

Alliance exCHANGE: Efficiencies Flash Report

Introduction

The Glasgow Alliance to End Homelessness and partners from across the city came together on Thursday 9 December for an Alliance exCHANGE session to explore efficiencies in the sector. As part of their remit, the Alliance is to find 5% efficiencies in the budget, and true to our approach of transparency and co-production, we sought views across the sector on where those efficiencies may be found.

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

What currently works, and what currently doesn't?

It was felt that a holistic approach to supporting people experiencing homelessness works, but there needs to be more training for staff to better support multiple and complex needs. Currently, additional agencies or services need to be brought in, incurring extra costs.

'Sometimes we set the bar too high for people without considering what is currently happening in their lives. This can often lead to multiple services being involved, incurring that extra cost.'

We want our services to be flexible and tolerant, but the pressures of complex situations (e.g. overdoses) has a massive impact on staff. One service saw improvements after staff received trauma-informed training. However, it's important to acknowledge that significant challenges across the landscape result in difficulty retaining staff and having the resources left to manage. The increase in checks to prevent overdose was an example that results in some leaving the sector, and more funding may not be the complete solution to this.

Some shared their experiences of scaling back on house visits during COVID and taking a more blended approach. This worked well and saved on resources.

Sometimes there's a lot of spend occurring due to the volume of checks on people that aren't always necessary or could be more efficient. Admin

issues could also be demotivating, causing hold-ups in casework, for example, when there are no handovers between departments.

A more joined-up approach and better communication across the sector was unanimously agreed as an essential solution. An example of this in practice, it was suggested, was more joined-up working between RSLs and housing associations through collective training that could help people see opportunities where they can work in partnership.

A more joined-up approach could support in reducing lengthy waits between referrals, which can have a significant negative impact for the individual:

‘Sometimes six weeks down the line, an individual may have been visited by multiple services whereas if there was simply a “round the table” conversation about a specific case, one person could be assigned.’

The current spend

Andrew McCall, Alliance Leadership Team member, presented the current spend (please see attached slides).

Initial reactions at the current spend was surprise that the numbers for emergency accommodation weren’t higher. It was noted that were some council emergency accommodations not included as part of these figures. Andrew highlighted that the data doesn’t cover the ‘true cost’ of services providing support that often goes over and above the remit.

More scoping was suggested on how spend is categorised. It’s likely that since contracts were awarded, some of which will be years ago, their scope has changed or evolved. It was agreed that the Alliance would review this to ensure that we aren’t doing more of the same.

Where will we see the shift in spend?

‘It will always be a difficult decision. However, we’ll hopefully see an increase in outreach support.’

‘As we encourage people to be more independent in the community, that will require more outreach support’

It was also suggested that there should be an investment in the prevention space in conjunction with outreach.

Improving communication was regarded as a common theme throughout discussions. Looking at ways to improve this could yield considerable impact without having significant implications to spend.

What's next?

Conversations at this exCHANGE event helped demonstrate that efficiencies are not just about funding, and that partnership working can help improve efficiencies in the system. That said, when developing the budget for the future of homelessness support services, the Alliance will remain cognisant of the importance of flexible funding and high-trust contract management principles.

Feedback from these discussions will feed into conversations around budget preparation and discussions around how the Alliance will award services.

Another step that emerged from discussions at this session has been for the Alliance to facilitate a city-wide summit event. This event will bring together services supporting people experiencing homelessness, as well as other health and social care services and organisations, relevant third sector partners, community justice organisations and others to discuss how we can work in partnership and take a more joined-up approach.

If you have any questions or would like to feed into this work, please get in touch with hello@glasgowalliance.org