuse issues, stigma, lack of confidence and self-esteem. Some also explained that, if they did voluntary work or attended training or college for more than 16 hours per week, they would lose their benefits.

Some service users described chaotic lifestyles that prohibit being able to keep appointments at Job Centres, let alone hold down a job. Such behaviour is being sanctioned by the Department for Work and Pensions. Several service users told us that their benefits had been suspended when they arrived late to sign on. Service providers have identified this as an issue, with a number of them highlighting in staff training the need to support service users to punctually attend their Job Centre appointments.

The organisations contacted in the research identified a number of ways in which they are able to develop stability and enhance their service-users' self-esteem. Several also acknowledged that paid employment is not a realistic, achievable goal for some service users. However, this should not mean that they are stigmatized and that ways of valuing their other contributions should be developed. For example, United Welsh Housing Association is encouraging tenants to develop other roles outside paid employment - such as being peer mentors and good neighbours. A staff member stated that this initiative means that vulnerable service users begin to see them differently and value their contributions to the community.

The organisations have developed a range of activities in order to build up self-esteem and confidence amongst service users. These include a range of activities and training opportunities.

### **3.1.2. Activities**

Activities were put on for service users by the vast majority of service providers spoken to – whether in drop-in centres or supported accommodation. These included barbecues, litter collection, art and craft activities, film-making, playing sports, leisure activities, music, film

making, drama, cookery, cinema nights, creative writing, camping, cycling, gardening and paintballing.

Some were put on by the organisations' own staff; others by partner organisations such as the Princes Trust, Glyndwr University and Street Football Wales. Such activities were seen as a way of developing social skills and self-confidence. In supported accommodation for young people, taking part in such activities was either part of the contractual obligation of residing there or encouraged through a rewards system, in which participation led to the award of small household items or trips, in return for attendance. The service users who participated in the research had mostly positive views of the activities. Some thought them useful for building a sense of community spirit. For example a resident in a hostel for homeless people in North Wales said:

*It's important for people to interact, so it's important to have activities;*

and a man using a substance misuse service in West Wales said that engaging in activities such as litter picking

*... enables you to get to know people and means that you talk about things other than the problem you're there for.*

These sorts of group activities are aimed at breaking down barriers by building up social skills, self-esteem and confidence. The wide range of activities offered by organisations means that service users can move between different sorts of interests. Activities such as drama and music provided by charities working with vulnerable young people in North Wales widened their experience through travel to other European countries and the young people enjoyed performing a play about homelessness in London.

There were more activities put on in services provided for young people, but such activities were also effective in projects for over 25 year olds. For example, the researchers visited a hostel for people with substance misuse issues in Ebbw Vale, and the day before, some of the service users had taken part in paintballing. They were enthusiastically talking and laughing about it. The paintballing had clearly brought service users together for a fun activity which helped build relationships and provided a talking point beyond their substance misuse. In fact, one of the service users told the researchers that when one is recovering from substance misuse, it is vital to have a variety of diversions to take one's mind off the addiction. He said:

*After detox and rehab you're stuck in the middle: you can't go forward and you can't go back. You are very vulnerable; you need the distraction of cookery, music, art - to keep trying different things.*

Confidence was also developed through one-to-one support work with support workers. One 18 year old with an abusive family background as well as mental health problems, who was living in supported accommodation in Aberdare, said that she had really gained confidence through talking to staff in the project as she was learning, for the first time, how to communicate properly with people.

This was a feeling echoed in several projects, as service users reported that the unusual experience of being treated with respect and being listened to improved their feelings of self-worth. This was summed up by another former resident at the hostel for people with substance misuse issues. He said:

*When I talked about my past to people here I couldn't understand why they were being so nice to me.*

### **3.1.3. Service user involvement**

Many of the organisations told the researchers that they attempt to engage service users in influencing how services are delivered through involvement activities. For example, service user forum events provide an opportunity to feedback any successes and problems with the service and suggestions for improvements or new ways in which services can be developed. The researchers attended such events held by Caer Las and the Cyrenians. Most hostels and supported accommodation schemes hold regular residents' meetings, usually monthly. For example, service users from projects run by North Wales Housing, Adref, Clwyd Alyn, Gwalia, Gisda and Digartref Ynys Môn told us that they could attend such meetings. Some organisations are encouraging participation at strategic level, as in Solas' 'Loop' scheme, in which residents represent the views of service users and take their ideas to the housing association's Board.

Some organisations, such as the Wallich, ask for evaluation feedback when service users are leaving schemes, some hold large workshop events with service users from different schemes, such as the United Welsh Housing Association 'Let's Get Together' events. Also, organisations such as Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire Care Societies encourage past and present service users to attend Supporting People service user involvement meetings. This research and report is, itself, another example of gauging and presenting service users' views; the fact that the organisations agreed so willingly to take part and help facilitate focus groups and interviews with service users testifies to their commitment to encouraging service user involvement.

The organisations reported that it is not always easy to engage service users in feedback and involvement events, but when they do there are two positive benefits: firstly, service users are able to have an input into how their services operate and secondly, participating in such events helps to raise confidence and develop communication skills, being one element of starting to break down barriers and promote social inclusion.

## **3.2. Training**

To complement these social and confidence building activities, several organisations also provided information on specific skill-building activities which aim to develop independent living skills. These were sometimes provided in-house and sometimes in partnership with other agencies such as Further Education colleges, the local authority youth service and service-specific agencies such as CAIS Drug and Alcohol Agency and Rathbone.

The in-house training comprised Agored units. Many organisations had trained staff to run courses on topics such as life skills, basic skills, maintaining tenancies, healthy living, preparing for job interviews, budgeting, 'knowing myself', cooking, identifying risk, sexual health, writing a CV and dealing with emotions in the workplace.

Some providers felt that their service users were more able to engage with courses run in-house, partly because they had experienced stigma at colleges, and partly because the courses were easily accessible - the service users do not have to travel far to study or train. Organisations found that service users preferred to learn 'in surroundings they know, with people they know'. As the director of one North Wales housing association said:

*For some young people going to college is a step too far and 'education' is a horrible word for them.*

Of course some service users interviewed do attend college or school, although it has to be recorded that the majority of those who participated in the research were finding it difficult to maintain attendance due to health, transport or motivation issues.

Some service users expressed ambitions to go to University or gain qualifications and then work in occupations ranging from animal care, to children's entertaining, to event management, to construction. Several of the young men interviewed expressed a desire to join the army 'when ready', which for some would be when they were no longer using drugs and for others when they were 'together enough'.

The appointment of specialist staff to liaise between colleges, trainers and service users by some organisations was deemed to be a successful way of tackling barriers into education and training. Sometimes colleges themselves had provided staff to link with organisations and in a few instances tutors were involved in service users' planning and support meetings. However, these instances were rare amongst the projects which participated in the research. The broader experience was one of service users attending external courses with little specialised support.

Some of the projects visited by the researchers did not consider provision of activities or training as part of their remit, especially drop-in centres and hostels for homeless people over the age of 25. These organisations tended to refer their service users onto agencies specialising in the field of training and saw this element as one aspect of the support which could be better provided by external specialists. One of the schemes visited was just about to start working in partnership with Oxfam on a Big Lottery-funded project called 'Building Livelihoods and Strengthening Communities in Wales'. The aim of the project was to work with the most difficult to engage people in their own homes.

The greatest difficulty identified by the research, was to translate training into securing employment. For this reason, we were told, service users are stuck in training and few move into work. A number of organisations said that they recognised that developing ways into employment was the next logical step in their provision. They had developed an innovative range of volunteering, work experience, apprenticeship and employment opportunities.

### **3.3. Getting into work**

The activities and accredited training was perceived to be crucial in developing service users' self-esteem and confidence and in equipping them with the basic and life skills required for working. Although it was recognised that some service users would never be able to enter employment, activities and training which could be useful in preparing for work were seen as useful in themselves, whether or not employment resulted - because of their role in breaking down barriers to social inclusion.

For more able service users, however, there was a feeling that real jobs were what they would prefer, as the project leader of a hostel in Merthyr Tydfil said:

*Service users are going on courses and courses but it's jobs they want and it's getting more and more difficult to get jobs ... It would be nice to see job creation and not just training.*

However, as with activities and training, it was recognised that, for some, it would be more successful for into work provision to be carried out 'in house', as the project leader of a hostel for homeless young people in South East Wales said:

*The scheme is the place to start ... Business in the Community attempted two week work placements but the young people found it difficult to commit for 10 days. You must do it in the scheme first and then link outside. The scheme gives stability and hope.*

Further than this, some organisations recognised that, because of a lack of job opportunities in their local economies, they needed to develop their own ways of providing employment for their vulnerable service users themselves rather than relying on Job Centres.

Job Centres were perceived by some service users to be unsympathetic and inefficient, though a few of the service users spoken to found them helpful, particularly if they had been referred to the Work Programme. For example, a 22 year old male resident in a hostel in Pontypridd, who had been on the Work Programme for seven months, said:

*They help you - you write CVs, work on computers; they get outside people in to give you mock interviews.*

However, the Work Programme was also perceived as problematic in some cases because service users had to give up places on courses or work experience that was arranged in-house in order to maintain their benefits. For example, a North Wales housing association director said:

*The DWP Work Programme is sometimes pressurising young people who aren't ready. Also, it doesn't do a lot for the young people. They may be attending something which is more beneficial and bespoke but they have to go on the Work Programme, they have no choice.*

The difficulties experienced by service users included not being able to use the computers in Job Centre offices for job searches; delays in processing benefits and unsympathetic staff. One service user who had recently been discharged from prison said of his local Job Centre:

*Coming out of prison you have no money so you go to the Job Centre and it takes 3-4 weeks to sort it out. You only get £40 when you leave prison. They're intimidating. We're nobodies ...*

He highlighted the difference between him approaching the Job Centre and his support worker approaching it:

*If the support worker phones, they get through quickly. If you're signing on it takes ages to get through. Lots of people haven't got the social skills to talk properly and be able to fill in forms. They need help. It's a frustrating system.*

The organisations told the researchers about a number of innovative ways in which they were attempting to access paid employment for their service users - although these schemes

are in the early stages of development. Most of the organisations saw moving service users into employment as an area that they had identified as the natural next stage in their work. These can be categorised into 4 strategies:

- 1) Working with other agencies, such as Careers Wales, to access opportunities for work and work experience programmes.
- 2) Providing unpaid volunteer positions in their own organisations in order to provide work experience.
- 3) Developing new social enterprises in order to provide voluntary work experience and sometimes paid work.
- 4) Initiating schemes such as peer mentoring in order to employ service users.

### **1. Working with other agencies and businesses**

Gwalia has employed a dedicated employment and skills development manager who works with senior managers in agencies in local areas in order to access employment opportunities for service users. For example, the housing association has developed a construction industry work experience programme, 'Building Futures', in partnership with two local authorities and a Further Education college, together with the All Wales Probation Trust. Volunteers, aged over 16, are trained in City & Guilds and Open College Network 'preparation for work' qualifications. They gain safety cards and are provided with equipment, clothing and tools. They volunteer for 4 to 10 weeks, doing carpentry and building skills.

In the Swansea Bay area the employment and skills development manager had persuaded local Job Centres to sign a service level agreement to let the service users stay with 'Building Futures' instead of the Work Programme with no penalties. The added advantage is that young people are able to volunteer and gain work experience for 26 hours per week as opposed to the usual 16 hours per week, before losing benefits.

Other organisations' schemes tend to be less well-developed than the scheme above, but others are starting to develop employment focussed activities. These include developing links with local businesses for work placements; referring service users on to other agencies to gain work experience and apprenticeships; negotiating a partnership with a local trading business; accessing 'Getting Ahead' funding from the Welsh Government to identify employment opportunities for 16 and 17 year old care leavers or young people involved in the criminal justice system, as well as setting up their own peer mentoring schemes.

### **2. Providing unpaid volunteer positions**

As well as finding volunteering opportunities for their service users in other organisations and businesses, some organisations have developed their own volunteering schemes, for example in property maintenance businesses and charity shops.

### **3. Developing new social enterprises**

Some of the organisations had ideas for social enterprise schemes which would afford employment opportunities, either paid or unpaid, for their service users - including catering and hospitality schemes, a climbing wall, a glass-etching scheme, removals and property and garden maintenance.

#### **4. Initiating new schemes for employment**

Some organisations had themselves created opportunities for service users to gain work experience and in some cases, jobs. These include learning rural skills such as stonewalling, gardening, farming and environmentally sustainable working, as well as temporary paid peer mentoring positions.

In Ebbw Vale, the researchers met an ex-service user who is soon going to start work as a volunteer on a project which the Wallich is entering into partnership with another charity. He is doing various qualifications which may lead to a job supporting people with similar experiences to himself. He has already volunteered on the organisation's breakfast runs for rough sleepers and is determined to get paid employment as a support worker eventually.

#### **3.4. Building on success in employment**

One of the organisations in the POCC consortium, Cyrenians Cymru, has had considerable success already in tackling barriers through providing activities, training and support to enter employment. In 2009 the organisation received European Social Fund monies to set up a training and employment project. An independent evaluation of this project summarised the approach (Wavehill Ltd 2012):

*The Cyrenians model has four phases or elements; firstly it reaches out to homeless people, people with alcohol and drug misuse problems, and those with chaotic and unsettled lifestyles through its community centre. Here people are identified as facing significant barriers to training and employment and helped to address these barriers, along with health and life skills support. They are then offered access to the menu of accredited training at Dragon Arts and Learning. The participants can then progress into work experience, via the Res-a-Rec recycling project or CELFI retail training centre, or can undertake volunteering. They can then be supported at the Cyrenians Employment Support Agency (CESA) with CV development, employability training and careers advice, and once job-ready, helped into employment and, crucially, helped to maintain work.*

Funding for this project has recently been extended by the Wales European Funding Office until June 2014. Since it began, the project has worked with 6,380 people, helped 890 gain qualifications, and 1,109 find work (Cyrenians Cymru website, accessed 30/5/13).

POCC could build on this success and the approach could be rolled out across different parts of Wales. Of course different regions of Wales have different needs and so the programme would need to be adapted in order to be appropriate for the various locales within the convergence areas.

#### **3.5. Demand drivers**

There are several forthcoming economic infrastructure investment projects which have been announced by the Wales Government and which could provide opportunities for Places of Change initiatives around Wales. These have been highlighted in the Guilford Review (Guilford, 2013) as demand drivers:

- The development of major energy developments in North Wales. These include the Wilfa 2 nuclear energy plant on Ynys Môn and wind turbines along the North Wales coast.
- Rail electrification and associated development in South East and South West Wales.
- The development of an across-Wales high speed broadband network
- Major projects announced in the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan (Welsh Government 2012c). These include housing building and refurbishment across Wales, major food waste and residential projects around Wales, the building of new public educational and health facilities around Wales.

The service users who participated in the research were aware of some forthcoming employment opportunities in their areas. For example, hostel residents in Colwyn Bay were aware of wind turbine development, but felt that they did not have the necessary expertise to benefit from job opportunities associated with this project. Service users in an employability project run in Ynys Môn felt that jobs at Wilfa 2 would go to experts from outside the area. They had heard that a Center Parcs-type resort was going to be built on the island but they were not optimistic of gaining employment there either.

Service users in Ebbw Vale were aware of the development of a race track. They felt that this project might be able to offer some initial, temporary construction-related jobs for local people, but that once the track was built there would be few employment opportunities and that local people would not be able to afford to attend events there in any case. Digartref Ynys Môn did anticipate some employment opportunities in rural activities and Gisda suggested that there may be scope for training up service users in outdoor leisure activity work, such as rock climbing and mountain expedition, but pointed out that 87% of these sorts of jobs were presently going to people from outside Gwynedd.

There seems to be a confidence and skills gap which is preventing service users from taking up the employment opportunities that are available or are on the horizon. Major projects, such as those above, certainly seem to afford opportunities for some lower skilled jobs. In her foreword to the November 2012 Annex (Welsh Government 2012c), Jane Hutt AM, minister for Finance and Leader of the House, mentioned that she saw delivery partners for the Infrastructure Investment Plan as coming from the private, public and third sectors. There is scope therefore to capitalise on the projects within the plan in order to provide relevant training and subsequent employment for some vulnerable service users

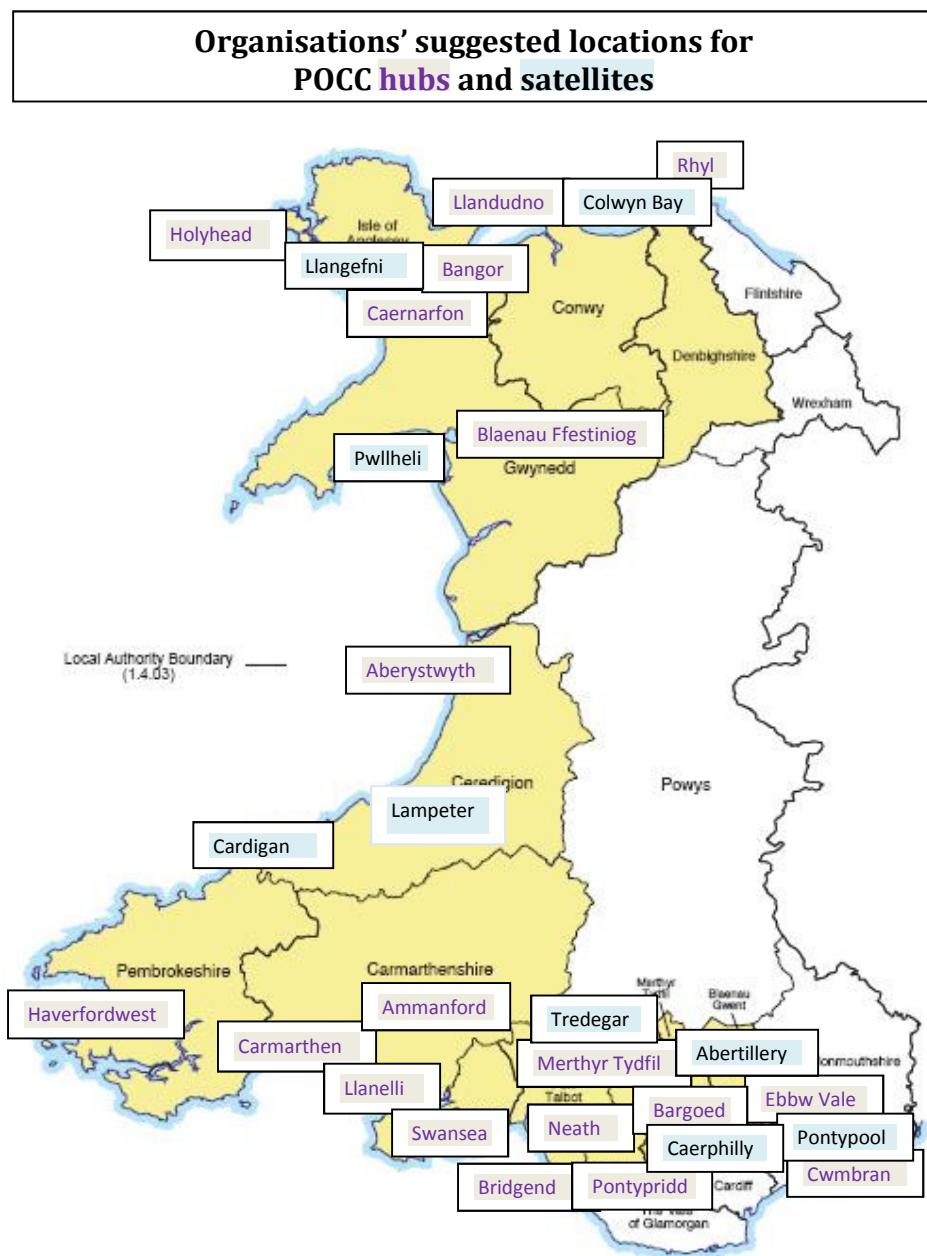
### **3.6. Hubs**

The establishment of 'enterprise hubs' in convergence areas is a key part of the POCC model. Consequently, the researchers asked director and project leaders where they thought a Places of Change hub could be established locally.

Most directors and project leaders agreed that it made sense to locate hubs in major towns where service users had to sign on for benefits and where they accessed local housing offices. In addition, it was felt that building hubs around existing services would mean that applications for planning consent would more likely be granted. Those working in rural areas additionally highlighted the need to have satellites as well as hubs in order to ensure that services are available locally for their rural service users. They advocated working with existing or new partners to provide a network of services. One director thought that it would

be best to locate hubs in areas where there are already good community associations, for example in Communities First areas. United Welsh Housing Association have developed a mapping tool which determines where active people and organisations are based, which could be used for determining where Places of Change hubs could be located.

There was certainly enthusiasm from all of the participating organisations' directors and project leaders for the idea of hubs, albeit with the caveat of also needing satellites in rural areas. The map below sets out where organisations' directors and project leaders considered hubs and satellites would best be located.



When service users were asked how far they would be prepared to go to access training, the consensus was that they would go as far as the affordability of local transport allowed them to go. This suggests that service users, particularly in rural areas, would benefit from the provision of satellites as well as hubs. The POCC model idea of integrating accommodation and training in one site could overcome the difficulty of transport considerations to some extent.

### **3.7. Procurement policies**

The UK Government's Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 (UK Parliament 2012), which came into force in January 2013, demands that public bodies in England, and those working in non-devolved function areas in Wales, consider social value as part of their consideration of value for money during the process of commissioning and procurement. The Act aims to assist the voluntary, community and social enterprise business sector to win public service contracts. In Wales, the 2012 Procurement Policy Statement by the Minister for Finance (Welsh Government 2012e) similarly calls for economic, social, environmental impacts and community benefits to be an integral consideration during procurement. Thus both devolved and non-devolved functions are covered. The benefit of these policies is that public service procurement can be used to create jobs, stimulate local economies and conserve the environment. These policies should promote public sector bodies such as health, education and local authorities to commission services from the third sector and social enterprises, thus facilitating more employment opportunities for homeless and vulnerable people. These could arise in areas such as construction and parks maintenance, for example.

### **3.8. Summary of Section 3**

Breaking barriers through activities, training and getting into employment are interlinked and it is important to recognise that service users flow between the various services at different stages of their lives. It is vital to raise confidence and self-esteem first through activities, including involvement in how services are run. These are valuable in and of themselves. The next stage is training, which can be put on in-house or through external partners. Further Education colleges supply important training, particularly for younger people. Entry into employment can be through supported employment. The mainstream Work Programme is possible for some but insufficient for many vulnerable service users. This has been highlighted by the recent UK Parliament's Work and Pensions Committee Report which states:

*There is growing evidence that the Work Programme is failing to reach jobseekers with the most severe barriers to employment (Work & Pensions Committee 2013).*

Many service users need intensive support in an environment in which they feel safe. The organisations already working in the areas of providing activities and training are well placed to supply this type of support into employment. The Cyrenians provide a good model of how this can work effectively.

It should be acknowledged, however, that the economic context is difficult and that, in order to provide sustainable employment, organisations should take existing and proposed economic drivers into consideration. These economic opportunities are being driven by both the private sector and the Welsh Government's infrastructure plans. Obligations on public bodies to consider social value in procurement also provide employment opportunities resulting from public sector commissioning and procurement processes.

The geographical situation of Wales presents additional challenges which could be addressed by centralising services in 'hubs' but, in rural areas, satellites should also be established, as well as hubs. The researchers suggest a regional pattern for POCC bids.

## 4. THE EXCHANGE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The research has identified several examples of good practice in existing service provision. It has also found gaps in service provision and thus we are able to make recommendations to be borne in mind in the development of POCC in particular and for service provision in Wales in general. This section highlights some of the example of good practice identified during the research, while Section 5 makes recommendations deriving from the research.

Much can be gained by exchanging good practice. It is particularly important for links and exchanges to be made between North and South Wales as the geography creates difficulties for communicating. In the discussion below we illustrate good practice by the work of one, or a few, organisations. This selection is not definitive; organisations work in many areas and there are examples of good practice which are not represented here; some examples have already been mentioned above.

### 4.1. Preventative work

Pembrokeshire Care Society is particularly focused on preventative work. People usually access services from housing offices, social services, health, justice or detox services once problems are entrenched. These statutory services are expensive. Preventative work is better for everyone. Pembrokeshire Care give advice to over 1,000 clients a year. Their workers are generic and give advice in all areas. In addition, they rely on a full range of services, to which they can refer clients for more specialist work.

Communication is a key area in rural counties. For this reason the organisation makes frequent use of phones. Clients can use their free landline phone numbers. They also text service users, for example to remind them of appointments as often they do not have enough credit on their mobiles to enable them to pick up voice messages.

### 4.2. Drop-in and advice centres

Caer Las Cymru currently runs three drop-in and advice centres, in Swansea and Port Talbot. At these venues, support workers sort out benefits and give advice on a one-to-one basis. Over 500 clients were helped in the last year. People with mental health issues and prison leavers are amongst their wide clientele. The local Housing Departments refer a number of their users so that failing tenancies in social housing can be sorted out. Through activities, clients can learn, for example, basic literacy, numeracy, IT skills and healthy living. Interestingly, one service user said:

*It's more about everyone getting together and feeling a part of something. It wouldn't really matter what they did – what does matter is seeing people regularly, building confidence and making friends.*

A young man, recently out of prison describes the value of the support workers:  
*When you've got someone behind you like this organisation they do sort it out.*

### 4.3. Working hostels

North Wales Housing Association's Noddfa hostel has 12 rooms and is staffed, with 10 support workers, over 24 hours. The ages of those in our focus group ranged from 19 – 56. The main reasons for homelessness were divorce, domestic abuse, repossessions and coming out of prison. Tenants stay about 9 months and then move on to independent flats.

One young man spoke about how being in the hostel relieves the pressure of not knowing where you can stay and feeling that he was taking advantage of friends. Here in the hostel he can sort himself out. He said that he feels more relaxed.

Some tenants work on Agored units and there is voluntary work in a charity shop. They have a walking group, bowling nights and house meetings. Importantly, tenants can use the hostel's computers to sign on for benefits.

#### **4.4. Relations with neighbours**

It is particularly important for hostels to have good relationships with neighbours as the concentration of vulnerable people can create problems. There can also be problems in gaining planning permission.

The manager from Adref's hostel for young people told us that a neighbour had complained about loud music coming from one of the flats. The young person said he wanted to write a letter to apologise. He signed the letter 'your noisy neighbour'. The man complaining was so impressed that he became emotional. Now the boy and the man wave to each other and speak. In Adref's all-age hostel, there had been complaints from young mothers living nearby about needles for injecting drugs being found in a local park. It was assumed that these had come from the nearby hostel. The tenants cleaned up the area and neighbours were invited to visit the project to build bridges with the local community.

#### **4.5. Links with the community**

The organisations in this report rely on good relations with the community. Gisda and Shelter go into schools to talk about homelessness. Previous research has found that one young person who was present at such a school talk was able to contact Swansea Young Single Homeless Project when, later, she became homeless (Hutson & Jones 2012). Gisda runs question sessions with local AMs and MPs as well as writing articles in the local paper. Digartref Ynys Môn, with the local authority, uses a mobile bus to advertise and provide services.

#### **4.6. Facilitating service user involvement in services**

The organisations use a variety of activities to encourage service user involvement in how services are run, ranging from service user forum meetings, to evaluation forms, to making representations to Board members to feed into strategy. These activities not only enable service users to influence the services they use, but also help to increase participants' self-confidence and develop their communication skills.

#### **4.7. A range of services leading into employment**

The Cyrenians run a range of services in Swansea which are ESF funded, as well as some supported accommodation for vulnerable adults. Many service users have drug and alcohol issues and some have come out of prison.

They run a drop-in centre where support workers can give advice and refer service users onto other in-house or outside services. The subsidised breakfast and lunches, the resident nurse, from the local GP's surgery, and the use of computers are all very popular. Service users can move onto a range of activities, such as craft, music and IT which are run by Dragon Arts. In the morning, service users can 'drop-in' on activities and, in the afternoon, accredited classes are run which lead to qualifications. There are also opportunities for volunteering with the Res-a-Rec recycling social enterprise.

CESA, the Cyrenians Employment Support Agency, provides training, job search skills and work placements. Service users may come to CESA through a range of services, from the drop-in, the activities and the training schemes, or they may come in off the street or be referred from the Job Centre. If people are not 'work ready', they may be referred back into Dragon Arts, Res-a-Rec or the drop-in centre, where skills can be learnt and confidence built up. By 2012, 950 clients had entered employment with an estimate of 64% still in employment after 1 year. A report, which carried out a cost benefit analysis (Wavehill 2012), estimates that, for every £1 spent, £1.44 benefit is gained. As one client said:

*I wouldn't be where I am today... If it wasn't for them I'd still be drinking. I'd probably still be homeless and wouldn't be working. I got NVQ level 2 while I was there which enabled me to get a job.*

#### **4.8. The 'Night-stop' project**

Digartref Ynys Môn is the only project to run a 'Night stop' project where volunteers take in young people who otherwise might be sleeping rough or in inappropriate B&B accommodation. 100 places were provided in the last year. This scheme has been identified as innovative by the Welsh Government as a possible pathway for vulnerable 16 or 17 year olds across Wales. It is more suitable for young people with low support needs. The importance of this kind of project is that it attracts volunteers who might not otherwise be involved in homelessness provision, for example church groups. Breakfast runs fall into the same category.

#### **4.9. Family mediation**

Many young people become homeless because they have been forced to leave home following family conflict. Other homeless people come from care and so family relations are already problematic. For most young people, the way ahead is independent living. For some, however, a good family mediation service can solve a homelessness situation.

One interviewee was living in a supported housing project, run by Solas. Many residents were 16 and 17 year olds. He wants to go back and live with his mother. He said that he fell in with the wrong crowd from the age of 11 and began smoking cannabis. Before he came to the hostel, he was spending £100 a week on drugs. He was 'kicked out' by his mother on New Year's Day as he had sold the Christmas present she had bought him to pay for drugs and also fought with his brother. His mother will let him come home when he is off drugs. Meanwhile, with encouragement from the hostel and the local family mediation service, he visits her frequently and talks on the phone.

#### **4.10. Peer mentoring**

Gisda employs 3 peer mentors, funded by 'Job Growth Wales', a funding scheme aimed at business employers whereby the employees' salaries are paid for 6 months at the minimum rate. After this period, Gisda will look for further funding. All the mentors are ex-service users. A peer mentor co-ordinator is paid for by Gisda's central funding.

Gisda's peer mentors work with young people who drop-in at Blaenau Ffestiniog and Caernarfon and are tenants in their supported accommodation schemes. The mentors do activities with young people - such as cooking sessions and football. They also help to deliver Agored training units such as budgeting and life skills. One peer mentor had been to Barcelona with Gisda's theatre group and another peer mentor had taken part in a play about homelessness at the Royal Opera House during the 2012 Olympic Games.

#### **4.11. Volunteering in the project**

Volunteering within the project can act as a first step towards keeping down a work placement. One young man had been living in a Solas supported housing project and had been working in a youth club for 4 weeks. He hopes to gain a level 1 NVQ if he completes 24 weeks' volunteering. He has always enjoyed working with children. He is on Job Seekers Allowance but can work as a volunteer for 16 hours without it affecting his benefit.

Another service user, aged 31, has his own flat and a support worker from the Wallich. He started volunteering on the breakfast run. Then he volunteered in the project's office in Ebbw Vale. Later he worked in the central office in Cardiff. At this time he spoke about his experiences of being homeless to a room of 150 people which he was very proud of. He is about to work as a volunteer on a new Wallich project in partnership with Oxfam which supports people in the community. He hopes that this may turn into a paid job. He told us that he keeps busy to avoid the world of drugs and alcohol.

#### **4.12. Using outside volunteers**

The Wallich run a volunteering programme – for both for ex-clients and for people from outside. Some of these latter volunteers are young and others are retired. They have 10 volunteers working in Bridgend. Some work on the Breakfast run. Others manage voids in a hostel and decorate the flats. A volunteer co-ordinator is paid for from central funds.

#### **4.13. An employment and skills development manager**

Some larger agencies have co-ordinators who work throughout their projects in a specialist capacity. Gwalia have an Employment and Skills Development Officer. She is part of the senior management team and oversees peer mentoring, volunteering, training and social enterprises. There are 167 projects for the 6000 clients across Gwalia's Social Care arm. She has established good links with employers e.g. BT, Tesco and Grew Enterprise (which is a social enterprise spreading across Wales). Gwalia have signed a service level agreement with Careers Wales, who prioritise Gwalia service users and give them one-to-one service.

The skills manager told us of the 'Building Futures' programme. Volunteers are trained and gain qualifications relevant to working in construction. They also gain their safety cards and are provided with equipment, clothing and tools. In the Swansea Bay area, they have persuaded the local Job Centres to let the service users stay with 'Building Futures' in place of being on the Work Programme.

#### **4.14. Social enterprises**

The setting up of social enterprises provides volunteering or work placement positions where support can be provided and employment is protected. There are a number of examples already set up, for example a climbing wall and a cinema project by Gisda. The Cyrenians run Res-a-rec which recycles furniture. Ceredigion Care are extending their in-house gardening enterprise to social housing schemes and the local authority. Gisda is planning to buy a property and open a guest house. They also hope to use this building where opportunities in the community can be showcased which includes local entrepreneurs, Further Education colleges and the local authority.

In many projects, clients are not ready to enter mainstream employment. Many 16 and 17 year olds have a negative view of education and work and are not even ready for formal college courses. With older people, mental health problems and/or substance use may mean

that a commitment to work is not yet possible. There is no doubt that the setting up of social enterprise schemes is a major thrust to help vulnerable people into mainstream employment.

#### **4.15. Working with partner organisations**

The United Welsh Housing Association is involved in the regeneration of a Baptist Chapel in Bargoed in partnership with the chapel's congregation, Caerphilly County Borough Council and the Welsh Government's Heads of the Valleys Programme. A community hub has been created, hosting a state of the art education, library and community centre, also incorporating a social enterprise café.

#### **4.16. Rural skills**

Given that a large expanse of the Welsh convergence area is rural, it is not surprising that a number of agencies have adapted their services to rural areas. The Cyrenians and the Wallich run surgeries in outlying rural areas. Pembrokeshire Care runs a Travel Warrant Scheme to help with the cost of transport in a rural area.

A number of projects, including Solas and the Cyrenians, encourage tenants to work in the project's garden as an activity and the Wallich in Bridgend facilitates service users' work on an allotment. Tourism is a key industry in rural areas. Digartref Ynys Môn are planning to open a guesthouse and a café. These venues can be used to facilitate volunteering and work placements. This organisation is also working with the North Wales Wildlife Trust in a consortium to develop rural skills such as stonewalling, gardening, farming and conservation.

#### **4.17. Wales and the issue of language**

Any scheme in Wales must be aware of and cater for both Welsh and English speakers. Welsh is particularly used in the North and West of Wales. Gisda, Digartref Ynys Môn and North Wales Housing Association all work in both Welsh and English. In Gisda, 29 out of the 31 staff speak and write Welsh fluently. Interestingly, Ceredigion Care are interested in making links with Catalonia in Spain as here there is a bilingual issue and a similarly rural environment.

#### **4.18. Transnational links**

A number of agencies already have links with other countries and have experienced the excitement and success of arranging trips abroad for service users. The Cyrenians have taken clients to Sweden. Gisda has done the same to Estonia. The Wallich have been to Germany. Solas has visited Holland.

#### **4.19. Working with the private sector for accommodation and jobs**

Clwyd Alyn have an innovative scheme for getting move-on accommodation for their supported tenants. Private landlords lease their properties to Clwyd Alyn for 3-5 years. For the young people, no deposit is required and the shared room for under 35s rule does not apply as it is no longer 'private'. A number of agencies, including Gwalia, Gisda and Digartref Ynys Môn are beginning to contact local businesses and ask for work placements. In Swansea, some people are able to gain seasonal work with Amazon.

#### **4.20. Conclusions**

This section shows a wide range of good practice within Wales. Cymorth Cymru and the Rough Sleepers Cymru network are in a good position to disseminate these examples. These exemplars of good practice can be used as a basis for all-Wales conferences and workshops.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1. The importance of entering employment**

Places of Change Cymru suggest a model of i) working on barriers, ii) accredited training and iii) moving into work. The research has found that the first two stages - working on barriers, through housing and support and running 'activities' and in-house training courses - have been developed in the convergence areas of Wales, the geographical focus of this research. In contrast, there is a definite lack of work placements and schemes enabling clients to enter employment. This is where the main thrust of new services should be focused. Both service providers and service users agree that work placements and movement into work is the next step.

However, schemes for work placements and entry into employment need to be embedded in other services. Accommodation gives the bedrock. 'Activities' and training, in particularly accredited course such as Agored units, are important prerequisites to work. This intermediary level has been built up by the voluntary sector and exists in many areas. It must be maintained and renewed because many vulnerable people are not ready for mainstream work and a range of services enables service users to move forwards or backwards as their needs change. One must acknowledge that some vulnerable service users may fail once, twice, or more before succeeding, and that for some service users, employment is not a realistic goal.

### **5.2. Provide accommodation with training**

In order to overcome some of the difficulties with finding appropriate move-on accommodation, as well as the need to provide training in a comfortable, non-stigmatizing and safe environment for vulnerable service users, it is suggested that residential training be a key component of some Places of Change Cymru projects, as appropriate to the local context. This would be an innovative way to introduce employment related training to people with complex needs. This approach has already worked successfully in the Places of Change programme in England, in projects such as the Shekinah Mission Resettlement project in Torbay (<http://homeless.org.uk/places-of-change#.UbDNEYBwbIU>).

### **5.3. Routes into work**

Young people, particularly 16 and 17 year olds, take a different route into work than older service users, who already have experience of work. For young people, links with local Further Education colleges are important. The Princes Trust is active in some areas and has experience of self-employment, even with young people. Rathbone and the Shaw Trust also provide training.

Volunteering acts as an important first step into employment. Volunteering opportunities can be developed within organisations, such as cooking and cleaning. Some agencies have developed training schemes for outside volunteers. Organisations could work more closely with local council of voluntary organisations branches and develop more social enterprises, possibly in collaboration with the Wales Co-operative Centre.

### **5.4. Jobs**

There is a need to be aware of 'demand drivers' such as energy developments and the electrification of the railways outlined in the Welsh Government's Programme for Government and the Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan for Growth and Jobs. Although many jobs in these developments are skilled, there are construction and other manual jobs

which may also be linked to them. In addition, the Welsh Government's 'Houses into Homes' scheme will lead to property maintenance and construction jobs (Welsh Government 2011). The structured approach of the Places of Change Cymru model could link in with employment opportunities arising from Welsh Government initiatives.

In addition, the public sector can generate jobs such as painting and decorating and gardening, and indeed should do so in order to meet the 'social value' consideration in procurement practices as set out in the Public Services (Social Value) Act of 2012 and the Welsh Government's Procurement Policy Statement of the same year.

Private sector employers must be drawn into work initiatives. Call centres and tourism give some opportunities for private sector jobs in Wales. A successful model, especially for young people, is the 'Building Lives' social enterprise programme in London which was initiated by a successful businessman working in the construction industry (<http://www.buildinglives.uk.com/home/>).

If Places of Change Cymru is to capitalise on infrastructure and construction schemes connected to demand drivers and Welsh Government initiatives, the development of partnerships with the third, public and private sectors will be required.

#### **5.4.1. Jobs and gender**

Place of Change Cymru has an opportunity to break down traditional gender segregation in employment through innovative approaches to training and support into work. Key employment opportunities are likely to come from demand driven development in the construction and infrastructure development programmes outlined in the Welsh Government's *Wales Infrastructure Investment Plan for Growth and Jobs*. Homeless and vulnerable women should be encouraged to take up training and employment in these sectors in order to widen their horizons and promote equality.

#### **5.5. Synergy with EU and Welsh Government policies**

The development of jobs for homeless and vulnerable people, especially if they are able to break down traditional gender roles in employment, fits in with key EU and Welsh Government policies aimed at tackling social exclusion, poverty and inequality. For example, the EU's policies on growth and gender equality: *Europe 2020: a strategy for European Union Growth and Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*, and the Welsh Government's policies (2009, 2012e,f): *Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives 2012-2016*, *Ten Year Homelessness Plan for Wales, 2009-2019*, *Tackling Poverty Action Plan 2012-2016* and the introduction in April 2013 of Anti-Poverty Champions in each local authority in Wales. It is important that Places of Change Cymru is aware of these policies and how to locate its services within them.

#### **5.6. Develop jobs for service users and ex-service users**

A number of clients expressed an interest in working as support workers and so making use of their own experiences. This can lead into interesting jobs. Peer mentoring schemes can play a part here but more career routes into this sector could be considered. As Part of the Places of Change Cymru programme, mechanisms should be built in to encourage employment of service users and ex-service users.

### **5.7. Tackle problems with benefits**

There are real problems with living in hostels and being able to take up work. This is because Housing Benefit is withdrawn as earnings rise. The rents at hostels are high because they include support. A similar problem is that benefits are withdrawn where a service user attends college or volunteers for more than 16 hours a week. These benefit rules are keeping people out of work and education.

Cuts and changes to welfare benefits will create a ‘tsunami’ of demand. However the fact that increasing numbers of vulnerable people who will be seeking training and work can be seen as an opportunity for the voluntary sector, already experienced and successful in this area, to develop services.

### **5.8. Work with the private sector**

The organisations in this report have traditionally worked with the public sector rather than the private sector. Partnerships with the latter is an area that could be expanded - both for accommodation, training and work. Policies such as ‘Jobs Growth Wales’ can create opportunities. Bond boards are already in place in some areas. Support agencies could offer their management skills to private landlords.

### **5.9. Links with Job Centres and prisons**

There is a need to press for better services within Job Centres, in particular for the provision of computers and advice. Organisations should encourage Job Centres to refer clients with support needs onto training programmes run by support agencies. They should liaise with Job Centres to dovetail the Work Programme with organisations’ training programmes.

Organisations should create more links with prisons. Their training programmes could be linked into training outside. Homelessness can be avoided by accessing benefits from a Job Centre immediately and by creating awareness of local accommodation options before leaving prison.

### **5.10. The geography of services**

The convergence area falls into five geographical areas:  
Western Bay (Swansea, Neath & Port Talbot, Bridgend);  
West Wales (Pembrokeshire, Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire);  
North (Gwynedd, Denbighshire, Conwy, Ynys Môn);  
Cwm Taf (RCT, Merthyr Tydfil,);  
Gwent Valleys (Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen).

It should be noted that Supporting People Regional Collaborative Committees are divided into the same geographical regions except that Powys, which is not in the convergence area, is included in the Mid and West Wales Supporting People region; the Gwent Supporting People region also includes Newport and Monmouthshire, which are not in the convergence area; Flintshire and Wrexham, which are also not in the convergence area, are included in the North Wales Supporting People region.

These regions also accord with the collaborative footprint areas set out in the Welsh Government’s *Comparison of the Regional Collaborative Areas* publication (Welsh Government 2012d) which calls for increased regional collaboration in service delivery in order to provide more efficiency and economies of scale. There is also some cross-over with

convergence area regions and the Welsh Government's 'Vibrant and Viable Places Regeneration Framework'.

### **5.11. Organisations combining within or between regions**

It is logical that support organisations could combine within regions in order to make bids for Places of Change funding. Already, organisations are working together within and between regions, for example, the Bright Horizons consortium in West and North Wales.

There is a choice of encouraging bids from single agencies - which will spread services around Wales (as Gwalia and the Wallich currently do) - or gaining the spread of services through encouraging bids from a number of agencies in the same geographical region (such as putting together Pembrokeshire Care, Ceredigion Care and service providers in Carmarthenshire). The authors of the Report suggest the latter regional model makes better sense, particularly as it would also fit in with the collaborative footprint areas model advocated by the Welsh Government (2012d) already mentioned above in 5.10.

There is another choice of organisations combining across regions because of specialism. For example organisations dealing with young people in the South (for example SYSHP) could combine with similar agencies in the North (for example, Gisda and Digartref Ynys Môn). New links between the North and the South could thus be created.

In ideal terms, each region could be granted a project with the new monies. However, it is likely that funding will only be able to cover two, or maybe three regions initially. If this is the case, it is suggested that at least one bid should come from the South and at least one from the North. In the same way it is suggested that at least one bid should be tailored to young people and at least one bid should be tailored to people of working age over 25.

### **5.12. Specialist workers within regions**

In whatever way these bids for major, integrated projects are arranged, it is suggested that monies should be also spent on setting up a worker in each region who is specialized in work placements, social enterprises and links with Job Centres and the private sector. A region is a small enough area for an individual (or small team) to cope with and be able to build up local knowledge as well as working on the ground with clients and providers.

### **5.13. The need for monitoring data**

There will be a need for complex monitoring and data collection in new bids for money. There are opportunities for the exchange of good practice here but funding will also be necessary. Supporting People have developed monitoring schemes all over Wales and over a wide range of services. Funding should also be dedicated to video conferencing facilities to enable time and cost effective communication between organisations involved in Places of Change Cymru projects.

### **5.14. The exchange of good practice**

Even without new funding, the exchange of good practice could improve services and lead to new developments. This report sets out examples here. Links between the regions should be encouraged.

### **5.15. Bilingualism**

The bilingual nature of Wales should be acknowledged and respected within the Place of Change Cymru programme, in all aspects of service provision.

## **5.16. Transnationalism**

The Places of Change Cymru Organisations would be well-placed to build on the evident interest of organisations in Wales in transnational working. The development of partnerships and knowledge transfer mechanisms with good practice models across Europe should be structured into service delivery within the Places of Change programme. This would not only improve services through the exchange of ideas, but provide opportunities for service users to widen their horizons through exchanges across the European Union, at the same time increasing their confidence and helping break down barriers to training and employment.

## **5.17. Services for women**

The numbers of men and women service users who participated in this research reflects the fact that women are in the minority in hostels and drop-in centres. The shortage of women-only services must be acknowledged. Close working with Women's Aid should be encouraged regarding the provision of accommodation, while links with Chwarae Teg should be developed in order to tailor training and schemes to facilitate entry to employment for vulnerable women.

## **5.18. Other issues**

Whilst the main thrust of new monies should be on getting vulnerable people into work, there are a number of gaps and issues which have been raised in this report:

1. In terms of accommodation, there is a shortage of direct access beds and an acute shortage of appropriate move-on flats or houses. There is an unmet demand for 'wet' beds or houses. There is also a shortage of supported accommodation for people with 'complex needs'.
2. In terms of health, there is a demand for an in-house nurse and other links with GPs at a time of change in health provision in the community. Currently, there is a lack of mental health services, particularly for young people. There are also long waiting lists for counselling and detox.
3. In terms of IT there is a lack of access to computers and advice/tuition, particularly in view of new demands from Job Centres. Use of social media could be developed, particularly with younger people.
4. Rough sleepers and some people who use drop-in centres are so poor that they do not have enough food to eat. Some drop-in centres provide subsidized food but others could develop it. Food banks are a resource which could be developed.
5. A number of service users in the focus groups had children who did not live with them. Two women had new-born babies in foster care. A number of service users were seeking access to children. If they gain this, they will need housing which will allow children to stay. There needs to be awareness of this issue, particularly as Legal Aid is being reduced.

## **5.19. Conclusions**

The evidence presented in this report suggests that the Places of Change Cymru approach could build on the many areas of good practice already in operation throughout Wales.

Service users have commented very favourably on the accommodation and support work provided in projects and organisations are ensuring that their support work is a key aspect of their service provision. Great strides have been made in terms of tackling barriers to social exclusion through activities and training.

These successes could be built on to move, more comprehensively and consistently, to support into employment - where this is appropriate for service users' individual situations and their readiness to participate in the mainstream employment market. This must be backed up with the continued development of in-house training and employment schemes as there is a need to provide such activities in a place where service users feel safe and comfortable and thus more likely to engage. These activities, training and support into employment should create a flexible continuum of services to recognise the changing needs of vulnerable service users.

The development of hubs is supported but, in rural areas, there will be a need for satellite hubs so that more service users can access services. It is also necessary to pay attention to the need to tailor POCC services appropriately to different age groups in order that young people are able to engage and participate.

Organisations in Wales are well placed to develop links with their European counterparts by building on several Welsh organisations' membership of FEANTSA and existing transnational partnerships. There is already a successful ESF-funded scheme in the Swansea Bay area, the Cyrenians Supported Employment and Training Project, which reflects the POCC model and focuses on providing activities, training, social enterprises, and support into employment. The POCC model also fits in well with the Welsh Government policy priorities of tackling homelessness, poverty and social exclusion. There is an enthusiasm and preparedness to participate in the POCC initiative; the timing is right to build on existing foundations. The research evidence suggests that Places of Change Cymru could make a real difference to the lives of homeless and vulnerable people and that this approach is the next logical step for services in Wales.

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