

## “UPDATE ON HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPERS”

### Redbridge Faith Forum Network Meeting 29 January 2019

Redbridge Faith Forum had this topic at its first network meeting two years ago and was keen for its members and supporters to be updated on recent developments.

Speakers were therefore invited from SHP Housing, The Welcome Centre, Salvation Army and the local authority to update us on the services currently provided in Redbridge and future plans.

Phil Butcher, RFF Co-chair welcomed the audience of 68 to the event.



#### SHP Housing - Mel, Housing Support Officer and Shreya Regional Services Manager

SHP are commissioned by the local authority to provide floating support to those rough sleeping or homeless in the borough and currently have between 150 & 180 clients. 15 support workers aim to support vulnerable people to avoid homelessness and work with a range of individuals. Some of these may not have ID or recourse to public funds and SHP will link them to pathways of support in Redbridge which may include registering at a GP or accompanying them to a walk-in clinic. Some clients have moved into council accommodation and some have been referred to the Welcome Centre services and



Salvation Army shelter. SHP are pleased to be working in partnership with other agencies. There has been a 25% increase in rough sleepers over the last year and SHP is now implementing the Housing First focus which has been successfully piloted in the USA and used successfully in Manchester and Camden.

The public can assist by reporting sightings of rough sleepers to Streetlink which is a national service in England & Wales. This can be done by downloading the app to a smart phone or by going to their website <https://www.streetlink.org.uk/> or telephoning 0300 500 0914. A description of the person plus their exact location and time of day observed is very useful. This information will be passed onto the local outreach team who will then make efforts to contact the person to check on them – they often will go out at 5am to maximise the chance of finding people where they sleep.

#### The Welcome Centre, Healthy Living Projects – Phil Herbert

The Welcome Centre operates as a day centre (first 2 floors) and a “moving on accommodation” housing 12 people (3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> floors). The day centre operates Monday-Friday providing basic services such as food, showers, laundry service. A nurse is available to give health assessments/referrals and checks free haircuts are available once a month. The centre receives many self-referrals plus referrals from the SHP street outreach team.

The centre relies heavily on volunteers especially in catering and reception. Local residents and businesses have been very generous donating food including Tesco, Nandos, Waitrose, Marks & Spencer, Take Away Genie, local fish & chip shops and a local family came in to cook a wonderful curry. Also donations of toiletries are always welcome. Community support has also been received from 9 local primary schools, Federation of Redbridge Muslim Organisations and the Lions Club.



Phil explained that the goal of all outreach services is to get people off the streets and into housing therefore it can be unhelpful to give food directly to those rough sleeping as it enables them to stay on the streets whereas donations of food and other items to supporting agencies can be used to support people towards long term goals. There is food available every day of the week in Ilford for the homeless with many faith communities participating in this.

The Welcome Centre is keen to support clients in different ways and recently were able to take 4 ladies to a retreat in East Sussex which gave them the opportunity of enjoying country walks, visiting the seaside with positive outcomes including raising self esteem.

One initiative is partnership with LBR Business In the Community which is a 6 week course which runs 6 times a year with 4-6 delegates on each course. This has been a success with one candidate now working. Another moving onto "Ready for Work" and one successfully overcoming alcohol addiction and now working in Norfolk.. Marks & spencer have an excellent programme to give work opportunities to people who might usually not have been considered.

Another recent initiative is a partnership with Barka UK (<http://www.barkauk.org/>) which provides a reconnection project for Eastern European newcomers to the UK who have realised that things are not working out for them in the UK and would like to return home but have no means to do so or are embarrassed for their families to find out things have not worked out for them. Barka can help with travel arrangements and obtain the necessary ID. Barka also has a huge farm which grows vegetables either to sell or be used at a training café. So far 3 clients have been helped since November.

Mohamed Omer, RFF co-chair explained he had great pleasure in introducing Dave and Cedric who would be providing an update on the activities hosted by the Salvation Army and Project Malachi (pop up hostel). This is an interfaith project of which Mohamed as a representative of FORMO is a committee member.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/new-funding-project-malachi>



#### Salvation Army– Dave Morris & Cedric Lungiambudi

The Salvation Army is a hive of activity each week with many community activities taking place including:

Monday & Friday 9.30-4.30	recycle workshop – renovating repairing and servicing bikes for the public
Tuesday & Thursday 10-11.30	toddler group
Wednesday 10-12	coffee morning & job club
Saturday 10-12	brunch served
Sunday 10.30-11.30	morning worship service

The night shelter is open 8pm-7.30 am each night during winter and has been running for 8 years in response to increasing concern about the number of rough sleepers.



Project Malachi is a new initiative for a 42 bed pop up hostel which came about after a note was received from a child named Malachi enclosing £5 he had received from the tooth fairy which he wished to be used for a home for someone on the streets. This inspired individuals to set up an interfaith initiative to do something about the problem – a sponsoring committee has been set up by senior faith leaders and planning permission has been given for a 5 year lease to build a hostel out of shipping

containers at 1a Chadwick Road in Ilford. It is a significant location for the Salvation Army as they first met at 1A Chadwick Road in 1886 in a rented room above Gilderson’s funeral parlour.

The structure will consist of 60 shipping containers – 42 of which will be used for accommodation, 12 for recycles workshops, 1 for laundry and 4 for offices and meeting rooms. Fundraising is ongoing for the project and donations are welcome.

London Strategy & Partnerships Officer Borough of Redbridge – Hitesh Tailor,

Hitesh explained that the council has published a draft Homelessness Strategy on its website with a survey which is open for consultation until 22<sup>nd</sup> February this is the link to complete it <https://engagement.redbridge.gov.uk/housing/homelessness-strategy/>

The aim is to prevent homelessness– 1754 households were able to remain in their existing home last year through our prevention work. Across London, Redbridge had the third highest figure for the number of successful prevention cases. Property prices in Redbridge have increased by an average of 53% over the past 10 years and a third of Redbridge clients in temporary accommodation are housed outside the borough. The strategy is to increase the supply of housing by providing 1000 new homes by 2022, help sustain tenancies and to support vulnerable people including ex-offenders, care leavers and victims of domestic abuse. The council would welcome residents giving their views.



Questions from the floor

All speakers were then invited to the front of the room to form a panel to answer questions. These varied in topic but some answers were as follows:

Project Malachi – 15 of the 42 housing units will be allocated to people without recourse to public funds

Donations of food to rough sleepers – generally it is best to donate resources to the agencies that are working to prevent rough sleeping but people should use their own conscience to decide if it is appropriate to give something.

Beggars – not everyone begging on the street is homeless. Donation of money may be used to fuel addiction to drug or alcohol. There is no financial charge for entering a shelter for the night therefore those that ask for money to fund a night in a shelter are not telling the truth.

The best way to help is to

- a) contact Street Link if concerned about an individual sleeping rough
- b) donate time or resources to the organisations working to prevent rough sleeping.

A vote of thanks was expressed to all the speakers and everyone was encouraged to complete an evaluation form before leaving.



**The next network meeting will be held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> April.**