

Online homelessness information hub for Bristol

23rd March 2017

Ben Richardson – Caring in Bristol

Summary

Using a model similar to [Street Support](#) in Leeds and Manchester, there is a need for a new website containing all information pertaining to homelessness in Bristol. The site would be a central resource both for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness, agencies working with them, and people that wanted to volunteer, or had ideas about how to help.

It would be preferable to get something in place in time for Autumn 2017, when there is a significant increase in interest and enquires around homelessness.

What's already in place/in development?

- [Bristol City Council Homeless Page](#) – Predominantly aimed at people at risk of homelessness or homeless;
- [Bristol City Council Homelessness Commissioning Page](#) – Funding of homelessness prevention and support;
- Survival Handbook** – Currently produced by Caring in Bristol, once a year, this includes information on services available to homeless people in central Bristol, along with the Treatment Directory for recovery orientated alcohol and drugs services. We are investigating a potential new partnership with a local social enterprise [Arkbound](#) to produce a bi annual printed magazine with much higher distribution and a sustainable business model – funded from variety of different sources. As part of this partnership, Caring in Bristol will retain the research database component.
- [City Office](#) – Mayor of Bristol's initiative
- [Golden Key](#) – Citywide partnership to change the way services respond to people with complex needs
- [Safer off the Streets](#) – Crowdfunding partnership between St Mungo's, Caring in Bristol, Crisis Centre Ministries and Julian Trust, to fund shelter provision in the city. Will continue until reaches £100,000 target – but also holds some important messages about shelter programme in city. Will link to contactless payment hubs in city.
- [Bristol Homeless Forum](#) – formerly Bristol Christian Action Network, encourages cooperation and collaboration between diverse organisations and groups across Bristol working on Homelessness. Coordinates Homeless Awareness Week and annual Sleepout fundraising event.
- [BDP](#) – Contains advice and information on recovery orientated drug and alcohol services.
- Information Sharing Screen** – A partnership with Keep Bristol Warm and BT, not sure at what stage of development this is at

What's needed?

Need Help (Rough Sleepers') section:

- A better organised version of the Survival Handbook, providing basic information on where to sleep, food, washing, charging phone, health, etc.
- An interactive map of venues/places of interest

I want to help (Concerned public) section:

- Find out what is already happening in the city and what the key needs are
- A form where people can pledge what they are offering?
- A list of concrete asks around volunteering needs
- A list of concrete other asks e.g. business help needed or people skills needed or expertise in specific areas
- A link to how to donate funds to specific organisations or Safer off the Streets

Current resources available

- Caring in Bristol is happy to be the lead partner in developing and hosting a new online resource (with City Office/BHF?). We hope via the new partnership for Survival Handbook we will achieve a funded research database of local homelessness services which will lend to this purpose. The proposal directly links to Key Actions in our Delivery Plan FY18.
- Existing materials developed such as Myth Busting Handouts, the Bristol Street Aware campaign, and the Safer off the Streets Campaign could all be hosted.
- Caring in Bristol is also proposing to start offering a regular drop in for local people with ideas about how they want to help – to act as a mini ideas incubator and try better align giving with need and avoid excessive duplication.

Resources needed

- Technical support** – designing, developing and hosting website. Single database? Comment from David Ingerslev - *One of the conversations that happened recently is that there are various people already maintaining and updating bits of info, if they could continue in a joined-up form using a single database then that could be used as the source for multiple websites and documents (via a technology solution). Could be a way of sensibly sharing resources or dividing up responsibility for curating sub-sections.*
- Human resource** - Caring in Bristol would be happy to take on the human resource implications of managing the concerned public section, but would need to seek funding to support this. We would imagine the time implications would be fairly minimal – approximately half a day a week over the course of a working week, which would have an approximate annual cost implication of £2,500 - £3,000 per annum.
- Governance** – Comment from David Ingerslev - *The process/system would need some sort of coordinating, possibly via steering group or multi-agency review, ideally a funded role (but not clear on the funding!) -- but could be a way of sensibly sharing resources or dividing up responsibility for curating sub-sections.*

Funding options

- Caring in Bristol has had initial conversations with the Transform Foundation about their £18,000 grants for web development. They have indicated potential to take this idea forward, however should we successful, it would necessitate an annual unfunded cost of £5,000 for support and development. Caring in Bristol would have source funds to cover this cost.
- Caring in Bristol will also follow up with Richard Collins, CEO of Signal Networks, who've been very supportive of our work in the past.
- Richard Chilvers from the City Office has indicated that they may be some willingness via the City Office partners to locate a local technology company and make an ask – either for the project to be taken forward and developed locally, or for ongoing project funding to support an initial grant from the Transform Foundation.
- Jo Lenny from St Mungo's has suggested an approach to a local IT company Worthers – BR to follow up.
- More suggestions needed!

Action plan/Timeframe

- Partners to agree that this is a useful way forward – ASAP
- Partners to pool funding ideas/suggestions for potential leads – ASAP
- Partners to design basic architecture of site, including feedback from potential users - May/June 2017
- Funding/support in place – May/June 2017
- Development of online resource – June – August 2017
- Launch of new resource – September 2017