



The Elms

Continual Improvement Review

September 2018

1 Annual Equality Impact Assessment

DENS is committed to promoting equality and diversity within its services. The Council and DENS continue to work closely together to ensure that the service provided is joined up and clients are provided with appropriate advice and assessment to secure accommodation.

Where DENS is not able to provide a service due to the immigration status of the client or health or safety restrictions, which can relate to previous offending behaviour of the client, DENS works closely with the Council to ensure the client receives appropriate advice and intervention to prevent street homelessness.

DENS will make adjustments to service provision and provide specialist individual support to uphold diversity and equality principles. Examples of this in the previous year have included providing halal diets, supporting a number of clients with mobility issues and physical impairments to access the Elms, supporting clients with mental health issues to access appropriate support.

It is now mandatory for all DENS staff to complete disability Awareness Training within one year of commencing employment and to attend as refresher course every 3 years.

2 Performance

DENS strives to constantly improve the service we provide for all our service users.



KPI's

The Elms yearly targets and Key Performance Indicators are listed below:

Occupation Rate	99%
Percentage Of Rooms available within 24 hours	100%
Personal contribution arrears	11%
Housing Benefit arrears	18%
Positive Move on rate	46%
Percentage of support plans up to date	100%
Average Stay	93Days

Client Data: We use Inform as our CRM, which ensures all residents information and support plans are updated in real time and kept safe. This system is used across all DENS services, allowing for a quicker and more informed referral process across our services. This meets all GDPR requirements.

All residents complete Outcome Star within 5 days of entering the Elms and this is reviewed in their key worker session four weekly. Outcome Star is an effective and well recognised tool for measuring distance travelled and is also used to encourage and motivate residents.

DENS is working with other Hertfordshire based homeless charities - HYH, 1YMCA, Stevenage Haven and Watford New Hope to develop consistency across the sector locally, in regard to how Outcome Star is used and reported, and to share good practice.

Move Ons:

Where residents move to:

DENS Move On	50%
DBC	30%
Private Rent	2.5%
Other	15%
Friends/Family	2.5%





The significant percentage of Elms clients move onto to DENS Move On service (previously known as DRA), therefore an effective and smooth referral process from the Elms to DENS Move On service is key to a positive move on

In May 2018, it was decided that Sean Fitzgerald, Elms Manager would also oversee the Move On service. This has resulted in a more seamless transition from those moving from the Elms to the Move On service, with more consistent practice across the two services. Since this change, there has been an increase in successful move ons from the Elms.

A robust criteria, is now in place to assess whether an Elms resident is ready to move to the Move On service. As set out below:

- Up to date with payments to the hostel or following a payment plan for any arrears
- Adhering to rules within the hostel and not in receipt of any warnings for 4 weeks
- Actively engaged in support for any drink or substance abuse issues
- If appropriate, attending mental health support services
- Room is kept clean and tidy
- Engaging in key worker sessions
- Completed Tenancy Sustainment course

Key workers ensure all residents are signed up to the DBC Housing Register and support residents to bid for properties.

Evictions:

Reasons For Eviction

Drugs	17%
Arrears	21%
Abandonment	23%
ASB	39%

Our positive move on rate has been effected by residents that have been evicted, recalled to prison or abandoned their accommodation at The Elms.



Anti-social behaviour continues has been the major factor for eviction.

In the last year we have seen an increase in younger clients (18-25 years of age); a significant majority of whom of whom have drug issues, are involved in low level drug dealing which often results in disputes altercations between current residents, as well as with ex-residents. This does have an impact on eviction rates and positive move ons.

Social Return of Investment:

In partnership with One YMCA, HYH, Watford New Hope and Stevenage Haven, DENS commissioned independent consultants from Homelesslink to undertaken a piece of work to assess the financial benefits accrued from the provision of housing and support service by DENS. The work is still in progress, however the following calculations have been produced.

The consultants calculated:

- a) the cost consequences of supported housing not being available, using the work undertaken by Sitra for the National Housing Federation in 2017 - *Strengthening the case for supported housing: the cost consequences*

The total cost consequences calculated were: **£1,064,922**

- b) the social value of helping people move from the streets into settled accommodation. Calculations were based on work Simetrica for HACT in 2015 and is a treasury approved methodology for calculating social value.

The total accumulated social value form this activity was calculated at **£936,125.**

DENS will be producing a full report on the finding later this year, and it will be available in the new year. Further information on the calculations can be provided.

3 Development and Training for Residents

ETC: Up until July 2018, the ETC (Equip to Change) Co-ordinator continued to facilitate a number of training sessions for residents at the Elms; including pre-employability and employability courses, such as Food Hygiene Level 2, basic computer skills; as well as tenancy support courses, cooking on a budget and basic budgeting courses. The ETC Co-ordinator also provided individual



sessions with residents focusing on CV development, job search and interview techniques.

Unfortunately the funding for this post came to end in July 2018. Continuation is currently being sought, in the interim the support is continuing through the use of bank staff and individual sessions being held at Open Space with the Day Centre staff.

Numeracy & Literacy: Numeracy and literacy support for residents is being provided by a volunteer who is an experienced adult literacy tutor.

Work Experience:

Residents are now being supported to access volunteer opportunities in DENS services, particularly the Furniture Warehouse.

Supported by Elms Staff, Elms residents are involved painting, decorating and basic maintenance of DENS Move On properties. A number of Elms residents have previous experience in this type of work and are using this opportunity to become work ready. Due to the initial success of this work, the plan is to develop house maintenance Social Enterprise. Initially the focus will be on skills and employability development for residents, more medium term the aim will be full cost recovery.

Counselling: Counselling continues to be offered free of charge to Elms residents, by an external, certified counsellor. Residents are offered an initial 6 sessions, if they complete this they will be offered up to another 6 sessions. In the past 12 months, 59 residents have been in receipt of the counselling. Staff have seen a positive change in behaviour and attitude of a number of residents who attend.

4 Partnership Working

Partnership working is key to the success of DENS, not only at The Elms, but organisationally.

- The Elms Manager meets fortnightly with the Operational Manager, (Strategic Housing Team Leader). Quarterly Core Group meetings are held to ensure the contract is appropriately implemented and monitored. These meetings are attended by the Assistant Director of



Housing, Group Leader Strategic Housing, DENS CEO and the Elms Manager.

- The Elms manager is part of the Homeless Hub forum
- DENS CEO is the Chair of the Dacorum Homelessness Forum.
- A Senior Manager from DENS also attends JAG, and the PCC Rehabilitation of Offenders sub-group and Early Intervention sub-group.

The Elms work closely with a number of third sector and public sector organisations, including HYH and Turning Point, who manage the Mental Health High Support Needs programme, CGL, Open Door and Druglink. Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Marijuana and Cocaine Anonymous all hold weekly meetings at the Elms.

DENS will be producing a full report on the finding later this year, and it will be available in the new year. Further information on the calculations can be provided.

5 Customer Feedback

Residents meetings are held monthly and the times of these are advertised widely within the Elms. There is also a suggestion box at the Elms. Quarterly feedback surveys are undertaken.

Most recent feedback included:

Aug-18	40 yr male	thank you for your help
Aug-18	29 yr male	the rooms feel safe and secure
Aug-18	unknown	polite staff, good food
Aug-18	61 female	I am very grateful for the support
Aug-18	42 yr old male	relaxed atmosphere, friendly helpful staff

6 Challenges

Change in age group of clients: As stated, In the last year we have seen an increase in younger clients (18-25 years of age), particularly in the Spring (March - May); a significant majority of whom of whom have drug issues, are involved in low level drug dealing which often results in disputes altercations between current residents, as well as with ex-residents.





The table below shows the increase over 3 years:

	Yr1	Yr2	Yr3
Under 25	1%	5%	29%

Our experience is that a large number of those under 25 years of age are not interested in reducing their substance use or alcohol intake, finding employment or meaningful daily activity. They are literally after a bed and a roof. They will not engage in key worker sessions or support offered by external agencies.

This does have a significant impact on eviction rates and successful move ons.

Lack of mental health support: Lack of local mental health support for our client group continues to be an issue. This issue had been raised at both the Homeless Forum and the Dacorum Strategic Network.

SWEP: This year's long and cold winter led to unprecedented use of SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol). Over a 35 day period SWEP operated 34 times, with between 2 and 8 individuals accessing the service each night, with the average being 4. A number of those accessing SWEP are individuals who would usually not access at the Elms as they would not meet the drinking limits, have recently been evicted, do not want to follow the rules and policies or do not have a local connection.

The increase in numbers for over a month, along with the issues in regard to behaviour and disruption that comes with the clients, did present challenges for The Elms. Extra support staff, security and cleaners were required during this period.

Personal Contributions: By the nature of the residents at the Elms, there will always be an issue with residents not paying their personal contribution charges. This has improved with the use of the hand held card machine.



7 Planned Improvements for The Fourth Year

Social Enterprise Development: The development of the maintenance social enterprise had been discussed above. DENS is also developing a Coffee Cart social enterprise. The aim of this enterprise for clients to firstly be trained as Barista's and then will gain 'real' work experience working on the coffee cart, serving customers. It will also form an income stream for DENS.

Initially it is envisaged, the cart will service DENS events, such as the Sleep-Out, then looking at external events in the Dacorum area.

A thirds social enterprise is also being developed; repairing and selling second hand bikes. Clients will work with volunteers, to repairs bikes donated to DENS. Once repaired the bikes will be sold through s DENS Furniture Warehouse and social media. Each client involved in the scheme will be able to keep one bike they have repaired for their own use.

As with the maintenance programme, initially the aim is to provide clients with a safe and supportive environment to develop employability skills, medium term we will be aiming for full cost recovery.

Partnership with Oakmann Inns : A work experience and employability training programme is being piloted with the Red Lion Bar and Restaurant in Water End. Elms residents will have the opportunity the opportunity to undertake two weeks training with the Red Lion. If it goes well, the service user will be offered work opportunities and further training. The Red Lion have said they struggle to recruit kitchen staff. The first client is starting on this programme on 1st October 2018.

Evaluation of Counselling Service: DENS will commission an independent evaluation to measure the impact of the counselling service in supporting clients to maintain a tenancy.

House 2: It had become clear that small group of clients would benefit greatly from a stage 2 accommodation service, which provides a transition from the Elms to Move On service. This would be for those clients who are



committed to change and are engaging in services but for a period of time still require a higher level of support than Move On can provide.

Initially we would be looking at one HMO, with a member of staff attending the service each day. Clients would continue to attend the Elms on a regular basis at first, then this would gradually decrease.

We believe this would increase positive move-ons from the Elms and reduce the number of evictions from the Move On service.

Policy Review: DENS has implemented a programme to review and update all policies. This will be completed by January 2019.

PQASSO: DENS will be undertaking the assessment for PQASSO in 2019.

IT Security Assessment: The output of this assessment will be a gap analysis of IT security practices measured against Cyber Essentials and industry best practice.

Implementation of DENS 5 year Strategy: DENS Board of Trustees signed of the 5 year strategy in April 2018. A top level summary of the Strategy is attached, more detail can be provided.

Wendy Lewington
CEO DENS

Sean Fitzgerald
ELMS and Move On Manager



Helping rebuild lives

Overall aim:

Our aim is to be the first port of call for people in Dacorum who are facing homelessness, poverty and social exclusion; to support and empower them to take the next positive step in their lives, secure and sustain a long term housing option and be an active member of their community.

We will do this by:

- Ensure individuals and families have access to emergency food and provisions; and individuals have access to emergency accommodation
- Provide a range of accommodation options to support people to move on and long term, sustain their own tenancy
- Provide a range of services, including advice services & training provision, empowering people to develop skills and confidence to take the next step in their lives

To do this we will need to:

- Ensure DENS long term financial viability, through diversification of income
- Increase public understanding and support of DENS and the issues facing the people we support

To be the first port of call for people in Dacorum who are facing homelessness, poverty & social exclusion; to support & empower them to take the next positive step in their lives, secure & sustain a long term housing option and be an active member of their community.

