



# Leicester's Homelessness Charter

*TACKLING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER*

## Background

### What do we mean by homelessness?

People can be homeless if they have nowhere to stay and are sleeping on the streets; they can also be considered homeless (also known as the hidden homeless) even if they have a roof over their head.

This means that homelessness can also include people who are:

- Sofa surfing (temporarily staying with friends or family)
- Staying in a hostel, night shelter or bed & breakfast accommodation
- Squatting
- Homeless because of violence or abuse in their home
- Living in poor conditions which affect their health
- Living apart from their family because they don't have a place to live together.

### What is the scale of the issue in Leicester?

Like the national picture, Leicester has seen increasing numbers of people who are homeless or are at risk of homelessness.

Homelessness can affect anyone and people can become homeless for lots of different reasons. There are social causes of homelessness, such as a lack of affordable housing, poverty, 'no recourse to public funds', unemployment and certain life events that cause individuals to become homeless.

People can also become homeless when they leave prison, care, the armed forces or accommodation for asylum seekers, and have no home to go to. Many homeless women will have escaped violent relationships and some people become homeless simply because they can no longer afford the rent.

Life events like a relationship breaking down, losing a job, mental or physical health problems, or substance misuse can be the trigger. Being homeless can in turn make many of these problems even harder to resolve.

During 2017 Leicester City Council undertook a comprehensive review of homelessness in Leicester (this is done at least every five years).

For the years 2016/17 we found that:

- 1,412 families were provided with support to help them maintain their current home or find alternative accommodation
- 2,327 single people were provided with support to help them maintain their current home or find alternative accommodation
- Leicester's Rough Sleeping Outreach Team identified 198 individuals who had slept rough at some time in that year – sometimes between 30 to 40 people every night

This does not include the hidden homeless, or those sleeping rough in concealed locations and who do not seek help from the local authority.

Locally it is thought that women are more likely to be hidden homeless whereas there are more homeless men in temporary accommodation.

More information about homelessness in Leicester and local homelessness services can be found in Leicester's Homelessness Review, for a copy please email

housing-transformation-team@leicester.gov.uk

### **Where did the idea for a charter come from?**

Leicester has many organisations and individuals providing support to people who are homeless in Leicester, and there are many more individuals, organisations and businesses that want to help. The question was, how do we harness this support and work effectively together to prevent homelessness?

There were suggestions that we look at adopting a similar approach to the Manchester Homelessness Partnership organised by Street Support Network. They have a charter whereby individuals, organisations, businesses can pledge their support in different ways – from a commitment to support the charter to volunteering, donating money, joining an action group to seeking a 'partnership charter-mark' for services provided.

However, Leicester is not Manchester and we want a proposal that is right for us. This sets out what we think a charter could achieve locally and what our principles and values could be.

## Aims of a homelessness charter for Leicester

- Provide a multi-sector leadership / a shared vision
- Communicate a clear vision to the wider public
- Help to harness and enable partnership working
- Gain a greater understanding of the purposes, expertise and capabilities of those involved
- Improve communication between charter supporters
- Develop an inclusive approach including involving people who are or who have been homeless
- Provide a framework for learning, improvement and sharing experience between charter supporters and to enable and monitor change
- Enable charter supporters to support and advise one another
- Develop trusted standards for homelessness services
- Raise awareness of services providing support and work to prevent homelessness locally
- Provide advice and sign-posting to charter supporters and the public
- Provide a focus for co-ordination
- Identify areas for action and working together to tackle these challenges

## Shared principles and values

As individuals or groups actively working to tackle homelessness, or as individuals or businesses supporting work to tackle homelessness, we share values about how people should be treated and how we should treat each other and hold principles of what we want to achieve when we work together. Involving people who have experience of being homeless will be essential to ensure Leicester's homelessness charter delivers positive action to tackle homelessness.

### Principles of the charter

Homelessness affects individuals, families and friends and the wider community. Partnership working can be challenging at times but our focus will be making sure people are at the heart of what we do. This includes our staff and volunteers, people who are homeless and all the people that live and work in the city.

On our own we will rarely, if ever, be able to meet all the needs of individuals who are homeless. It is therefore important to develop effective communication between those in the city working with people who are homeless, those affected by homelessness and those supporting work to tackle homelessness. More can be achieved by working effectively together; reducing duplication and ensuring we have a shared vision about working to prevent homelessness.

The charter's partnership working will involve people who are homeless and people who have experienced homelessness as an integral part of what we do. It is vitally important that these views are reflected and services reflect these needs and aspirations.

Groups and individuals providing services for homeless people or those supporting work to tackle homelessness will have different ways of working, responsibilities, resources and ideas. Likewise, people who are homeless are all different; they have unique needs, expectations and hopes. As organisations sign up to the charter, we acknowledge and welcome our differences and recognise that at times we will view things differently and not agree. We will remain focused on our shared vision of tackling homelessness in Leicester together.

## **Charter values**

### **Stronger together**

Working collectively will achieve the best results. There will be active encouragement of each other to make things happen.

### **Ambition**

There is ambition to succeed. Everyone has their part to play in ending homelessness.

### **Participation**

Everyone has the right to have their voice heard and to participate in decisions that affect them.

### **Dignity and Respect**

People will be treated with dignity and respect.

### **Inclusion**

Differences will be valued and there will be a willingness to listen to new ideas and share views.

### **Honesty**

Everyone is open to receiving, and providing, feedback that is honest and constructive.

## **What now?**

The charter is a call to action; to bring people together to work with one another to prevent homelessness.

Citizens of Leicester, charities, Leicester City Council, healthcare and other public services, faith groups, businesses, institutions and other organisations are asked to adopt the principles and values of this charter, pledge their support and work together with others to tackle key challenges and to prevent homelessness in the city.

For more information and to get involved please contact  
[Homelessness.Charter@LecCofE.org](mailto:Homelessness.Charter@LecCofE.org)