

Alliance exCHANGE: Learning from COVID Flash Report

Introduction

The Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness, along with partners from across the city, came together on Thursday 28 October for an Alliance exCHANGE session highlighting examples of innovation and best practice from the pandemic response and beyond. We sought to explore what enabled these successful responses, how we can embed them into our ways of working in the future, and opportunities for further innovation in Glasgow.

Below are some insights, themes and reflections from discussions on the day.

What worked well during the pandemic response?

Partnership working and flexibility across services was a clear factor in successfully supporting people experiencing homelessness during the pandemic response.

Through effective partnership working, services were better able to identify gaps and respond to them. Some noted that the pandemic removed the 'competitiveness' across the sector. There was a clear need that required an immediate response, with one participant sharing that this way of working reminded them of their passion and enthusiasm for their role.

'It was a focus on the individual...services rallied and people were at the forefront.'

Participants spoke about how their services have renewed resilience as a result of the pandemic. In some instances, it has enabled them to be less prescriptive and become more independent, inter-dependent, and less restricted by funders.

Opportunities, Challenges and Innovation

We must keep in mind that one size doesn't fit all. There is a range of different types of services that an individual may need at any given time. This was reflected in discussions throughout the session and should underpin our approach.

The role of the city centre was identified as an opportunity for change. During the pandemic, the centre was cited as a 'ghost town', and as the world re-opens, there will be more opportunities to repurpose empty

buildings. However, it was felt by some exCHANGE attendees that we need to ensure we don't fall into the rhetoric of repurposing retail units into homes. A more helpful framing is how can we rejuvenate the city centre to support social connections?

Whilst there was improved partnership working during the pandemic, it's acknowledged that the range of services trying to do the same thing can make the landscape difficult to navigate. We need more clarity and unification. We need to keep the collaboration approach in plain view and remain solution-focused, as we were during the pandemic response.

'The really big opportunity is tying together the network of support that is available.'

The Alliance was seen as a step further than partnership working, but it was recognised that while we are all working together to achieve the same goal, the question is how do we put that in motion?

What's next?

As we move forward with our mission to end homelessness in Glasgow, what can we take from what we've learned over the pandemic? Or what opportunities may there be to innovate across the city?

Discussions were held around the role of 20-minute neighbourhoods that allow people to live and thrive in the communities they want to settle in. This will require a commitment to a range of cross-sector support to be fully realised and move away from large-scale accommodation centres.

Ensuring that people don't have to repeat their stories, which has been a focus at previous exCHANGE events, was identified as vital for moving forward. Improved partnership working and the removal of barriers imposed by the system, as seen during the pandemic response, have provided an opportunity to be innovative and share data more effectively, so people don't have to re-traumatize themselves sharing their story over and over.

There were calls for a forum for service providers to share feedback and ideas. The Alliance will be establishing a Frontline Forum, and further details on this will be available shortly.

‘What is one word you would use to describe the Alliance exCHANGE:
Learning from COVID session?’



Further Links

Help the Homeless Glasgow – COVID-19 Response

<https://www.pechakucha.com/presentations/help-the-homeless-glasgow-covid-19-response>

GHIFT

<https://homelessnetwork.scot/ghift/>

Dogs Trust Hope Project

<https://bit.ly/2Y1VBey>

Proxy Address

<https://www.proxyaddress.co.uk>

Figures around homelessness in Scotland

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/homelessness-scotland-2020-2021/pages/1/>

Contact

For a copy of the slide deck from the session, or to get in touch with any further questions please contact hello@glasgowalliance.org