

Item: no. 3

Update on the Abigail Centre – Eddie Matthews, On Site Specialist Manager

The following is a report in respect of services for homeless women on the Abigail Campus since the update provided to the last meeting of the NWA, JPC in June 2017.

The Steering Group overseeing and reviewing the services on the campus has not yet recommenced since the meeting held in March 2016. The Steering group includes representatives from the Novas, Tus Nua, DCC, WFTRA, Gardaí and Probation Services.

Issues

Both managers continued to address any individual issues, complaints or queries arising from members of the community in as timely a timeframe as possible.

Within the services themselves the number of clients currently stands at 35.

This fluctuates depending on move on's, unsuccessful transfers and the well documented and unprecedented demand for homeless services in Dublin, particularly for women.

Since the last meeting the occurrence of incidents has been low and no serious incident has been recorded. Examples of issues reported are detailed below. The atmosphere in both services is still positive and every effort continues to be made to facilitate and support the clients to move to permanent long term housing in line with their individual social care plan. While most issues that arose were managed in-house within the confines of both services the following are brief outlines of issues brought to the management's attention, in order of occurrence.

When the Gardaí had to be called they were very supportive and speedy in their response to ensure that there was no overspill into the local community. I would like to thank the local DCC office for their support and for assisting in working with groups such as Pavee Point and the Mens Shed in utilising the campus.

I would also like to acknowledge the role of the probation staff and their supervisors in the coordination of ongoing works on the campus.

Reported Incidents:

- There was a report of a man and woman fighting at the bottom of Kildonan Road. Two members of staff went out on two occasions but found nothing to report.
- A call was received from the local shop with regard to a woman who had stolen goods. Staff called to the shop and examined the CCTV and confirmed the lady was not from either service.
- Staff witnessed a client unsteady on her feet and returning across the park. They went out and escorted her back to the premises.
- A client returning to the premises was verbally abused by a group of youths and had objects thrown at her. She was very distressed on returning to the premises.
- The following complaints were made:
 - (1) Begging at the local shops.
 - (2) A mobile phone being stolen.
 - (3) Clients being loud on returning to the project.

In relation to (1) staff went to the local shop manager who reported he had no particular issue with begging. The issue and information re the mobile phone (2) was vague and additional information was sought and (3) clients were requested to respect their neighbourhood, and to be quieter on returning to the premises.

- One particular client who has no drug or alcohol issues has come to the attention of local people on three occasions as she tends to state loudly that she will self harm. This tends to frighten people and staff members escort her back to the premises quickly. Staff are trying everything in their power to minimise these community issues as they feel that the Abigail Centre offers the best and probably only chance for this woman to be rehabilitated successfully. The woman is linked to the psychiatric service and has an extensive key working schedule.
- On two occasions clients did not pay their taxi fares. In keeping with the services policy both taxi drivers were contacted and a reimbursement offered. The fares were then charged against the clients.

The progress which was outlined in the last update has been maintained and in addition:

- The North West Area Partnership will be utilising the training kitchen in the centre during the Finglas Positive Wellness Fortnight.
- Pavee point utilised the training kitchen in the centre over the summer months to provide one to one cookery classes for the travelling community.
- Pavee Point in cooperation with the Irish Heart Foundation held a community day in August on the campus. This was extremely well attended and exhibitions of crafts and sports were displayed. There was also a barbecue and gardening/allotments work groups.
- Work on the fitting out of a staff training room is almost complete
- The Men's Shed is holding an event on the campus as part of the Finglas Positive Wellness Fortnight.
- A major private company carried out extensive painting and garden refurbishment in Tus Nua as part of their corporate social responsibility policy.
- Services on the campus are participating in the 6th Annual Finglas Positive Wellness Fortnight to support the principle of identifying and supporting positive mental health in the general population. The event on the 22nd September is open to all and will have two particular themes - catering for school going children and older people.

Update on Kildonan Lands Project – Aidan Maher, Asst. Area Manager

Following public consultation the Lands Framework Study has been completed by Brady Shipman Brady. It was discussed at the September meeting of the North West Area Committee.



Next Steps

The Kildonan site was transferred to Dublin City Council from the OPW for the provision of a day and residential service to meet the needs of vulnerable women with histories of homelessness.

Now that the Site Framework Study has been completed the next step is to establish how the existing service can continue and that the City Council has satisfied the terms of the agreement for the transfer of the lands from the OPW.

The Housing Department has informed our office that they will consider including the lands in the Social Housing Programme when the requirements for the continuation of the service have been determined by the Dublin Region Homeless Executive.

The latest Meeting of the group chaired by Rita Burtenshaw, the Independent Facilitator, was scheduled for the 21st September.

Brendan Kenny, Assistant Chief Executive, will attend a meeting with the WFTRA Committee and public representatives in the Finglas Area Office at 4 pm on the 27th September.