

Caring Hands in the Vale
Charity Number: 1167237
Project Outline
Drop-In Centre – The Lighthouse

Caring Hands in the Vale exists for **“The prevention and relief of poverty and to relieve the needs of those who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress as a result of their social and economic circumstances in Evesham and the surrounding area.”**

Our new drop-in centre is a key part of achieving that vision. The drop-in centre will be a different building to the Vale of Evesham Christian Centre and will be called The Lighthouse.

We currently are based at Vale of Evesham Christian Centre and deliver our core services from there. Our core services are the 5 Resource Banks and meals on Mondays and Wednesdays. See below for more details on these services.

Those core services at present mainly address the relief of poverty in the short term, and our aim is not only to relieve poverty but to give our service users a route out of poverty and hope for the future. Many of the initiatives which we wish to offer regularly are dependent on the availability of space and dedicated resources which cannot be provided within the present accommodation.

The new or improved initiatives which we seek to offer are as follows:

- A Job club to assist those seeking work with job searching and job applications.
- Debt advice and help with form filling – developing what we offer at present
- An IT suite. This will allow service users to access the internet to help with job searching and job applications, bidding on properties under the Home Choice scheme, checking emails, accessing social media etc. Many vital government services are only accessible online.
- A neutral place to meet outreach workers to the homeless and drug and alcohol support workers
- A health hub. This again would particularly focus on homeless individuals but also those who are not currently registered with a GP practice. Possible services would include basic health checks, counselling, drug and alcohol counselling, podiatry service, dental clinics. We have a number of local hairdressers who have offered to come in to provide free haircuts.
- Cookery classes and other ways to use limited resources well – further developing our course “Cooking and Eating on a Budget”

In addition, we will be able to offer vital resources which are not at present available in the local area to assist with crisis situations and those who are homeless.

- A shower facility, particularly for those who are homeless.
- A laundry and drying facility. This would be particularly to support homeless individuals in being able to wash their clothing and other items. This would also be available for families in emergencies, where there might be an issue with no electricity or a broken washing machine. This would also be available to individuals and families who are in temporary accommodation. There would be a nominal charge for this facility.
- Lockers for individuals who are homeless and need somewhere to store important and personal documents. We will also offer the use of the building as a 'care of' address.
- A place for the homeless to drop in to with positive activities and a healthy environment
- A well-equipped centre for emergency accommodation in very cold conditions (SWEP)

The efficient storage and availability of resources will also be possible within a larger building. We struggle to store many useful resources at present and are unable to receive clothing, bedding and other items because we do not have the space to store them.

All current Caring Hands' activities will be transferred to the new building. These are our current core services:

Food Bank:

The Food Bank provides food parcels which are adapted to meet the needs of the recipient. Each food parcel is made up mainly of non-perishable items and should last for at least a week.

The Food Bank also provides Christmas Hampers made up of Christmas 'goodies'. We target families and individuals most in need by requesting referrals from specific agencies.

Household Bank:

Resources available from the Household Bank include toiletry packs, cleaning packs, laundry packs and toilet rolls. Each of these packs should last the service user two weeks.

Clothing Bank:

The Clothing Bank mostly stocks men's clothing, usually for individuals who are homeless or rough sleeping. Service users at the Drop-in Diner can access clothing when there are surplus donations, or items which we would not normally stock.

The Clothing Bank also keeps a small range of smart clothing, which are available for service users for interviews and other formal occasions.

Homeless Bank:

The Homeless Bank provides a range of resources for service users who are homeless or rough sleeping, including blankets, sleeping bags, filled backpacks, tents and homelessness handbook.

Baby Bank:

The Baby Bank provides nappies and wipes, baby milk and baby toiletries. We plan to eventually develop the range of resources the Baby Bank provides.

Drop-in Diner:

We continue to run the Drop-in Diner on Mondays and Wednesdays (during term-time). This is the only resource we provide which is accessed by self-referral. The Diner continues to provide between 100 and 120 meals each week, and is used by around 350 different individuals each year.

The drop-in diner aims to address a number of needs and provide different opportunities:

- A meal – the drop-in diner provides a free two or three course meal. Service users access the drop-in diner for the meal due to financial/housing difficulties.
- In addition, a number of the individuals who use the drop-in diner are socially isolated, such as elderly, individuals with mental health issues and individuals with a learning disability. In the drop-in diner they find friendship and acceptance.
- There is a Community Pantry with a 'help yourself' table with surplus fresh produce, non-perishable items which are past their 'best before' date, clothing etc. This not only reduces waste, but helps individuals with food items and therefore reducing the need for a referral for a food parcel.
- Networking with other front-line agencies to organise drop-in support, such as housing support, homelessness services and drug and alcohol support services.
- Volunteering opportunities. We have volunteers from Vale of Evesham Christian Centre and other churches, adults with a learning disability who are supported by care staff, as well as individuals from the local community. A

number of our volunteers are with us to support them in their recovery from mental health issues or bereavement. Some of our volunteers are developing their work skills and learning to work as part of a team. We provide work experience placements for a number of local Middle and High Schools as well as the local college and university.

Education/Training/Talks:

Our Community Worker, continues to be available to undertake presentations about the work of Caring Hands for local groups, organisations, churches, schools and community groups.

Caring Hands offers and runs a training course called Shopping and Eating on a Budget, which helps individuals and families learn to manage their shopping budget and reduce waste. We can also provide CAP Money Course, Modern Day Slavery Awareness Workshops, Homelessness Awareness Sessions and Basic Drug and Alcohol Awareness.

Our future plans include ESOL (English as a Second Language) and Basic Cookery Skills courses.

There would be the opportunity develop the services we already provide:

- Meals served more often than twice a week. We already provide two full meals during the week and additional days would be a lighter meal such as soup and roll or a sandwich lunch. Breakfast would be a lighter breakfast of cereals and toast. We would ensure that we did not start to create a dependency upon meals by asking for a nominal donation for anyone attending more than once in the week.
- Developing networking opportunities to be able to signpost individuals for further support.
- Increase the number of volunteering opportunities we have available.
- Helping individuals develop skills and knowledge and offer support to be able to change their circumstances.
- Develop partnership working such as Evesham Homeless Partnership, Wychavon Homeless Partnership, Evesham and Pershore Rough Sleeper Group and Evesham Food Bank Forum.

Diane Bennett MBE
Community Worker
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