

Communication Plan - Homelessness Awareness Campaign 2015

Project owner: Hywel Caddy

Budget: small budget available

Background

The city council has a statutory duty to meet the needs of homeless people who meet the criteria set out in the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. People facing homelessness or at risk of homelessness are referred to Housing Advice through partner agencies or through our customer service points. Their needs are assessed and we then deliver a housing solution or advise the household that we do not have a duty to house them. In the latter case we will always signpost to other housing options e.g. advising the person how to go about finding private rented accommodation.

Demand for the housing advice service is rising with referrals in the 3 months ending 30 June 2014 being up 27% on the same quarter the previous year. The total number of referrals was 1,431 in this period.

The most common reasons for people becoming homeless in Bristol in the 3 months to 31/3/14 were:

- Parents, other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate
- Termination of assured shorthold tenancy (i.e. notice being given by the private landlord that the household needs to leave the property)
- Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner

The rise in demand is manifested in the level of temporary/emergency accommodation bookings made. 167 bookings for households were made in the final quarter of 2013/14 with 600 individuals being in temporary accommodation (including B&B) on 31/3/14. This has risen again in quarter 1 of 2014/15 with nearly 100 h/hs being in temporary accommodation as a result of homelessness, 80% of the h/hs being families.

There are also more people sleeping rough in Bristol with 30 people identified at the beginning of August (monthly count based on a sample of inner city areas). This is the visible side of homelessness that the public sees and is another indicator that more people are losing their homes or are not in stable accommodation.

The city council is one of a number of partners in the city working to prevent homelessness by working with vulnerable single people and families who are at risk before they become homeless. In 2013/14 we collectively prevented almost 4,500 h/hs from becoming homeless, a rise from almost 3,500 in the previous year. This shows the rise in h/hs affected by homelessness and also the volume of cases that the city council and other agencies are dealing with in order to prevent people becoming homeless.

One of the main challenges we face in meeting the needs of homeless households is the shortage of affordable housing in Bristol and specifically private rented accommodation that is affordable to people on housing benefit (Local Housing

Allowance = LHA). Our Private Renting Team (PRT) work to secure properties that can be let to our clients, if necessary with the help of a rent in advance payment and use of the deposit bond scheme (a scheme that provides landlords with the security of knowing that we will refund them the costs of damage to the property at the end of the tenancy up to a level equivalent to 4-6 weeks rent). However, securing properties is a major challenge and we are planning new ways to market our services and incentivise landlords to work with us. In 2013/14 we secured 238 properties that we allocated to homeless h/hs, below our target level of 350. There are an estimated 12,000 private landlords in Bristol. In the current market landlords can obtain rent levels well above LHA and so are deterred from working with us. However, they are often not aware of the service we offer through the PRT which provides incentives to landlords as follows : deposit bond, tenants ready to move in, advice and support throughout the tenancy, LHA paid directly to the landlord and free property checks and inventories.

Communications aims

- Dispel myths surrounding homeless as criminal and drug and alcohol addicts - show how people find themselves homeless for a number of reasons.
- Highlight the different reasons people find themselves homeless
- Raise awareness among the public about what support and help is available to people who are homeless/at risk of homelessness
- Show how all the different partners are working together to tackle this issue
- Communicate how important it is for people to act early if they find themselves in trouble

Objectives

- Change people's perceptions of homeless people
- Highlight the problem of the hidden homeless
- Make people aware what services are available to them if they are in trouble
- Raise money for the Mayor's Fund which is supporting homelessness charities at the moment

Campaign partners (to be discussed and agreed)

- Bristol CAB
- The Julian Trust
- St Mungos Broadway
- Big Issue
- Quartet Community Foundation
- Caring in Bristol
- Second Step
- One25

Alternative giving charities

- The Sleep Out

Audiences

- People at risk of becoming homeless
- Bristol citizens
- Council staff
- Local media
- Businesses

Related campaigns/stories

- Mayor's Fund winter appeal
- Streetlink
- Your kindness can kill - stencil campaign
- Christmas homelessness feature in the Bristol Post

Timescale

- Media campaign will focus on Bristol Homelessness Awareness Week (Feb 23-27), building up to the sleep out on Friday 27th February.
- Case studies - partners will need to provide case study details/contacts by the second week of January to allow for a morning's filming later in the month.
- Press briefings - initial contact should be made with key press outlets (Bristol Post, Bristol 24/7, Made in Bristol TV, Radio Bristol, Points West, ITV) around a month to see how they can help us publicise the campaign.
- The first press release/media invites should go out the week before the event.
- Followed by press releases throughout the week itself

Information and key messages we want the public to know and reflect upon (to be discussed and agreed with campaign partners)

- Challenging perceptions of homeless people and those at risk "it could be me."
- Invite people to come along to the homelessness prevention fair to be held in the Galleries Bristol.
- Educate the public about the most common causes of homelessness.
- Publicise the importance of early intervention and other key ways to prevent homelessness.
- The good working relationship between the various partners in Bristol, and how they combine to create the services currently on offer.
- What services there are to help people off the streets and what we are doing to tackle the issues.
- How you can help - where you can donate/volunteer.

Tactics

- Fundraising and donations - link to the Mayor's Fund/Sleep Out
- Digital - video interviews of people to illustrate our key points. Case studies of people who have been helped by the various systems (would it be possible to get someone from the armed forces?).

- PR/media - press releases - pre-release to announce the week of awareness, plus releases to highlight various areas throughout the week. Arrange quotes, facts and figures from partners.
- Printed material - A4 posters for organisations and businesses.
- Social media – Facebook and Twitter - Facts and figures, did you know? Promotion of donation and link to web site information.
- Website – Create/update web page on BCC to highlight the work already going on in Bristol and educate the public. Myth busting. Portal promotions on the home page.
- Information in newsletters and other publications going out to Bristol citizens. For example, Our City (E-newsletter).
- Pop up homelessness prevention fair (St Mungos Choir)
- Volunteering webpage for New Year tweets

Key contacts

Bristol City Council

Hywel Caddy T: 0117 3526749 E: hwyl.caddy@bristol.gov.uk

Bristol CAB

Ann Vink annv@BristolCAB.org.uk

Julian Trust

Richard Drake T: 07831 539122 treasurer@juliantrust.org.uk or richardd@BristolCAB.org.uk

Big Issue

Jode Mayhew T: 07939453761 E: Jode.Mayhew@bigissue.com

Caring in Bristol (for Caring at Christmas, Survival Handbook, Bristol Nighthstop)

Matt Dowse T: 0117 92444444 matt.dowse@caringinbristol.org.uk

Second Step

Jane Edmonds T: 0117 909 6300 x249 07841777401
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One25

Gill Nowland T: 0117 9098832 gill@One25.org.uk

Communication action plan

Date	Method(s) of communication	Activity	Measure/track	Audience	Cost	Responsibility
External communication						
Jan 2015	Our City e-newsletter - Issue: February	A maximum of 40 to 60 words including a website link for further information.	MailChimp analytics / website hits / donations	1.6k subscribers	0	KS
Internal communication						
Feb 2015	BCC Intranet: The Source: Team leadership message Copy deadline: tbc	Front page message from John Readman, Strategic Director, People - announcing start of campaign.	Website hits	BCC staff	0	KS
Feb 2015	Monthly Roundup (all staff) e-newsletter Copy deadline: tbc	Light content to re-enforce the previous messages for staff. Link to online information.	Click through	BCC staff	0	KS
Advertising						
Feb 2015 (half term)	Big Screen Bristol - promotional slide	Use campaign poster design to create a slide for use on Big Screen Bristol.	Rotations / donations	Bristol citizens	£55	KS/LB/Design
Printed materials						
Feb 2015	A4 colour posters (Print quantity: 250)	Main poster A4, plus PDF version. PDF for partners and supporters - including logo.	Donations / website hits	Bristol citizens	£230	KS/HC/Design/Partners
Photography and video						
Feb 2015	Council photographer	Capture our own images for use in publicity material (max 2/3 hours) and use in on-going tweets/web work. (Alternatively, were there any pictures taken last year that we could use to keep costs down?)	N/A	Bristol citizens	£165	KS/CB/Design/Partners
Feb 2015	Video	Work with homeless charities to find people to talk about their experiences. This would give the campaign a lot more credibility.	Views / donations	Bristol citizens	£330	KS/HC/Design/Partners
Feb 2015	Council photographer	To cover x1 press call - the actual sleep	N/A	Bristol	£55	KS/CB

Date	Method(s) of communication	Activity	Measure/track	Audience	Cost	Responsibility
		out		citizens		
PR and media						
Feb 2015	Media/press call	Media release to local media to announce campaign and sleep out	Positive media coverage / donations	Bristol citizens, partners and media	0	KS/HC/Partners
Feb 2015	Quotes, facts and figures	For use in press releases and other media.	Positive media coverage / donations	Bristol citizens, partners and media	0	KS/Partners
Feb 2015	Main spokespeople	Councillor Brenda Massey and / or the Mayor from the Council.	Positive media coverage / donations	Bristol citizens, partners and media	0	KS/Partners
Jan 16 2015	Case studies of people who have been helped to turn their lives around.	Liaise with partners regarding case studies.	Positive media coverage / donations	Bristol citizens, partners and media	0	KS/HC/Partners
Feb 2015	Q&As	Need to have a think about what questions we could be asked by the press or members of the public.	Positive media coverage / donations	Bristol citizens, partners and media	0	KS/HC/Partners
Social media						
Dec 19 2014	Volunteer website	Set up new central volunteer webpage		Bristol citizens	0	RD/AV
Jan 1 2015	Twitter and Facebook	Volunteering tweets to link to new webpage	Social media interaction	Bristol citizens	0	KS
Feb 2015	BCC Facebook and Twitter www.facebook.com/BristolCouncil https://twitter.com/bristolcouncil	Schedule of social media posts using #XXXX (suggestions?) – e.g. facts and figures, did you know? Promotion of text donation, link to web information etc. Asking partners to RT/share posts to help spread the word. #SleepOut15 or #BristolSleepOut15 -NY Resolutions tweet for volunteers	Social media interaction / donations	Bristol citizens	0	KS
Feb 2015	Header graphics	Change our social media artwork to campaign visuals.	Likes / followers / donations	Bristol citizens	0	KS
Feb 2015	BCC YouTube	Set up play list of video messages.	Likes and views	Bristol	0	KS

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	www.youtube.com/user/bristolcitycouncil			citizens		
Website						
Feb 2015	Bristol City Council website www.bristol.gov.uk/XXX X	Dedicated web page with campaign information, poster and how to donate/get involved	Web page live / website hits / donations	All visitors to BCC site	0	KS/TP
Feb 2015	BCC home page promotion www.bristol.gov.uk	Advert on front page with link to campaign web page.	Website hits / donations	All visitors to BCC site	0	KS/TP