

The Castle Hotel

Currently we have 36 singles in accommodation in the Castle Hotel. The table below shows a breakdown of age groups, sex etc.

Sex	Number	Age group female	Number	Age group males	Number
Male	34			16-19	0
Females	2	20- 24 yrs.	2	20 – 23yrs	4
				24- 40	17
				40 +	13

Reason for Homeless

Reason for Homeless	Number
Prison leavers	6
Hospital discharge	1
Domestic Violence	4
Eviction by family/friends	8
Relationship breakdown partner	4
Sofa Surfing	8
Rough Sleeping	4
Licence agreement end	1

Length of Accommodation

Length of time in B+B	Number
0 – 3 months	13
3 – 6 months	6
6 months -1 year	16
1 year plus	1

Cost of Accommodation/Security

Costs	Number Rooms	Monthly cost (based on 31days)	Funded From
£49.00 – double on suite	31	£47,089	Hardship Fund
£69 – deluxe suite	1	£2,139	Hardship Fund
£70 - - family	4	£8,680	Hardship Fund
Security	n/a	£8,143	Hardship Fund
Cornerstone	n/a	£6,269	HSG
TOTAL		£72,320	

- Costs are per room per night

Projected costs Oct 21 - March 22	Estimated (£)
£49.00 x 31 rooms x 182 nights	276,458
£69 x 1 room x 182 nights	12,558
£70 x 4 rooms x 182 nights	50,960
Security costs x 182 nights	47,807
Cornerstone x 182 nights	36,806
TOTAL COSTS	£424,589 (currently funded via hardship fund)

Support at the Castle Hotel

The Castle Hotel is situated in the heart of Merthyr town, next to the central bus station with direct access to shops, pubs and other facilities. With this in mind and the negative stereotypes surrounding homeless clients, we have taken positive steps to reduce the impact our clients have in the town centre by ensuring the necessary security and support is in place for all our clients in this type of accommodation.

Through our HSG programme, when the Covid pandemic hit and homeless legislation changed to remove priority need, services that already existed within Pobl, were reconfigured to meet the needs of the clients and demand for services. This is not a long term project and with Covid restrictions lifting, one of the Pobl workers will revert back to their role as substance misuse floating support worker, working with people in their own tenancies.

Two staff from Pobl, one of whose original role was assertive outreach in style, would provide support to our clients directly at the Castle hotel. They were given a support room, where clients can drop in and see them to discuss concerns, complete paperwork etc. This support is available Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm. With the success of this project in the Castle Hotel, drop in sessions are now being done throughout all our bed and breakfast facilities on a timetable basis.

Cornerstone are also commissioned to provide support in the evenings up to 11pm and additional security is in place throughout the night. Through the Covid hardship fund we currently employ a specialist security company that works 6pm – 7am Mon – Fri and 24 hours on the weekend. **This is at a cost of £1532.28 plus VAT per week. £1838.73 inc VAT.** To build in resilience, our Assertive Outreach Worker who is at present covering temporary accommodation, has built up a good rapport with both clients and establishment owners to address any behavioural issues going forward. This is to ensure clients are complying with rules of the hotel and following guidelines around Covid issued by Public Health Wales.

To date we have had no major incidents with our clients at the Castle Hotel, and any major incidents that have been reported to us have involved paying guests with no connection to our service or our clients.

Each client when they first enter the Castle Hotel are advised by case officer of the support on offer from both Pobl and Cornerstone. Each provider makes an effort to introduce themselves to all clients and provide the support room number. All clients are supported by support workers to complete housing benefit applications at point of entry.

Most clients in the Castle Hotel have low/ medium support needs and where the need for additional support is identified we ensure that this is utilised through the HSG gateway and the drop in services that we have at this establishment are able to pick up any footfall.

The owner of the Castle Hotel is very supportive of the team and our service area, and he has been pleased with how we have responded to our clients and their needs during the pandemic.

MTCBC assertive outreach worker over the past year has taken a lead role in managing temporary accommodation, placements and relationships with landlords. This has proved to be a worthwhile investment as we have gained the trust of these landlords, evidencing that we will address any issues that may arise regardless of how small or large.

Our temporary accommodation officer has daily contact with all landlords, where overnight concerns are discussed any issues arising, ensuring all clients have stayed and were in by curfew etc. The temporary accommodation team also have a presence in all our bed and breakfast facilities on a weekly basis.

For those clients who have alcohol or substance use issues, we have arranged for drop in services from Barod to go around all our Bed and breakfast accommodation and offer the necessary support and outreach.

With the dedication of our temporary accommodation team and external support providers our clients feel supported and are working towards living independently in their own accommodation.

All support services that operate out of the Castle Hotel and our other establishments are funded through the Local Authorities Housing Support grant (HSG). Below is the current break down of funding:

Name of provider	Grant Award 2021 – 2022
Cornerstone B+B covid 19 support	£73,814.47
Pobl – Street smart	£36,907.23
Pobl – substance misuse floating support (redeployed to B&B during Covid)	£36,907.23

Alternative accommodation options.

At present we are full to capacity in all B+B accommodation, Hostel and HMO. When a void presents its self in Hostel, HMO etc. we work to identify the person who needs support and would fit well within that specific scheme.

Alternative move on from the common housing register for single applicants is very challenging. At present we have no single units of accommodation coming through to move people on. We work well with our RSL partners and are nominating 100%

into all available voids. I will continue to do this based on length of time in accommodation and readiness to move on.

Private rental accommodation for single applicants within Merthyr still remains unattainable for most. With MTCBC having one of the lowest LHA rates in Wales, this type of property is often unaffordable. Most of our clients have multiple complex needs and finding a guarantor is almost impossible. If a guarantor can be found Landlords are asking so much in rent and Bond that it remains unaffordable. Where rent is affordable, we are able to provide financial assistance for a cash bond via our bond scheme operated by The Wallich in certain circumstances or alternatively through our Homelessness Prevention Grant for one off payments.

If we were to stop using the Castle Hotel, we would be unable to absorb the clients into our existing stock of temporary accommodation for as already mentioned, we are full to capacity with very little move on. There is not enough supported housing in the borough for the complexity of need. Lack of single person accommodation means that we have a large waiting list for social housing and Housing First model of support.

All clients in the Castle Hotel have low / medium support needs at this point in time. I have assessed this based on how they are presenting now, engagement levels with services etc. However, moving these clients on is not an easy task as some of the clients have had quite turbulent pasts experiencing multiple ACE's, with evictions from RSL accommodation, past incidents of ASB, criminal offending history and past high level of substance misuse put them in complex need category for re housing.

The table below outlines the projected housing need based on clients we currently accommodate in the Castle Hotel and what type of move on accommodation they will require.

Type of accommodation needed	Number of units
Own accommodation without support	11
Own accommodation with support	8
HMO	9
Hostel	7
Housing 1st/ higher complex supported housing	1

Phase 2 funding / Exit Strategy

Through the WG Covid 19 phase 2 funding and partnership working with local RSL and developers, we will have **9 single units** of move on accommodation that will be available between July and end of October 2021:

- 7 x MMC Modular units with Merthyr Valley Homes – 2 units in Glasier Road, Twynyrodyn and 5 units at Honeysuckle Close, Gurnos.
- 2 x 1 bed flats at Trevithick Street – in partnership with a private sector landlord.
- Also in partnership with D2PropCo we are in the process of identifying a third 4 – 5 bed HMO for use as temporary accommodation for those with no or very low level support needs. We have identified a potential property and are waiting for feedback from landlord and his surveyor if this is a viable option, and we will update when we have the feedback.

- VAWDASV Capital funding received to refurbish 2 x RSL properties for use as dispersed refuge accommodation for those unable to access traditional refuge models.
- Up to 3-5 units of supported accommodation to be made available working in partnership with MTHA for those with multiple complex needs. Awaiting suitable property/land to be identified. Anticipated start date now Spring 2022.
- We have commissioned a Private Rented Sector Officer to start to develop partnership working with private landlords in the area in the hope of being able to discharge more homeless duties into the PRS. Work is ongoing, and we are working with Blaenau Gwent Council to restart a Landlord Forum across both LA's to support this work. A Landlord Consultation Survey has also been distributed via social media at the end of June targeting private landlords in the area to ask their views on private rented housing and how the LA can support them in this function.