



Street Support Network's Alternative Giving Network Meeting Notes

Event Recording Link

Paul Scotting, SSN Nottingham

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streetsupport.net/nottingham/street-aid/

- Largely cloned from Cambridge, Nottingham Street Aid has been fully running for about 2 months (with contactless points).
- Early on they were disappointed by how much money was being raised (as they hoped for similar figures to Cambridge) but then expectations were adjusted.
- It took around a year from conception to launch.
- Paul sums up the numbers:
- There are 3 contactless points (cost £30 per month to lease) and they make between £20 - £230 a month (one at a loss currently)
- Posters and website £100pm
- Looking at about £4-5K per annum (plus £5K business donation)
- Expect slow pick up with some regular donors and more machines, and better awareness (plus winter schemes).
- BIG wins (shopping centre and BID, plus council and business support).
- Launching Alternative Giving has strengthened the homelessness partnership with businesses in the city - particularly the two universities. This is one of the biggest achievements of the scheme.

Sarah Steggles, Harm Reduction & ASB Manager, Community Safety Team, Cambridge City Council

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cambscf.org.uk/cambridge-street-aid

- Wanted to launch a scheme that avoided the negative stereotypes about homelessness. This meant the messaging was focused on care and education.
- Cambridge's fund is also available to those with recent previous experience of homelessness as well as current.
- After a small donation from the BID, they printed large posters to put in windows and raise awareness.
- Just Giving was the way that members of the public could donate to the fund. They still use this today.
- Since launch they've raised £167,000
- Donations always increase when there's press coverage
- Since they launched Cambridge Street Aid in 2016, York (2019), Harrogate (2020) and Nottingham (2023) approached them for information and went on to adopt their branding and model.
- They are aware of another area in the process of setting up but have not launched yet. They're happy to speak to locations who want to know more.



Paul Woodman, Street Support Southampton and Maria Byrne, Southampton City Council

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- Wanted to change the way people in Southampton gave money to people experiencing homelessness.
- Ran an alternative giving scheme that raised just over £1000 in website donations and contactless points. Unfortunately this meant that the scheme wasn't breaking even.
- Going forward, they want to try again to refresh the campaign. Part of this will involve replacing contactless points with QR codes that will allow people to donate via their website which is a lower cost option.
- Nottingham's Paul Scotting spoke to the fact that Alternative Giving is trial and error and varies from location to location. His main message was 'the press is your friend'.

Matthew Bushnell, Street Support Luton

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<https://justgiving.com/campaign/bigchangeluton>

- Luton also use Just Giving and since 2019 have raised £13,500 and £8,500 in grants.
- Matthew then talked through the following questions and answers:

Q. Where does the income come from: contactless points, vs personal web donations (regular donors), vs larger corporate contributions, text to donate numbers.

A. The personal contact points are quite costly, and there are probably more simplistic ways to raise the money.

Our income is received through personal donation, web, and the local authorities rough sleeping initiative who support the scheme. There is some income via contactless points but to be honest, it's quite low and would only probably cover the cost of the points.

However I would say that the purpose of the points is not so much about income, but really raising awareness that there are ways for people to give easily to people who are experiencing homelessness, primarily sleeping out.

Q. What advertising do people do and can they tell which is most effective?

A. We have run a number of high-level campaigns across the town with regards to alternatives given. However you really need a sustained communication plan in order to keep the profile. This means there needs to be resource which is often quite challenging as the services that volunteer within a partnership have their own social media to deliver

Q. How has income varied over time?

A. £13,500 income from donations, council grant. £8,500 in grants – 31 awards so far. Contactless points increase donations during holiday seasons for obvious reasons.



Q. In general, what strategies have worked well and which have not? Also, I'd be interested to know how much others value their alt giving initiatives more because of their role in promoting the sector and as a deterrent from giving to people begging, rather than for their income.

A. This is a hard question to answer, because how do you measure the impact of a campaign? However two points;

Having a strategy, galvanises a local partnership and provides one vision with regards to alternative giving. Considerable time was spent in designing the alternative given scheme and making sure the narrative was correct. This is really important in the initial set up so to reduce confusion and Aims later on.

Additionally we have awarded 31 grants that directly impacted individuals lives and made a difference and that's the important thing about the alternative given your able to specifically make a difference to individuals lives with a pot of funding that has less red tape which means you are able to expedient the funds to people who need them and track that difference reporting back ad good news.

Q. How is the scheme hosted? BID/council/charity - and how many workers?

A. Our Scheme is hosted through the local Luton Homeless partnership there is a panel of decision makers which consists of The LA RSI third sector and people with lived experience. The funds are held by a local voluntary service that is independent from the partnership and there are policies in place to ensure appropriate eligibility criteria and distribution.

The voluntary service is also the administrator who distributes monies to awardees via the approved service that is making the application on behalf of the individual. Expenditure and income is reported back to the homeless partnership on a quarterly basis and annually. The voluntary service is audited as part of their financial procedures.

Crispin Pailing - Street Support Liverpool
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- Liverpool have also had a string of Alternative Giving campaigns over the years led by the city council. Like Nottingham some messaging of these was insensitive and was received badly.
- In 2019 there was a partnership conference off the back of which came a business charter that laid out how businesses can help in non-financial ways.
- In February the partnership came together again to launch AG with financial contributions from the Church and Liverpool One shopping centre.
- There's a focus on educating the public on what to do to help - this got a big push around Eurovision earlier this year.
- Again using Just Giving, they've raised £2500 since February. They also received £40,000 from a private donor.
- Updated comms materials cutting out stereotypical images of people experiencing homelessness.
- Although text giving was easy to set up and low cost to maintain it hasn't raised much money.

Dave Paterson, Street Support Leeds

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- Gary helped set up Big Change in Leeds in 2017 that got kick-started with £25,000 from the council.
- Advertising was simple and effective, if vague.
- They raised between £70,000 and £100,000 and the last of it was allocated in the pandemic.
- Big Change then had to change its name.
- There is still lots of money going out to agencies from different funds, one of which is the Household Support Fund. Below are a couple of links which both show the national allocation of the Household Support Fund and some details of the Leeds allocation.
- The purpose of the grant is to provide support to certain local authorities in England for expenditure lawfully incurred or to be incurred by them in accordance with the Grant Conditions to provide support to households, who would otherwise struggle to buy food or pay essential utility bills or meet other essential living costs or housing costs (in exceptional cases of genuine emergency), to help them with significantly rising living costs.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/household-support-fund-guidance-for-local-councils/household-support-fund-grant-determination-2021-no-315787>

See this link which might be helpful - <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/benefits/household-support-fund>

Dave says, 'In our role as chairing the Leeds Food Aid Network, which comes under the legal structure of Unity in Poverty Action (UPA) and Leeds Christian Community Trust (LCCT), we are setting up a holding account which means that money can come into our bank account and then go out again without having to register it in our main account.'

This is important because having to register all the money in your account is a reason given for charities not taking on this kind of money. If they can get round this then hopefully other cities would take on a few hundred thousand pounds and then allocate out to good grassroots work. It may be too late for this round although money always seems to be kicking around somewhere. It's likely that there will be another round of the Household Support Fund released early next year.'

Alternative Giving is still active but not in the same capacity it was before COVID.

Kieran Turner and Fiona Williamson- Simon Community Scotland, Street Support Scotland

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- Street Change Glasgow is Scotland's first Alternative Giving Scheme and was launched in March 2020.
- It's run by SCS but is a strand of the council's begging strategy.
- Originally there were 5 contactless points around the city which raised £7000 before they were taken down in 2022 due to cost issues, vandalism and the company that owned them going into administration.



- Since then they've paved a successful QR code route again to a Just Giving page.
- From utilising Best Bar None, there are now around 25 bars and restaurants displaying posters and their QR codes as well as 30 council-owned buildings.
- Business owners have enjoyed hosting the posters and have promoted it themselves on social media.
- In terms of advertising, the posters have been transformed into beermats, billboard displays and large vinyl posters - all these have different QR codes so that the success of each one can be tracked (they still consider they're in the trial period).
- Since August 2022 Street Change Glasgow has raised £2500.
- Donations come to SCS who use it (along with four other partner charities) as a rapid access fund so that support workers can easily purchase things for those they encounter.
- In Edinburgh begging is very lucrative and so SCS are running a begging consensus talking to around 140 people. The results of this will be shared with the network.

Discussion notes:

Matt Farrow - Reading

Reading are in the early stages of setting up AG and they're being very careful in constructing their messaging. Matt asked the network if they've provided a 'shopping list' - what can be done with someone's £20 donation.

Sarah from Cambridge says they've considered doing something similar on social media, but currently they talk about the types of things the fund is buying, and asks members of the public to donate the cost of a cup of coffee.

Matthew suggests checking out [this promotional video](#) made on behalf of Real Change Manchester which showcases the types of things that Alternative Giving funds can provide.

Paul Scotting - Nottingham

Paul shares how he's diverted from Cambridge's model that their AG fund was based off of.

- They've focused on making special adjustments for sub-group such as ethnic minorities and women - as women will often choose extremely vulnerable housing situations over rough sleeping. People who work with these sub-groups are involved in discussions around distribution of the fund.
- Rather than having two awards per lifetime, Nottingham have allocated £2000 worth of bids per lifetime so recipients feel less pressure to decide and potentially receive support over a longer period of time.

Roy Stannard - Off The Fence Brighton and Hove

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Why aren't we talking to commercial suppliers of contactless technology about a nationwide approach to Alternative Giving funds? Has anyone tried this? Roy would be happy to lead something here.



Cherry Shin - Wolverhampton BID
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Cherry spoke about the gift card scheme that they and other BIDs have run by My Connects. She suggests approaching My Connects to see if there could be a charity donation as part of the gift card purchases - so at the same time as supporting local businesses, people could also be supporting their local homelessness community.

Event Summary from Gary

- It's very easy to go wrong with Alternative Giving, but there is a recipe to get it right - and there were a lot of ingredients shared today.
- Be clear on the purpose of your campaign - it's not just about cash. Raising awareness, building and utilising partnerships.
- This isn't the solution to begging and saying that will trip you up.
- Involving businesses is KEY - in our experience when you approach them with a partnership and this idea, they will be receptive.

