

Leeds
Homeless
Charter



Leeds Homeless Charter

Introduction

The Leeds Homeless Charter is a set of general actions and aims which act as a foundation for a wide range of people to work together to tackle homelessness in Leeds. By signing this charter participants are not necessarily stating that they will be involved in everything but are agreeing to play their part where it is appropriate.

Participants include those with lived experience of homelessness, grass roots groups, the council, commissioned services and charities, as well as churches, mosques, synagogues and those from other faith communities. It is not an in-depth strategy but is part of a process by which Leeds is becoming more and more interconnected in order to tackle homelessness more effectively. The charter will be reviewed on an annual basis and can be used to hold different participants who sign up to it to account. The aim is to see a reduction in homelessness by preventing it happening in the first place, thus seeing less people sleeping rough on our streets and ensuring that vulnerable people go on to live in secure and safe housing, fulfilling their aspirations and been able to integrate into society.

1. This charter has been put together by 3 working groups which will continue to meet. Each of them involves people with lived experience, with groups being co-chaired by someone who has experience of homelessness. These groups are:

- **Charities and Grass Roots Groups Connecting with Commissioned Services (inclusive of what happens in the city centre).**
- **Addiction and Mental Health Working Group**
- **Homelessness and Migration Working Group**

2. When it comes to serving the homeless community in the city of Leeds, all those who sign up to the charter recognise that they are not the only group or organisation to exist and that there are many other participants involved in supporting the homeless community. This homeless charter recognises 6 different types of activity and states that respect between all participants is vital in tackling homelessness in Leeds. These are the following:

- a) People with **lived experience**, who have a unique insight into what it means to be homeless.
- b) **Public sector bodies**, such as Leeds City Council, Adult Social Care, the NHS and **commissioned services** which receive government money such as Beacon, Street Outreach (CGL), Bevan @ York Street, St Anne's Resource Centre and St. George's Crypt Night Shelter.
- c) **Registered charities and social enterprise** such as Lighthouse, Simon on the Streets, Joanna Project, Streetwise, Big Issue North, LASSN and PAFRAS.
- d) **Faith communities** including the Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh faiths and encompassing initiatives like Lighthouse, St. Martin's Church and Leeds with the Homeless.

- e) **Grass roots groups** which often operate out on the street including Homeless Street Angels, Community Kitchen, Focus4Hope, Feed Leeds plus many more.
- f) **Businesses** which operate in the city, including the Leeds Business Improvement District (LeedsBID).

3. The charter is linked to a number of other initiatives such as Big Change Leeds, Street Support Leeds, the Leeds Homeless Forum, Leeds City Council's Homeless Strategy and the Leeds Migration Partnership.

3.1 Big Change Leeds (www.bigchangeleeds.co.uk) is a collaborative city-wide campaign to help people in need on the streets of Leeds.

An alternative-giving campaign, it aims to provide practical support which can make a real difference to the lives of those on the city's streets by focusing on the provision of essential everyday items, which are often unfunded such as a bus pass, deposit for a flat, and items of clothing or basic furniture.

Big Change enables offers of help and appeals for help by connecting charities, organisations and people with a way to make donations of money, time or items effectively, channelling all donations through a central online resource (Street Support Leeds).

Charitable organisations and support services must register to Street Support Leeds (streetsupportleeds.org.uk) to appeal for and access donations and be eligible to apply for Big Change funding through the Leeds Community Foundation grants programme.

4. The charter states that respect between all these different participants is crucial to tackling homelessness in the city of Leeds. Below are some of the aims and actions.

4.1 Engagement Out On the Streets

- a) All charities, grass root groups and commissioned services agree to sign up to the Leeds Homeless Charter Safeguarding and Good Practise Document (see pages 7 and 8).
- b) Encouraging volunteers to attend accredited training on how best to offer support to the homeless community. This will be provided in 2019.
- c) Encouraging volunteers to make contact with the new Street Support Team, as the primary pathway to refer homeless people, so they can access housing, emergency accommodation, addiction and health support.
- d) We request that all charities, commissioned services and groups signpost to key organisations when out on the street, including St Anne's Breakfast Club, Bevan Health Care, Housing Options, Street Outreach and the Street Support Team. These places themselves can help people access additional support such as emergency accommodation at St George's Crypt and support with substance misuse issues at Forward Leeds. Charter participants agree to commit to use various signposting documentation including the 6 sided

Homeless and Food Aid Document and a city centre map of provision which can be handed out.

- e) We encourage commissioned services to work together with volunteers offering community support and to seek ways in which they can develop effective communication to support vulnerable people. The Charter understands this can be difficult and has no desire to force agencies to share information about vulnerable adults, which break its confidentiality codes of conduct, but does ask all workers to do what they can in facilitating good communication with volunteers.
- f) Leeds City Council make known data annually on homelessness, covering:
 - The number of rough sleepers
 - The number of people in emergency and temporary accommodation
 - The number of people on the housing waiting list.
- g) A grace period of 6 months (July 2019) will enable different groups to endorse the charter's aims and principles. We reassert that we are committed to offering accredited training and offering advice to help any charity or grass roots group develop its good practise.

4.2 Housing to Prevent Homelessness

- a) **Need for good housing** - We state that good housing can make a real difference to people's mental wellbeing, enabling people to have a platform where they can then access education, training and voluntary or paid work. From all our homeless charter discussions we have seen that the condition of housing, its location and what types of relational support can be offered by agencies and the local community are crucial in preventing people from becoming homeless. With this in mind, we seek to act out the following:
 - i. Existing forms of **supported housing** delivered by Engage Leeds and Beacon Pathways is valued; support will be given to volunteers from charities and grass roots groups to offer assistance in getting people into accommodation and helping them to stay there. Part of this will involve facilitating effective communication between groups and commissioned services on how best to support an individual into secure housing and help them maintain their tenancy;
 - ii. **Local community support** may entail going for a coffee, connecting people with local activities and supporting vulnerable adults with small amounts of finance through either the Big Change Leeds Fund or LCC Homeless Prevention Fund. Both of these can release small amounts of money to help someone by getting them a gas or electric token, gym membership, bus pass, mobile phone etc;
 - iii. **Ethical housing** - We recognise that for lots of complicated reasons, housing can be in short supply and we therefore seek to value different forms of **ethical housing**, which put people before profit, such as LCC's Council Housing, Abigail Housing (for Refugees), Beacon and Leeds Housing Concern. We also want to value the development of new housing initiatives, such as the partnership between St. George's Crypt and the Council to develop 23 accommodation units at Hedley Chase in West

- Leeds and want to connect people with the Crypt's Growing Rooms project which provides abstinence-based housing alongside a 12-step recovery programme for people struggling with addiction; and
- iv. **Speedy house repairs** should be a key priority and we ask companies carrying out repairs to be more specific as to what time and day they are coming to do a given repair. We seek to take active steps in encouraging repair organisations to be able to enact this.
 - b) The charter states that being able to give people **Dual Tenancies** for a given amount of time can be very helpful, as it allows a vulnerable person to transition from one tenancy to another. We also support the process of **Joint Tenancies**, which means that where appropriate, 2 people can actively support one another by moving into the same house together; and
 - c) **Ex-Service people** - For some, service life can put a strain on relationships, leading to separation or divorce. A lack of experience in dealing with everyday finances can quickly lead to financial hardship. Mental health problems can emerge, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which can lead to unemployment and addiction issues increasing the risk of homelessness. Wherever it is appropriate, we will seek to provide information on services such as the Royal British Legion, which can often provide additional support and find housing for those who are homeless.

5. Addiction and Mental Health Working Group

5.1 Further reflections from the Addiction and Mental Health Working Group:

We seek to intervene in order to prevent homelessness, which in turn can have substantial positive effects on people's mental wellbeing and benefit those seeking to recover from addiction. The aims are listed below.

- a) **Signposting to addiction services** - We aim to make sure that many different workers are clear on signposting routes to a range of different addiction services such as Forward Leeds, Leeds Street Support Team and the abstinence-based St. George's Crypt Growing Rooms Project. The charter will seek to **effectively communicate** clearly what different services are on offer through homeless charter meetings, using appropriate social media / online activity and raising awareness through various paper flyer materials.
- b) The charter will seek to make clear what is available in terms of **mental health provision** in the city and recommends that workers and volunteers utilise the Leeds Street Support Team, Bevan @ York Street, St Anne's Resource Centre, Leeds Street Outreach Team and Simon on the Streets to assist the homeless community in finding appropriate mental health provision. The charter is committed to getting both health and adult social care providers, who are involved in mental health provision, round the table to be able to have **effective dialogue** on the challenges the homeless community sometimes face in accessing support and in understanding the significant pressures adult social care and mental health services are under in Leeds.
- c) The charter encourages the principle of **actively going to the homeless community** and wants to see more health care out on the streets. We are

supportive of utilising the services of Bevan @ York Street, who are able to provide a health care bus to support the homeless community in the city centre and aim to let people know where the bus is and at what time. In addition to this, the charter supports the involvement of a dental care bus in order to assist the homeless community and will seek to connect the homeless community with the dental bus whenever it's available.

- d) The charter will seek to work towards establishing more **advocates / navigators**, who can work one on one with people to help them access addiction and mental health services.
- e) The issue of the drug spice has been something we are very aware of and we will seek to incorporate training on the dangers of this drug wherever possible.
- f) **Release from prison** - The charter highlights that there are major challenges when people leave prison with nowhere to go and that people in this situation often have addiction / mental health needs. Below are the Recommendations.
 - i. Establish a one stop centre for prison leavers, either inside the prison or outside, where people can go to in order to secure accommodation and mental health / addiction support on release. A key part of this is making sure that if someone needs a prescription, they can get access one that will last them enough time before they can get access to another prescription. For example, if leaving prison at the end of the week, they may need a prescription to last across the weekend until Monday;
 - ii. Make sure there are meetings where homeless services and prison services are round the table discussing how to improve people's experience of prison release in Leeds. Within this, we state that **clear communication** is vital between different participants. We want to work towards a situation where both workers on the inside and outside of the prison have each other's contact details and advance warning can be given wherever possible when someone is about to be released. A key forum which we wish to work with in achieving this is the already established West Yorkshire Criminal Justice Network;
 - iii. We recognise that releasing people in large groups and on a Friday often leads to people being homeless and encourage prison workers to make every effort avoid this situation by releasing people earlier in the week
 - iv. Work with the Leeds Crime Reduction Network to map out who is doing what in terms of prison release and highlight key situations where people end up homeless to prevent them continually happening; and
 - v. Listen to the stories and experiences of prison workers. The charter acknowledges that prison resources have been overstretched for a number of years and, as well as listening to the stories of people with lived experience of being released from prison, we also want to listen to the experiences of those who work in the sector.

6. Homelessness and Migration Working Group

6.1 We seek to value all refugee, asylum and migrant communities and will aim to do everything we can to support people and find accommodation for those who are homeless. The key aims are as follows:

- a) We want to hear the voices of people with lived experience of homelessness who have travelled here from overseas. We will make every effort to do the following:
 - i. At every Charter meeting spend time listening to people's stories and get their incites on how we can all do better in providing accommodation / housing from migrant communities;
 - ii. Share people's experiences through local media outlets, such as the YEP, Leeds Live Website and various TV and radio outlets;
 - iii. Connect with decision makers who operate asylum accommodation, such as G4S, to share experiences of what it's like to stay in this accommodation;
 - iv. Engage and invite members of parliament to meet those with lived experience, to hear their stories of being homeless;
 - v. Engage in consultation with a variety of agencies to see how the voices of refugee, asylum, EU and non-EU nationals can be heard more directly with decision makers at the Home Office; and
 - vi. Work to ensure that language is not a barrier to people with lived experience being heard.
- b) We want to see a situation where refugees can be granted status and then given 56 days to find accommodation in line with government policy for British nationals. Currently, refugees are only given 28 days-notice and we want to see this changed. We want to commit to speaking to MPs on this topic;
- c) We acknowledge that there are a number of different types of status that migrant communities have. We will make every effort to carry out an analysis regarding how many Migrants are homeless in Leeds. We ask that data be shared and that findings be referenced in official council documentation;
- d) We value the good work which takes place to provide accommodation through projects that support destitute asylum seekers such as Grace Hosting (LASSN), St Monica's, WYDAN Night Shelter as well as organisations providing accommodation for refugees such as Abigail Housing and Palm Cove. We also welcome the new refugee city council workers and their existing posts to support refugees, as well as the invaluable work done by organisations such as the Red Cross, RETAS, PAFRAS to help find asylum seekers and refugees accommodation. Also, we recognise that there are certain times of the year when there is a greater need for beds than at other times and we want to work in collaboration to see that we avoid duplication in providing accommodation for destitute asylum seekers;
- e) We seek to provide primary health care to migrant communities who are homeless. This is currently is offered by Bevan @ York Street Health Practise, as well as other NHS locations in the city such as many GP surgeries;
- f) We state that trafficking of migrants, who often experience homelessness is not acceptable in our city and want to make a real strategic effort to play our part in tackling this form of 21st century slavery; and
- g) This charter working group is officially linked and will feed back to the Leeds Migration Partnership, which has one of its core priorities as tackling homelessness amongst migrant communities.

7. Safeguarding and Good Practice Protocol

7.1 Here are a set of practises which we ask any group or organisation to keep to when supporting homeless and vulnerable people.

- a) **Safeguarding policy** - All groups and organisations must adopt and abide by a safeguarding policy and have a safeguarding lead ensuring that all reasonable steps will be taken to safeguard vulnerable adults and children. **Attached is a template which groups and organisations can use.** Frontline activities refer to when organisations and grass roots groups have direct contact with vulnerable adults who are engaged in street-based activity.

b) **Volunteers and DBS Checks**

- i. Any volunteer who is working one on one must be DBS checked;
- ii. Those volunteers who are not DBS checked must be **supervised** by someone who is, when doing frontline activities;
- iii. Any group or organisation is required to have someone who is DBS checked present when they engage with homeless / vulnerable people at all times;
- iv. Individuals who participate in frontline activities on a regular basis should be DBS checked. We define the point at which someone becomes a regular volunteer as when someone has volunteered 4 times at a frequency of at least once a month;
- v. All groups and orgs should have their own volunteer application form;
- vi. All volunteers must be 18 or over when participating in frontline activities;
- vii. When people arrive unexpectedly at activities taking place on the street, they are to be treated as visitors and should be supervised throughout. We then recommend that if they wish to return, they fill in a volunteer application form before volunteering again;
- viii. Signatories of this charter agree to not bring children with them on frontline activities;
- ix. The charter asks volunteers to sign a confidentiality agreement / code of conduct to prevent them from sharing personal information about service users on social media or with members of the public who are not volunteers; and
- x. We strongly encourage volunteers involved in groups and charities to attend accredited training on safeguarding and good practice.

c) **Social Media**

- i. By signing up to the charter, groups and organisations agree not to post pictures or personal information on social media re: vulnerable people who are engaged in street-based activity. It is a key aim of the Leeds homeless charter to eradicate the taking and posting of pictures on social media when, or soon after, activities have taken place;
- ii. If groups or organisations wish to share a story / perspective of someone who has experienced homelessness, then we all agree to a number of codes of conduct that apply to picture taking or film making. These are:

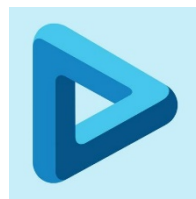
- Groups and organisations must get written permission from the person in question;
 - The person, when signing, should not be intoxicated through drug / alcohol use;
 - The person in question should be able to access the picture / film before it is released; and
 - There is agreement not to live stream homeless / vulnerable people.
- iii. This charter states that when involved in frontline activities, which are either out on the street or in a building, groups and organisations are fine to take pictures of their own volunteers and workers, which may then go on social media immediately; and
- iv. Assume good intent - All groups and organisations agree to abide by the principle of assumed good intent and are asked to respect each other even when people air different opinions on social media. All groups and organisations agree to engage in respectful dialogue when disputes arise.

d) Food Hygiene and Responsibility for Waste

- i. All groups and organisations agree to have at least one person who has a food hygiene certificate on site when providing food;
- ii. All groups and organisations giving out food agree to abide by food hygiene best practices in the preparation, provision and storage of food and agree to be familiar with guidance on good food hygiene. See the guidance on the application of EU food hygiene law to community and charity food provision:
<https://www.food.gov.uk/sites/default/files/media/document/hall-provision.pdf> ;
- iii. Everyone who is providing food agrees to tidy up any waste / surplus food they may have and dispose of it responsibly, including taking responsibility for subsequent waste after their event;
- iv. Participants who sign up to the charter will be allowed to access bags in order to put waste food and packaging at the end of activities; and
- v. The vendor is to contact 0113 2422572 or email city.enforcement@leeds.gov.uk to arrange collection of the bags and they must be signed for from the city centre depot.

e) Alcohol and Drugs

- i. All participants in the Leeds Homeless Charter agree not to drink alcohol with the homeless community;
- ii. All participants agree not to take part in any outreach activity or food provision while under the influence of drugs or alcohol and not participate in drink or drug use with service users; and
- iii. We agree that if someone is actively dealing drugs or alcohol on site when homeless people are being supported, then they will be asked to leave the premises / location where the group are carrying out activities.



Street Outreach Leeds



Leeds Homeless Charter (Signature)

Organisation / Group (If Applicable):

.....

Name of person signing:

.....

Signature:

.....



Street Support



Leeds Tenants Association



StreetWise



Leeds BID