

BRISTOL CHURCHES WINTER NIGHT SHELTER PROPOSAL

1. Introduction

Homelessness in Bristol is a well-known challenge that is catalysing the efforts of a wide range of parties to seek rapid and sustainable solutions. A range of formal and informal partnerships are currently engaged in the issue.

Rough sleeping is just one dimension of homelessness which has caught everyone's attention. Significant progress has been made in this area since winter 2015/16 with 78¹ shelter beds now available but there is scope to increase shelter capacity for the winter months of 2016/17.

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the concept of a Church based and led winter shelter programme that would provide beds, for 18 people on 7 nights each week, and to seek engagement from the church community to be involved in running, hosting and supporting the shelter. Based upon the level and nature of the engagement offered by the Church across the city, a formal offer will be made via both the Rough Sleeping Partnership Group and the City Office² to pursue this initiative.

2. The Need

Published figures from autumn 2015 gave a validated estimate of 97 rough sleepers in Bristol at that time. Recent 'hot spot' counts by the St Mungo's Outreach teams have shown that, whilst there are peaks and troughs each week, the trend is of increasing numbers of rough sleepers. A range of actions are being pursued and it is recognised that the provision of temporary shelter represents one of the best opportunities for professionals to engage with rough sleepers to support them in their journey off the streets. The Rough Sleeping Partnership Group have already identified the need and usefulness of this project. It presents an opportunity to compliment other provision within Bristol's homelessness pathway model.

3. Why The Church

The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:40

It is clear that God requires us to engage with the needs of others: we see this in the Old Testament, where God says to the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah that unless they share their food with the hungry and provide shelter for the 'poor wanderer', that they will not know the joy or presence of the Lord. It is emphasised further in the New Testament, where Jesus says that separation from God's presence, as a shepherd separates sheep from goats, is dependent on how we treat those who have suffered misfortune.

It is not just this general principle that should motivate us as the church of God in Bristol to tackle our city's growing problem of involuntary rough sleeping. He is calling us as individual Christians and churches to respond to this issue. What is more, we have what is needed to do so; financial resources, buildings that are

¹ Source: Rough Sleeping Partnership Group, Aug '16. The Rough Sleeping Partnership Group supports the work of BCC's Homelessness Prevention Board.

² The City Office is a forum established by the Mayor to create new connections that make things happen and drive positive change in Bristol.

available for much of the week and church members with hearts for those whose lives are broken. Many church members have experience of working with vulnerable adults through volunteering at the Wild Goose Drop-in, Spring of Hope Women’s Night Shelter, the Soup Run, One25 and other projects.

We have been presented with a great opportunity for our churches to work together across geographic, ethnic and denominational backgrounds, to demonstrate to our city not just our unity in the Gospel, but our desire to work with and serve our City Council as we bring something of God’s kingdom values and His heart of love into the life of our great city. Involvement with the poor and marginalised will bless our congregations as much as it will bless Bristol’s rough sleepers.

4. Proposed Model for a Church Based Winter Shelter

The proposal is to adopt a model for church based shelters developed by **Housing Justice**³ and endorsed by the **Cinnamon Network**⁴. The concept being that a group of churches come together under a project coordinator to set up and run a shelter programme. There is a range of ways in which churches can engage and participate in the project:

Option	Description	Examples	Commitments	Frequency for each Church	Resource Commitment	Comments
A	Churches offer to host the shelter in their building.	St Mungo’s currently using the Quaker Meeting House (since Dec15).	Availability of building facilities.	One night each week? One week a month?	Primary contact person. Utility costs. Building wear and tear.	Building ‘use’ will need to be formalised in some way.
B	Churches offer to run the shelter in <u>their building</u> .	Reading Churches Night Shelter ⁵ . Housing Justice Night Shelters. (see footnotes)	Available space & facilities. Team of volunteers. Food in evening and morning (TBD).	One night each week.	Primary contact person. Utility costs. Building wear and tear. Volunteer team to cover range of tasks.	Building ‘use’ will need to be formalised in some way. Volunteer team will be trained.
C	Churches offer to run the shelter in <u>someone else’s building</u> .	St Mungo’s currently using Quaker Meeting House (since Dec15).	Team of volunteers. Food in evening and morning (TBD).	One night each week.	Primary contact person. Volunteer team to cover range of tasks.	Volunteer team will be trained.

³ <http://www.housingjustice.org.uk/pages/shelters.html>

⁴ <http://www.cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/project/night-shelter/>

⁵ <http://www.fcg.org.uk/abedforthenight/main.htm>

Considerations:

- i. Building needs (minimum requirements): space for 18 camp beds in one hall (or perhaps two separate areas e.g. male/female); toilets and washing facilities; kitchen; separate secure area for volunteers/staff; safe outside smoking area.
- ii. In addition to the above, an ideal facility would have: a meeting room (for key working); shower(s); clothes washing facilities; clothes drying facilities; car parking.
- iii. Distance of shelter(s) from central Bristol: A walking distance of approximately ½ mile from the Bear Pit Roundabout in Stoke Croft as an initial guide.

Wider Church Response:

It would not be unreasonable to surmise that churches with access to the sort of funds that are needed to launch and sustain this project are not those that are geographically suited to hosting the shelter. This project provides an opportunity for a wide range of churches to partner together by offering what they are able to.

The needs include:

- i. Financial contributions,
- ii. Volunteers for welcoming and hosting teams, for overnight supervision, for supper and breakfast teams, for logistics teams etc.
- iii. Prayer teams.

5. Shelter User Gate Keeping

The proposed winter shelter project assumes that the guests have been *needs assessed* and are being supported by the St Mungo's Outreach Team on behalf of Bristol City Council. St Mungo's will, therefore, gate keep the list of shelter users throughout the project. A link person from St Mungo's would liaise with the Winter Shelter Project Coordinator (see details in Project Governance below) who would, in turn, liaise with the volunteer team leader each night.

It is important to note that whilst a 'local connection' requirement is part of the criteria under which St Mungo's work, flexibility can be applied based on individual circumstances. The intent would be to have an agreed 'move-on' target and plan for all guests i.e. a plan to move into suitable accommodation. Typically a 28 day target is used.

6. Project Duration

- Year 1 – one month shelter pilot in January 2017 timed to follow on from the Caring at Christmas provision.
 - Planning Phase – from now until end of December 2016.
 - Pilot Phase – January 2017
 - Review Phase – completed by 28th February 2017
- Year 2 – three month shelter (timing and scale to be decided based on the experience from Year 1)

7. Project Governance

A Winter Shelter Project Coordinator would be appointed on a short term part-time contract (self-employed but engaged by Crisis Centre Ministries) for the purposes of the pilot in year 1. The same or similar role will be required in year 2 with the duration determined as part of the Year 1 review.

A Project Delivery Group, comprising of the primary contact person from each participating church and led by the Project Coordinator, would be formed. It would be linked to the Rough Sleeping Partnership Group via Crisis Centre Ministries who are participants in that group.

Financial governance would be through a restricted fund managed by, and reported through, Crisis Centre Ministries. This enables gift aid to be collected on eligible donations and added to the fund.

8. Draft Expenditure Budget

Year 1 - £13,500 (est.) to cover Project Coordinator salary, purchase of camp beds/mattresses and bedding, and van usage for the duration of the shelter opening.
Year 2 - £22,000 (est.) as above but without camp bed purchase.

This proposal has been drafted by the following:

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