

## **Appendix A3:**

### **Change the model of meanwhile sites to one leading out of homelessness.**

#### **Changing the model of meanwhile sites**

##### **Background**

In the first Coronavirus Lockdown at the end of March 2020, the Government set out a requirement that all homeless people should be brought in from the streets into hotels, hostels, and other temporary accommodation, to allow them an opportunity for shielding and safe distancing. While this was happening, BCC raised the question of what would happen to the people living in vehicles; two Covid shielding sites were set up for this purpose that provided amenities and allowed safe social distancing.

The Covid sites allowed us to see, for the first time, the numbers of vehicle dwellers in the city, the impacts that living in a vehicle had on them, and the need for some kind of sustained site provision.

##### **Meanwhile sites today**

To date, there have been eight meanwhile sites on BCC land that was unused and waiting for development. At the time of writing, there are five sites still open with 65 pitch spaces available. Sites offer an individual pitch with access to shared fresh water, chemical toilets, and rubbish disposal facilities. The main benefit of the sites are that they are safe, secure and off the kerbside.

##### **What has worked well?**

- Over 220 people have been offered safe accommodation off the kerbside.
- Site residents have had a base from which to: register for GPs and access to further medical services, apply for benefits, gain access into employment, provide their children access into education provision, etc.
- Vulnerable people with support needs have been offered stability.
- People have stated that they feel safe, often for the first time in many years.
- Sites are intended to be self-funding and not pull money from elsewhere in the Council (£31.50 per pitch per week).
- People living in vehicles have been recognised as existing and important.
- “Day to day survival” does not have to be the first thought in people’s minds.
- Sites have attracted next to no complaints from neighbours or the general public.
- Bristol has gained a strong positive national reputation for working with Vehicle Dwellers.

##### **What are the challenges?**

- Sites have become “stagnant”. Once a pitch is filled, there is little site turnover and new places do not become available very often.
- Growing number of vehicle dwellers in the city and increased need.
- Residents have become reliant on-site provision.
- Conflict within the vehicle dwelling community over who has a “right” to be given a pitch.
- Lack of pitch availability to groups.
- Site users running up debt.
- Finding new sites has proved very challenging.

- Issues around planning.
- Negative and inaccurate press reporting has created a confusion over the purpose and function of sites.

### **Recommendations**

1. Change the function of meanwhile sites from:
  - Providing alternative sites for vehicle dwellers away from the kerbside
  - TO:
  - Providing a supportive environment from which individuals can move out of vehicle dwelling into mainstream accommodation.
2. Set up regular support facilities from our partner agencies, available to meanwhile site users to include:
  - Financial advice services
  - Housing support services
  - Legal support
  - Health and social care support services, as needed, such as:
    - Health visitor
    - Chiropody
    - Dentistry referrals
    - AWP mental health support
    - Substance misuse support
    - Domestic violence support services
    - Adult Social Care
    - etc
  - Foodbank and Homebank referrals
  - Signposting towards other services including showers, laundry, animal care, etc.
3. Set a maximum time that people can remain on sites. It is suggested that this be a maximum of eighteen months, structured as follows:
  - Up to 3 months of initial intensive support to enable adjustment from kerbside living.
  - Up to 3 months directed work towards accessing other housing types.
  - Up to 9 months preparation to move.
  - Up to 3 months facilitating resettlement into mainstream accommodation.
4. Maintain an ongoing waiting list for a throughflow of meanwhile site residents.
5. Link in with the Homeless Strategy.
6. Develop links into settled accommodation.