

End Youth
Homelessness Cymru

Ty
Pride

Three Years On



Tŷ Pride - Three Years On

Recently, EYHC spoke to colleagues from Tŷ Pride - Emma Evans, Claire Owens and Alex Thomas - to find out more about the first LGBTQ+ specific supported accommodation project in Wales three years on from its creation.

How was Tŷ Pride developed?

The idea for Tŷ Pride came about because of EYHC'S LGBTQ+ Task and Finish Group, which discussed the needs of homeless LGBTQ+ young people and ways to prevent homelessness and improve services for the said group, on which Claire, and Hannah Rowan (Viva) sat. After the draft report was submitted to the Steering Group, Viva, Denbighshire County Council met, and Llamau were invited to take part in submitting a bid in on behalf of Denbighshire County Council.

Prior to submitting the bid, Claire was in conversations with Viva LGBTQ+ and the management of Children's Services who together recognised the need for LGBTQ+ specific accommodation based on the individual cases the local authority was dealing with at the time.

'We were aware that young people from that community were being bullied by their peers and our Supported Housing and Children's Services were really supportive saying we need a specific project'. The property for Tŷ Pride was previously sat within the homelessness lease portfolio so once Tŷ Pride was successfully awarded with the Innovation Grant, it all came together.

What is Tŷ Pride's biggest success?

One of the biggest successes at Tŷ Pride is that all of the ten young people who have so far accessed support at Tŷ Pride have successfully either gone on to move independently or have gone back to live with their families.

'We are pleased to say that following support at Tŷ Pride, none of the young people have presented back into the Homeless Team. This positive outcome does not always happen in many supported housing projects. If we found there was a concern for a young person and their situation was not working at Tŷ Pride, then we would come, together to find a solution that would ensure that young person would not end up back in temporary accommodation. Going back into temporary accommodation would mean that any work that had been achieved with the young person so far would be reverted to the beginning and potentially cause retraumatization. Therefore, I think Tŷ Pride has made a big achievement. In addition, in particular seeing a young person returning to family is a big achievement. If they have had to leave home because of who they are, then following their work with Tŷ Pride, their parents or their carers become accepting and want that young person back home, that's a better outcome than living on their own because they have built back those relationships and their family have accepted them again'.

Partnership Working

A crucial feature of Tŷ Pride is that it is run as a partnership between Denbighshire County Council, Viva LGBTQ+ and Llamau.

What are the benefits of partnership working?

Partnership working allows each party to bring a different area of expertise to the table. The unique perspective of each organisation enhances critical thinking and enables knowledge sharing. The different partners complement each other and together create synergy.

- Viva LGBTQ+ provides LGBTQ+ specific knowledge and support enhanced by Alex's background in counselling and therapy, which means that Tŷ Pride benefits from a psychologically informed and mental health aware approach.

'If we didn't have Viva, we would just have another young person's project. We have to have the input from the LGBTQ+ community. And Viva have got 25 years of experience with that.'

- Llamau brings the expertise necessary to deliver supported housing and homelessness interventions.

'...But the people that you are getting from the [LGBTQ+] community may not have the background in those other areas that are still going to be important for the provision. Therefore, it is a recognition of the importance of all of those skills sets to be able to actually meet the needs of the people that we want to help.'

- Denbighshire County Council adds the local authority lens and the ability to claim funds draw down from Welsh government and provide accommodation.

What are the challenges to partnership working?

Whilst partnership working can benefit from different expertise and perspectives, it also means that challenges can arise, as each partner organisation will have a different culture, ways of working and priorities.

'We have had to be very open to the fact that we come with organisations that have a history of working differently and looking for different things. A lot of the paperwork and procedures, we have had to step back from our own ways of doing things and collaborate on what we can build as a single entity from our individual heritages'. 'Open communication is crucial to facilitate understanding of how each organisation functions and addressing the differences to enable for effective decision-making'. 'However, the onset of the pandemic meant that communication was negatively affected as partner organisations were not able to meet in person, which made it difficult to build relationships.'

'The sad thing is that we came together as a partnership, only had a few meetings all together and then everything went digital'. I definitely felt like in that period, definitely at the beginning of the pandemic, that many things felt like they got lost in communication. Discussions did not feel quite right because they were on Teams and you do not get to feel the room properly as well. If we had been more easily able to sit around a table to talk through the journey from referral to move on, planning the fine details of recording and invention would have been much smoother'.

Organisations considering partnership working should therefore ensure that adequate time is set aside to build relationships between different partners, facilitate open communication and reflect on the process of partnership working.

Young People

Value to the Young People

The project is of huge value to the young people as it provides a safe and inclusive space that understands their specific needs

'It is so important to have safe and inclusive space. Moreover, I think you cannot put a price on that, you really cannot, and for the young people to be able to express themselves. I think that is what we have seen with all of the young people that have come in it avoids young people being put in dangerous situations in temporary accommodation'.

'If we did not have Tŷ Pride, there would be no other alternative offer than temporary emergency accommodation. This could potentially cause the young people to think it's better to stay where they are, where there are perhaps other things going on that are still negative and cause trauma, but they feel it's the better option that being in emergency accommodation. I think the temporary accommodation in Denbighshire is the same across Wales. It is not good enough anywhere and I think it is not always a place where the LGBTQ+ community can feel safe'.

Positive Pathway

'One young person we have supported recently moved on to university in September. They had the time to be able to get support in a safe environment and actually just say, this is my plan. And is that it is a reparative experience in that they have had somewhere safe to be, to build themselves up, get to a place where they are able to go out on their own. This young person that came to us having just dropped out of college because of the assessment process. Now they have gone to university and are feeling confident about it. To be able to make those plans, see it through, find out things they did not know how to do and get through any obstacles - it has been a privilege to be on that journey with them'.

Key Features of Tŷ Pride

Therapeutic element of Tŷ Pride

What is also unique about Tŷ Pride as a supported accommodation project is its therapeutic element. Thanks to Alex's background in counselling and psychotherapy, the young people at Tŷ Pride can benefit from an immediate offer of mental health support. Furthermore, Alex also delivers clinical supervision to staff, talking training and reflective practice sessions, which ensures that the project works in a psychologically informed way, which is designed to be reparative alongside being an LGBTQ+ informed environment.

Community building and outreach

As part of Tŷ Pride, Alex and Viva LGBTQ+ have been carrying out outreach work to educate the local community on LGBTQ+ specific issues. This included training offered to local authorities, providers, homelessness and housing officers and other partners in North Wales. The training looked specifically at LGBTQ+ awareness and thinking about the experiences that LGBTQ+ young people would be bringing with them into getting support. The aim of the outreach work is to try to change the face of the support accessed across North Wales so that any LGBTQ+ young person can access support that meets their specific needs and have their experiences and additional difficulties understood by giving practitioners the confidence and competence to be able to ask the right questions and feel comfortable in their ability to do so. This also means that the impact of Tŷ Pride's work extends beyond the young people directly supported by the project.

So by having informed professionals across the sector, it is going to hopefully slowly reduce the need for specialist provisions. It also means that when young people from specialist provisions do engage with wider services we have the confidence that the people there have the knowledge to understand and work sensitively around the experiences of LGBTQ+ young people experiencing homelessness.

Part of Viva's outreach work also involves working with the LGBTQ+ young people in the community which places them in the position to do preventative work and capture LGBTQ+ young people before or at the very early stages of their homelessness journey and work with their families to stop them becoming homeless and traumatised in the first place.

'It is about getting ahead of the real difficulty and stopping them being traumatized in the first place to need a reparative experience. Prevention is better than cure, but let us have a good cure while we need it as well.'

Advice for Local Authorities

'When we started, we knew we would have the young people for the project; however, we did not actually have the statistics to back it up at this point. I think this could be something that other local authorities now worry about and whether they have the need or not.'

The key point that has been emphasised throughout the interview is for local authorities to start collecting data on sexual and gender identity. Tŷ Pride has had close to 60 referrals and enquiries for their three spaces so the need is clearly there, however, understandably local authorities might feel hesitant if they do not know the level of need for the projects.

Collecting data can:

- Support equalities information
- Help to identify need and support services
- Shows which services need to be developed and hence inform commissioning

As an initial step, local authorities can work with their supported accommodation providers to identify LGBTQ+ youth. Staff working in the supported housing projects will have good relationships with the young people and will be able to identify how many of them are part of the LGBTQ+ community. Furthermore, local authorities should speak with their Children's Services to identify whether they can further provide an insight into the level of need for LGBTQ+ services.

Staff confidence and knowledge can pose a barrier to collecting data. To improve their data collection, Denbighshire County Council commissioned training from their local organisation Viva LGBTQ+ which empowered them to ask the right questions.

The staff have had training with Viva to give them the confidence to ask the questions to identify those young people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. This was an area where staff were having an obstacle, and that training has helped. We have gone into assessments following the training, Local authorities should therefore connect with their local LGBTQ+ organisations who can provide training for staff...

'There needs to be an educational program to support staff to give them that confidence. By offering that support to staff, we are enhancing the support to the young people at the same time.'

...As well as specialist support to young people

'It is useful to identify where there is support from an organisation such as Viva, or something that is local to them to ensure they can have specialist support. Local authorities should also consider positive discrimination when recruiting for staff working in housing and with young people. It is important that there is a workforce that reflects the community.'

Furthermore, to start a project such a Tŷ Pride, local authorities should find a Registered Social Landlord:

'Finding a Registered Social Landlord or some type of community housing is beneficial and can provide stability for the project. Whereas, the private rented sector is not quite as stable.'

Finally...

'Go for it! If there is anyone out there that is wondering or has concerns, please get in touch with this. We want to help people across Wales or England to be able to set up a project that suits the needs of their young people. We are happy to share where our 60 referrals have come from, our paperwork or anything that would be beneficial.'

Alex Thomas

Lead Youth Worker / Viva LGBTQ+
Alex@vivalgbt.co.uk

Emma Evans

Assistant Head of Service Delivery
and Quality Assurance for Young People / Llamau
EmmaEvans@llamau.org.uk

Shannon Richardson

Programme Lead / Denbighshire County Council
Shannon.Richardson@denbighshire.gov.uk

