

**Mayor of the
West Midlands**

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Faith

Homelessness in the West Midlands



**West Midlands
Combined Authority**



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Foreword from Andy Street

Mayor of the West Midlands

One of my first actions when elected as the Mayor of the West Midlands was to establish the Homelessness Taskforce. Since then we have seen several successes, including the launch of Change into Action, the investment from Government into a pilot Housing First programme and the agreement from National Express West Midlands to pilot a free fares model for the homeless.

In my first 100 days as Mayor I established the steering group for the Mayor and Faith Conference. This took place in November 2017; 400 leaders of different faiths congregated at the University of Birmingham. One of the key priorities of the Conference was to explore how all the good work being done around homelessness by faith communities could be linked up with the work of the Homelessness Taskforce.

The Action Plan was launched in May this year and I am pleased that this booklet has been produced as a result of that Action Plan. This booklet has been produced after consultation with many faith based charities and action groups who are working tirelessly to help the homeless and those in danger of becoming homeless. All the groups showcased in this booklet have given their permission to share their work and best practice with those interested in the Positive Accommodation Pathway model.

I hope you will draw on their experience and use the unique and powerful voice of your organisations to speak out and act effectively.



Foreword from Jean Templeton

Chair of the Homelessness
Taskforce

I am really pleased to have the opportunity to chair the Mayor's Homelessness Taskforce. Under previous regional structures I chaired the regional homelessness network and saw the benefits of collaboration which added value rather than adding work.

As Chief Executive of St Basils, I am very conscious of the systemic and personal issues that contribute to homelessness. Generally we focus on the personal as we rarely have the opportunity to tackle and improve the systemic issues. This perpetuates a perspective that people are the problem; troubled individuals and families. And yet, a major factor is troubled systems, much harder to tackle and change.

There is a huge amount of good work in our region tackling homelessness and yet it continues to increase. By working together across the region,

across sectors and disciplines, we have the opportunity to tackle the systemic issues which contribute to homelessness and replace with approaches and processes which prevent and design out homelessness. We have been overwhelmed with the commitment to work together to make this ambition a reality.

In this booklet and across the region we are pleased to celebrate the many services working in the West Midlands that arose from the actions of people of faith. Examples such as the Salvation Army, YMCA, Sifa Fireside, St Basils, Cyrenians and Midland Heart are just a few examples of great organisations born of faith. With a diverse population and many faiths in the West Midlands now, there are a lot more faith based homelessness activities which we would like to celebrate through this booklet.

The Mayor's Faith Conference & The Homelessness Taskforce

In November 2017, the Mayor of the West Midlands welcomed over 400 people from many faiths, and none, to a 'Faith Summit' so we could discuss the issues that concern faith communities the most. It is clear that for faith groups, homelessness across the West Midlands is a cause of enormous concern, and an area of great action.

The conference heard about the Mayor's Homelessness Taskforce and the objective to 'design out' homelessness, through a Positive Pathway. Designing in, at every stage, the prevention of homelessness, reducing the impact of homelessness, and enabling successful recovery from homelessness.

The conference highlighted the many shared values and motivation held by faith groups, charities, and those working in the public and private sector when working with homeless people. The conference also highlighted the opportunities to harness the potential of working together, sharing best examples, and targeting resources most effectively.

To put this into action the Homelessness Taskforce therefore opens the doors to a dialogue, and working together to:

1

Take time to think about the Positive Pathway, and ways in which your work is already helping to design out homelessness

2

Challenge ourselves and ask the questions; Is what I'm doing most effective, what are others doing, what can I learn?

3

Let us know what you are doing, where can others help you? Let us know what we can do.

(Working with Birmingham University we hope to evidence the value of faith communities to the West Midlands)

4

Look at the examples, and tell us what else is really working

5

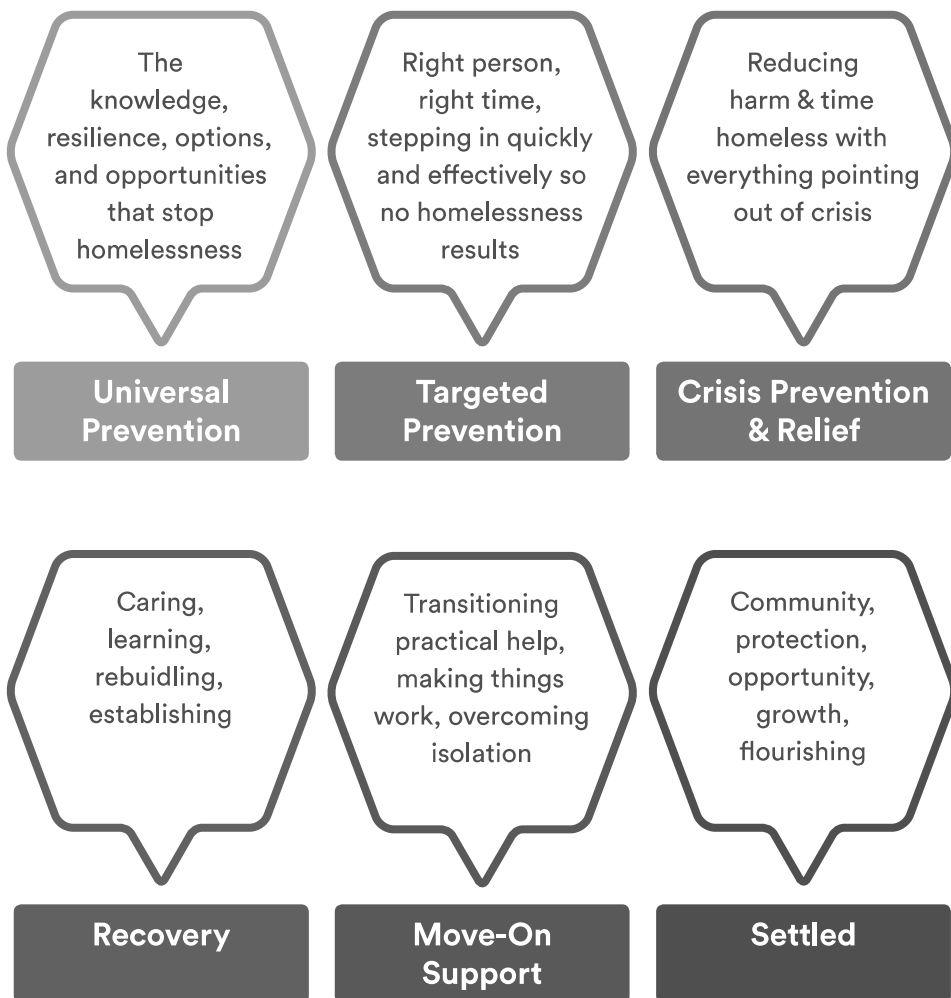
Visit the Change into Action website, are there people you are working with who might benefit from the support available?



Consider getting involved, and working together through one of the many groups available, see examples on the following page...

Designing Out Homelessness in the West Midlands

Examples of Faith Groups in a Positive Pathway



CAP (Christians Against Poverty) offer free Debt Help, Job Clubs, Fresh Start Groups, Life Skills Groups and Money Courses across the Midlands often from Church buildings and with Church volunteers, 'passionate about releasing people from a life sentence of debt, poverty and their causes'. capuk.org

The Jericho Foundation 'Ignition' programme offers training to faith and community groups to deliver practical job search support and guidance for unemployed men and women in their local community providing job seekers with the knowledge, skills, practical support and encouragement to help them search for work effectively. jericho.org.uk

Established by IShelter and managed by Father Hudson's Care, Tabor House is a night shelter offering volunteer led mentoring, befriending and strengths based support to homeless people. ishelter.org.uk

National Zakat Foundation (NZF) houses and supports Muslim women, developing confidence, self-esteem, and their ability to live independently, through emotional, spiritual and practical help. nzf.org.uk

Hope into Action: Black Country, provides homes for the homeless, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers; securing properties through partnerships with local Churches. blackcountry.hopeintoaction.org.uk

The Nishkam Centre, is one of many Places of Welcome, where "every neighbourhood has places where all people feel safe to belong, connect and contribute." nishkamcentre.org

Where can we work in partnership and help each other?

There are all sorts of ways in which faith groups can work in partnership to tackle homelessness, for example:

Churches and other organisations can join the Standing In The Gaps online network.



standinginthegaps.org.uk

Attend a Faith Homeless forum in Coventry or Birmingham. For information about the Birmingham Christian Homelessness Forum contact Rev Neil Johnson.



njohnson@birminghammethodistcircuit.org.uk

Contact other groups you know of already working in this area and agree to work together, if that would create a new multi faith project you may be eligible for support and or a grant from Near Neighbours.



www2.cuf.org.uk/how-we-help/near-neighbours

If you want to do something, why not consider joining one of the existing networks or projects listed here? Find out what others are doing and what is needed.

Contact organisations working in this area who can share best practice and offer support to get involved rather than starting something alone, for example:

Housing Justice offer support with setting up a community based night shelter, mentoring and befriending, hosting projects and redeveloping church land for affordable housing. Across the West Midlands there are faith groups running winter night shelters during the cold weather and for longer periods, a few of which are:



Birmingham Churches winter night shelter
bhamchurchesnightshelter.org.uk



Coventry Hope winter shelter
hopecoventry.org.uk/projects/cwns



Walsall Night Shelter hosted by the YMCA
ymcabc.org.uk/what-we-do/supportandadvice/the-glebe-centre



Places of Welcome, Thrive Together Birmingham; offer support in setting up a place of hospitality, a community drop in/coffee morning.
www2.cuf.org.uk/thrive-together-birmingham/places-welcome



Jericho Foundation; support Churches to help people in their communities to gain employment through setting up ignition job clubs. Ignition offers exciting opportunities to get beside and support those who are vulnerable, whether in small groups or one-to-one. Once the job club is established they provide ongoing support, advice and guidance.
jericho.org.uk/ignition

The National Zakat Foundation (NZF) provide Muslim men and women with grants in relation to basic costs including food, shelter, clothing and household furniture. Once the basic needs are met they provide support and assistance in achieving a step change to increase an applicants income or reduce their expenditure. Applicants or referral agencies can apply via their website or call:

 nzf.org.uk/apply

 **03333 123 123**

Hope into Action is a national charity enabling churches to provide homes for the homeless by securing property through social investment, placing homeless people in the property and partnering it with a local Church. They provide support to the Church volunteers and residents, take care of the legalities and formalities and make it easy for Churches to get involved. They have a presence in the West Midlands in the Black Country and Coventry are looking for Churches from Birmingham to partner with them in order to expand across the region. For more info on investing or partnering email or visit the website:

 blackcountry@hopeintoaction.org.uk

 blackcountry.hopeintoaction.org.uk

Centrepont Support Centre provide advice, guidance and support, as well as a food bank, as part of the Sandwell Advice Network. Working with refugees, asylum seekers, homeless and otherwise struggling.

 centrepontchristianchurch.com/centrepont-support-centre

Green Pastures buy properties for Churches and Christian charities so they can house the homeless in their area.


 greenpastures.net

Cinnamon Network support for Churches to set up many different community projects through grants and working with other organisations including 4family; supporting isolated families, CAP debt help; providing debt advice:

 cinnamonnetwork.co.uk/projects

CAP (Christians Against Poverty) seeks to help those who are feeling the weight of debt, struggling to find work, trying to overcome a dependency or battling through life on a low income. This is provided through free Debt Help, Job Clubs, Fresh Start Groups, Life Skills Groups and CAP Money Courses. Local services can be accessed through the website or by calling.

 capuk.org

 **0800 328 0006 (freephone)**

The work of the Mayor's Homelessness Taskforce is ongoing. Please stay in touch, tell us your stories, work with us and keep up to date with all that is going on.

 wmca.org.uk