

Single Service Offer for Bristol's homeless people

“Bristol as a city believes that no one should have to live on the streets. For that to be the case every homeless person living on the streets will be assessed and offered a route away from the streets that should work for them. This offer will be known as the single service offer and will be supported by all public and commissioned services that individual will engage with.

In every case this offer will be realistic and achievable but may not always meet the expectations or demands of the individual concerned. Voluntary sector agencies will need to understand how they will respond to the single service offer in order to help people off the streets.”

[Source Hywel Caddy, BCC; guest speaker]

Bristol Homeless Forum met on Thursday 20 October to share our views on the Single Service offer.

The topic was introduced by Hywel Caddy (BCC) & David Ingerslev (St Mungos) who illustrated the problems we are facing in Bristol (unprecedented numbers of rough sleepers in addition to over 1100 people supported in accommodation and the constraints of central government policy and funding) and explained what is meant by a Single Service Offer giving some real life examples of the efforts made to engage with and help people into housing.

We broke into discussion groups to discuss 4 key questions:-

[The text in quotes is a direct transcription of the comments written up at the meeting]

A. How could confidence and trust be built in single service offers being realistic and achievable in every case?

- *Depends on how much the council are prepared to poke their nose in*
- *JB confident in processes used by Outreach Team*
- *Linear service danger that people fall off it*
- *Needs to cover any risk, particularly if shared accommodation – facilitated shared sessions about how to work through that*
- *Info on evicting people needs to be passed on as well*
- *Potentially used between other LA's Outreach Team*
- *Need to feel ownership of it*
- *Risk – need to know – keeping staff, volunteers & service users safe*
- *Question is about behaviours – listening between services – need to understand the assessment process – understand game & rules but outreach need to understand how people work together*
- *SSO is outcome – need to understand the approach (caring & compassion) rather than just the goal – real examples*

- *Confidence to be able to share information that could have an impact or change the SSO*
- *Partner agencies need confidence in the plan, if they disagree should be shared between agencies rather than to the client*
- *Safe environment to be honest with each other, assisted by mutual respect and integrity*
- *Risk – need to know basis*
- *Understanding & Trusting the assessment process*

B. What should Bristol's approach be – as a city – if people don't want or accept a realistic and achievable offer?

- *Keep Trying ! There should not be a point where we give up on anyone*
- *Consistent message – so no-one is misleading them about what is available*
- *Tough Love – where is the line? Should we still protect their basic safety? Balance with “accepting consequences”.*
- *“Safe environment” – encourage standards of behaviour that will not see people excluded from options of last resort.*
- *More support & mentoring while trying new arrangements – to stop people “bouncing back”. Barrier to future attempts.*
- *Explore why – what don't we understand about their refusal to accept?*
- *Alternative sources of assessment if first relationship doesn't work*
- *Less formal, optional life skills training to prepare people for changes which frighten them – easier introduction. Charitable sector could pick this up.*
- *Avoid setting people up to fail – where the “plan” is too much to face*
- *Education/joined up message – explain how the plan is achievable – help with transport, furniture, debt advice etc.*
- *Relationships – if a relationship is working well – don't pass the person on to someone else*
- *Incentives for accepting/persevering?*

C. How can we all use every possible opportunity to encourage people to be realistic about options and take action to deal with their issues?

- *Education. Many vols have no understanding of homelessness*
 - *Induction & training, standardised resources*
 - *Publicity, PR, social media. Provide access to information & training*
- *Information for interested people – inform us about rough sleeping numbers, how many reconnected this month*
- *Who is doing what? Groups, scope, governance, who sets priorities, who reports to who?*
- *Mapping services & organisations, who is connected to who?*
- *Interactive version of Homeless Handbook [[?Survival Handbook?](#)]*

- *Confidentiality – we can't encourage people if we don't know what they are supposed to do. Nagging can be appropriate at times.*
- *The individual has to have options and buy into the solution. They have to be engaged and take ownership*
- *Statistics about the dangers of tents etc.*
- *Meet people half way – see things from their point of view*
- *Outcome star tool*
When people don't want what is available to them ...
"I accept that your desire (nice garden ..) is valid – but this is the best way for you to get/move towards it"
- *Adverts in the bus stops – are you homeless? This is what you can do*
- *Build relationships and trust so you can talk honestly with them long term*
- *Know what we want to achieve, be flexible about the best way to achieve it with each person*

D. What should Bristol's message be – as a city – for people who have a local connection to somewhere other than Bristol?

- *We care for you and want to help you*
- *We will help you find practical routes to a home*
- *We want you to be safe, even if that means it's safer somewhere other than Bristol*
- *You won't get a local connection by sleeping rough for 6 months – and we wouldn't want you to sleep rough for months, it's not safe*
- *If Bristol is the only safe place for you, you'll need to help us understand why.*
- *You just need to get on your feet where help is available – you can always come back under your own steam if that place isn't Bristol*
- *Local authorities are big – more than one centre*
- *Stop using the term "No Local Connection to Bristol" even between ourselves → either "Local connection to X(or Y, or Z)" or "no Local Connection anywhere" or "we're still working out what his/her Local Connection might be"*

After a summary from each discussion group David discussed next steps which would include bringing this subject back to the forum later

[more detailed notes on this are awaited]

The meeting was attended by

Jonnie	Angel	Crisis Centre Ministries
Hywel	Caddy	BCC
David	Ingerslev	St Mungos
Julia		The Big Issue
Martha	Luke	The Big Issue
Richard	Drake	The Julian Trust
Paul	Hazelden	Christian Action Bristol
Phil	Hibberd	Wick House
Steve	Jones	The Soup Run Trust
Lindsey	Jones	Caring in Bristol
Valerie	Moore	Christ Church, Clifton
Terry	Nichols	Wick House
Dave	Perry	Emmaus Bristol
Ed	Reed	Caring in Bristol
Ben	Richardson	Caring in Bristol
Amy	Sutcliffe	One25
Val	Thompson	Crisis Centre Ministries
Penny	Walster	Shelter
Sally	Zamparelli	Wick House
Mike	Zamparelli	Wick House