

Homelessness Task and Finish Group – Responses from CoLab

Date Received	From	Comments
8 September 2022	<p data-bbox="419 412 635 479">Laura Greenhill – CoLab</p> <p data-bbox="419 517 635 943">Please find attached a short report from Colab highlighting our visitor numbers and provision for people in the homeless and vulnerably housed community.</p>	<p data-bbox="646 443 1398 555">CoLab Exeter Welcome Team – supporting people with multiple and complex needs experiencing significant challenges.</p> <p data-bbox="646 591 1398 779">Colab Exeter is a multi-agency wellbeing hub that enables people and organisations to work together, to create conditions for people to lead their best lives, and do their best work; and for organisations to achieve their greatest impact and value.</p> <ul data-bbox="699 815 1342 1039" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="699 815 1342 891">• For information about the work of CoLab https://www.colabexeter.org.uk/ <li data-bbox="699 898 1342 1039">• For information on the 30+ organisations and projects based at CoLab please see our online brochure https://www.colabexeter.org.uk/colab-community <p data-bbox="646 1084 1398 1621">People coming to CoLab are met by our Welcome Team who will listen, support and signpost. The team of four (one full time Welcome team Leader and 3 part time staff) have a range of skills and expertise including housing, criminal justice and substance misuse. The team are skilled at managing the needs of the individual as well as sometimes challenging behaviours, often the result of frustration with systems. While CoLab takes a person-centred approach and many services have ambitions to work in this way, the system itself has yet to provide a truly person centred offer and it remains very difficult for people to navigate ‘service land’ and access support in a place at a time that meets their needs.</p> <p data-bbox="646 1628 1398 1957">CoLab is considered a trusted place where people are treated with compassion and respect, underpinned by a trauma informed approach. Hospitality is a pillar of our welcome and includes an offer of tea, coffee and cold drinks. Visitors have a very clear understanding about what is expected of them and their behaviours and we have led on the ‘Safe Place for Everyone’ charter as a citywide focus on addressing anti-social behaviours and underlying causes.</p>

Colab hosts a number of agencies and organisations, the key ones linked to homelessness are Julian House outreach team, 2 ECC Housing Officers and the ECC Complex Lives Navigator team, BCHA Housing First workers and Seetec Interventions Alliance who provide housing support for those in the criminal justice system. We also adjoin and work closely with the Clocktower Doctors surgery – who work specifically with people who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

Our One Mental Health team offer is a joint provision between the Clocktower surgery, a CMHT team in the building and Mental Health Navigators for Mind – again this provision is primarily for those who are homeless or vulnerably housed.

Crucially while the Welcome team started out nominally to greet and signpost visitors, over the last 18 months that has changed. The wider system has given us the moniker of Exeter’s ‘social A&E’ and we have seen our average **daily footfall increase significantly from 22 a day in September 2022 to 63 per day in August 2022**. We have been collecting robust data as part of our lottery funded Doing What Matters Most project and are now beginning to analyse and make sense of that data. We can see that 50% of our visitors come in for planned appointments with specific agencies within the building, the remaining 50% access the building through self-referral or having been signposted by other agencies such as police, probation, GP’s and the local council.

Daily footfall for the past 12 months;

Month	Working Days	Total Contacts	Average daily
September 2021	22	481	22
October 2021	21	420	20
November 2021	22	630	29
December 2021	21	566	27
January 2022	20	558	28
February 2022	20	716	36
March 2022	23	1037	45
April 2022	19	804	42

May 2022	21	1065	51
June 2022	20	961	48
July 2022	21	997	48
August 2022	22	1389	63

We record every visitor that comes in and their reasons for attending. Below is a list of examples of reasons for attending CoLab:

- Use of phone / computer / charging phones
- Support with making homeless applications to the council and bidding on Devon Home Choice
- Food bank vouchers – Colab is the second highest referrer in the city after ECC.
- Mental health support and listening
- Registering with the GP
- Safeguarding referral
- Supporting calls to energy companies, completion of passport forms, UC claims and bus pass applications.
- Colab has been key in the support of people through the hot weather alerts, along with St Petrock’s, Howell Road and Julian House – providing water, sun cream, appropriate clothing and shelter.

It is also crucial to acknowledge that many people will ‘pop in’ for a hot drink and a quick check in and we often find it’s just a brief interaction where they can be acknowledged, have the opportunity tell someone if they are feeling low or have achieved something and get a positive response. This is part of the role of a ‘trusted space’ or connecting institution. It is challenging to quantify this element of our ‘service’ but it is a crucial building block in helping to build personal resilience and social capital for individuals and for communities.

We have seen an increase in visitor numbers from the homeless and vulnerably housed community as a result of the changes to the operating practices of St Petrock’s, the ECC and Citizens Advice. Almost every day the Welcome Team support people from the vulnerably housed community with calling or receiving calls from ECC Housing team and completion of hubs and consent forms.

The nature of the need of visitors varies and a report produced later this year will capture examples. Here are two examples.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 06/09/22 two people were sent to CoLab by ECC housing officers to await taxis to temporary accommodation, one person doing a homeless application on our phone and 2 people sent in to sign consent forms for us to scan through to officers working at home. While the visitors were waiting they received hospitality and support from the Welcome team.• ZW was directed to us by another visitor, he was clearly very unwell and required medical attention. Further investigation revealed he was locked out of his home and had significant rent arrears as his benefits were not set up properly. The Welcome Team followed this up with a safeguarding referral in regard to his mental health, contacted his GP and linked agencies together to get him access to his property and his benefits in place. He was also supported to get to the GP and to get funding for some furniture and a bed. <p>On October 6th we will be holding an event to share insights from the work of the Welcome team, recognising that the cost-of-living crisis and housing crisis will inevitably see more people accessing services, we are keen to work more closely with stakeholders from across sectors to understand how we continue to meet the need of the most vulnerable in our communities. How can we share ideas, access resources and funding and develop existing partnership working?</p> <p>For more information contact Laura Greenhill – laura.greenhill@colabexeter.org.uk</p>
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