



Bury Drop In – Annual Report 2020/21

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Trustees (as at July 2021)

Rev Robert Green (Chairman)
Mr David Frank Bonnett
Mrs Diane Ruddock (Secretary)
Mr Nigel Johnson (Treasurer)
Mrs Jacqueline Burnett
Mrs Anthea Marshall,
Mr Richard Minns
Mr Michael Ryall

Charitable Object:

The objects of the CIO are:

To advance the Christian faith for the benefit of the public in Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk and surrounding districts and in other parts of the United Kingdom or the world as the trustees may from time to time think fit, particularly, but not exclusively by means of providing a warm, safe and welcoming haven where hot meals and drinks are served and where a variety of agencies and individuals can be on hand to offer befriending plus advice on housing, debt and benefits or help with problems including drug and alcohol issues and to fulfil such other purposes which are exclusively charitable work of the charity.

Organisational Structure and Decision- making process

The management team, chaired by the Chairman has oversight of the organisation. Acting as CEO he also has operational management of the day-to day activities of the Bury Drop In. A permanent, part time, charity co-ordinator oversees the behind the scenes running of the BDI charity

Each Trustee or manager has responsibility for an aspect of the organisation (eg Catering, safeguarding, training, funding, human resources etc) and works with a team of volunteers to achieve the charitable object of the Bury Drop In

Objectives

Bury Drop In has been open since September 2015, with sessions taking place on Tuesday's and Fridays from 11am – 2pm. Up until 'lockdown' the numbers continued to increase with new guests registering at each session. Although we are saddened by the continuing need for the services we offer, it is good to see actual evidence of some of our core principles in action!

We began the work, proclaiming ourselves as 'A signposting service' a place where those in need, mainly the homeless, could be directed to find the help and resources they needed. The guests registered on arrival and were welcomed. They help themselves to a hot or cold drink and pastries and cakes. Volunteers were available to talk through any issues they may have or to direct them to one of the agencies attending the session who may be able to help.

Over the years we have partnered with many organisations to realise and achieve this objective.

Today we have different agencies and organisations attending the Drop In sessions, but the core aim is still being fulfilled and achieved.

We have seen some of the long term homeless finally, and after much heartache, be offered their own space. We have facilitated the basic items they need to furnish their new home through generous donations from our supporters and through monies raised by the Looking for Change initiative.

The Drop In continues to seek and receive funding in terms of financial support from community and church based organisations. Although a Christian organisation we receive active support from other faith groups and individuals. We receive active support from Local Government and local businesses. In addition to financial support many of the local businesses actively support us with gifts of food and produce which contributes in a large measure to enable us to keep our costs low.

As a Christian organisation we give thanks to God for the work that has been ongoing through the pandemic and trust Him for the future

Activities

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic we had to close the doors in March 2020. However, we formulated the idea of texting our guests regularly to keep in contact. Our Charity Coordinator found a virtual platform service called TextMagic which enables users to keep in touch with our guests by sending texts and calling them over the internet from a dedicated virtual number. There are a team of volunteers who man this. TextMagic has been well received by all.

During this time the West Suffolk rough sleeper team made strong efforts to provide emergency homes during the pandemic; Portacabins were installed on council owned land in July, the cabins include a shower room and toilet. Bury Drop In provides essential items, and we deliver hot food twice a week.

We were also able to keep in touch with volunteers during this time by holding a weekly Zoom coffee mornings

Vision and Strategy

It was decided to take the opportunity to refine the vision and strategy of the BDI during the enforced closure due to 'lockdown'.

Discussion about the direction BDI would develop post-pandemic was responding to the challenge of the 'success' of the drop in in terms of numbers. With 60+ guests attending typical sessions, it was difficult to address some of the complex needs of homelessness.

Important work was undertaken by a sub-committee which has led to a decision to distinguish the Tuesday session for people who are homeless or vulnerably housed and the Friday session aimed at supporting guests once they are housed, but will benefit from ongoing support.

In order to start implementing the new vision/strategy and resume sessions, a great deal of work needed to be done. The registration process was re-vamped with a bespoke GDPR compliant computer programme.

The BDI is due to open again in early October

Achievements and Performance

All volunteers have been contacted and about 40 are planning to return when BDI is able to reopen. Training in positive communication will be delivered by Realised Futures. Guests will be contacted during September and invited to re-register and work out which of the sessions would best suit their circumstances.

A lot of work has happened behind the scenes re-vamping our documentation, employment policies, the way sessions operate, catering, promotion etc, etc.

We record in some detail the activities of the Drop In in order to capture an assessment of the impact the organisation is having and its value to the local community.

This year has seen many challenges due to the impact of Coronavirus. Sadly during this lockdown period three of our guests have passed away. (It is hoped to hold a memorial service for them when we are allowed to meet again).

Bury Drop In has attracted significant local media interest, and since the beginning of the pandemic has been inundated with enquiries via website, email and social media platforms. Our charity coordinator has been communicating with individuals, local charities and organisations who need or want to help such as guests who require emergency food vouchers, essential items and coordinating the many offers of donations including furniture.

We publish our own newsletter aimed at supporters and other interested parties. Our media profile continues and has certainly contributed to volunteers coming forward and financial support. Regular presence of agencies is a key strength of the Drop In.

The appointment of a Rough sleeper prevention workers by the Housing department has been a great asset. The team have made strong efforts to provide emergency homes during the pandemic. Portacabins have been installed on council owned land and Bury Drop In provides essential items and also deliver hot food twice a week.

We continue to be a centre for the work among the homeless in our community and are delighted to partner with other agencies to share the burden. Realised Futures have partnered with us on some previous occasions, recently having an artist with us on a Tuesday for many weeks, encouraging the guests to try their hand at art in various forms.

We recently became involved with the Bury Food Cooperative, started by the Bury Rickshaw. The group is made up of charities and organisations in Bury making sure food doesn't go to waste. The Bury Drop In supplies donated food to the food banks, Gatehouse, Vineyard, Best before project, School breakfast club and others.

This is an excellent example of charities working together to help the less fortunate in our community.

Our cooperation with some of the agencies evolves and one of these is the Community Dental Service.

Once a month a mobile clinic has been parked nearby and homeless guests are able to have referral to this clinic there and then. Further treatment will be followed up either at the mobile clinic the next week or at the Dental Services Surgery by appointment. This can have a dramatic effect on the oral health of those sleeping rough

It is a delight to see how many of our wonderful volunteers go 'the extra mile' to help and support the guests.

We continue to thank God for His grace and blessings each week.

Financial Review

The Charity Trustees review the finances of the organisation regularly and have enough funds in hand for a minimum of 6 months of operational costs. This is encouraging even with increasing numbers at all sessions. A set of accounts is attached to this report.

Future planning

What might the future hold? It's hard to say but there will doubtless be challenges ahead as we look towards the winter months. Although the local authorities have done a fantastic job of responding to the issue of homelessness during the pandemic reducing street homelessness to just a few, the problem hasn't gone away.

There will always be people with complex needs who are hard to help and don't fit into the programmes available who are vulnerable to street homelessness. To some extent the local response to homelessness is shaped by national governmental decision which are always changing.

Recently we have been able to reinstate relationships with the leisure centre for showers and a laundrette for clothes washing. These and other similar partnerships will benefit BDI guests.

One factor that's on the watch-list is homelessness that impacts families when people can no longer pay rent or other crises cause people's lives to spiral out of control. Although BDI isn't specifically set up for family work, we have encountered parents and children. Is there a role for a BDI family session? Perhaps.

As we look forward to 2021/22 there are a number of areas we would like to develop:

- To appoint a General Manager
- To continue to develop and train our volunteer base
- To continue development of strategic plan for 2021-2023
- Partner with a mental health specialist who will actively engage with our guests during BDI session
- To demonstrate the effectiveness of the Bury Drop In and what a difference it is making in the community