



BUSINESS PLAN

2010-2020

January 2010



**Vision:**

Colchester Emergency Night Shelter is a place where all vulnerable homeless people can go on a direct access basis. Our long-term vision is to extend the range of services offered to support homeless people with multiple and complex needs which will help this heterogeneous group to become motivated, exercising their skills and talents ready to become valuable members of the community.

**Mission statement:**

Our aim is to help homeless people to achieve better, more secure and appropriate housing. We aim to accept people regardless of how chaotic and complex their needs appear and help to harness their talents to become valued and creative citizens.

**Beliefs and values:**

Trustees and Staff of Colchester Emergency Night Shelter believe in the value of the individual in their own right as uniquely talented and worthy. All, including the homeless and vulnerable, are entitled to the support and security which will allow them to flourish and in the process create true human growth in the community as a whole.

To achieve our vision and mission we will be:

**Professional:**

- emphasise skill and expertise in providing service
- committed and passionate about the work we do with residents
- value staff, expecting their best

**Involving:**

- involve residents in shaping our future
- seek involvement with local communities
- seek partnerships that offer mutual benefit

**Empowering:**

- foster trust through communication and understanding
- encourage creativity and initiative
- run supportive yet challenging services

**Responsive:**

- respond to residents' expressed needs
- promote flexible service delivery
- challenge ourselves to adapt to our environment

**Inclusive:**

- celebrate diversity and mutual respect
- value people for who they are
- offer everyone opportunities to participate

**Aspirational:**

- achieve high performance through a focus on positive outcomes
- challenge residents and staff to reach full potential
- strive for new opportunities and innovations

**Learning:**

- reflect on our experience, systems and environment
- celebrate achievements and learn from mistakes
- develop individuals, teams and the organisation

**Core business and target group:**

Our core business is the provision of high quality direct access emergency temporary accommodation. We provide resettlement advice and assistance and signposting to partner organisations who are able to support residents' other needs. Our aim is to help our residents to gain self-confidence, to successfully find them suitable permanent accommodation which will enable them to realise their full potential. Our target group is homeless vulnerable people who require housing and other support.

Our present focus on temporary accommodation gives the clarity of purpose required to achieve our primary aims and objectives and to develop strategies to improve outcomes for vulnerable people.



**Background and Context:**

Colchester Emergency Night Shelter started on a purely voluntary basis in 1984 with a small council house capable of taking 6 men. After a few years where provision was intermittent, funding was achieved enabling appointment of a Co-ordinator in 1988. From then on Colchester Emergency Night Shelter has been able to expand its capacity to 20 including women and couples as well as significantly increase the services offered. We offer two meals every day, with lunch and longer opening hours on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Crucially, we now offer every resident access to a resettlement worker.

We have witnessed in the past two years a very significant rise in the numbers of people with multiple and complex needs who, with our present levels of staffing and facilities, we are unable to help successfully. The imperative for motivating and properly valuing this group can be witnessed by many statutory services who are also failing to provide adequately for them. This causes deep frustration among frontline workers who deal with them time and again without seeing any improvement. As such it also causes noticeable waste of precious resources.

**Future trends and analysis of need:**

As resources in the statutory sector become scarcer, with inevitable cut in public spending no matter what the outcome of the general election, the sector is likely to become more target focused. It is also likely that these service will be looking for quick successes and be more reluctant to engage with homeless people with multiple needs. More people are then likely to fall between service boundaries. Yet they will still be trying to access services and in the process waste valuable resources.

Our focus on the provision of emergency temporary accommodation for vulnerable homeless people has helped is to identify a future need for a facility which offers crisis response but focuses on homeless people with multiple and complex needs. Such a project could save resources both within the sector and in the community since service deprivation often leads to injury, anti-social behaviour etc, which are costly and does nothing to break the cycle of repetition. We estimate that a third to a half of our current residents are in this situation. This is becoming a greater issue as we see an increasing number of individuals with multiple needs. We also have to sadly acknowledge we often find ourselves victims of the resource-starved statutory services when support for a difficult resident is withdrawn.

**Strategies:**

In May 2009, the Trustees undertook a strategic review of the current operation of Colchester Emergency Night Shelter as a basis for development of strategies to improve services to our residents and to assist in preparation of bids for additional funding. The short- and long-term strategies outlined here are all supported by background papers and bids which are published separately.

**Asset Management:**

The freehold of the property in which Colchester Emergency Night Shelter operates was purchased and renovated in 1995 funded by the National Lottery. Recognising the problems of maintaining and improving an ageing property, the Trustees developed a Property Management Plan in 2004. This was enhanced to support a bid for Places of Change funding in 2008. Rent levels, which are set through and supported by Housing Benefit, are insufficient to do more than cover basic maintenance. The Trustees are still implementing the Property Development Plan, albeit at a slower level than if the Places for Change bid had been



successful, through bids to Trust Funds and targeted fundraising. The Trustees' intention is to continue to improve the property and environment for residents but the timescale will depend entirely on continuation of donations and successful bids.

**Preparation for Independence:**

The need to increase and widen the range of support given to our residents is based on our experience over 20 years, but particularly because we have noted over the last five years the growing complexity of individual resident need. Our successful resettlement program will only work if our residents have the basic skills to enable them to live independently. We can do much more to enhance the residents' ability to live in a more complex society but this takes resources we do not currently have. The aim of this enhanced service is to assess individual resident needs and provide a service and the support needed to help him/her develop the confidence, commitment and knowledge needed to plan for living a more active and rewarding life.

**Multiple Needs:**

The aim of this project is to provide effective and lasting resettlement for homeless individuals who have multiple and complex needs. It is intended to break the cycle of repeat homelessness and to offer instead positive life choices from a stable well supported basis. The project will succeed by building bridges to independence in a sustained way which embraces a wide range of statutory and voluntary organisations working productively together.

**SWOT analysis:**

**Strengths:**

- As the organisation is small it is also flexible, adaptable, friendly well placed to negotiate independently with partner providers and at the same time command the respect of the "target group".
- Well-supported by the local community

**Weaknesses:**

- Insufficient capacity by paid staff to manage all administration and respond to funders' reporting requirements
- Lack of acknowledged professional standing.

**Opportunities:**

- Statutory sector aware of financial squeeze but may see Colchester Night Shelter as part of a strategy to reduce overall costs.
- Wide co-operation between service providers for identifiable outcomes

**Threats:**

- Public spending reduction too severe for other providers to come on board.
- Target group is too risky for other providers to want to work with them.
- Possible legal obstacles to effective co-operation.

**Risk analysis:**

The Trustees and Management regularly review risks to Colchester Emergency Night Shelter. These reviews are designed to ensure that the health and safety of staff, volunteers and residents are safeguarded; that adequate insurance is in place where insurable risks are identified; and that financial resources are protected.



The major risks are identified as:

- risk to staff and/or property relating to the increasingly complex and difficult nature of residents;
- overconfidence concerning the ability of the client group to change and so not reaching outcomes such as reduction in revolving door service use or worse committing a serious and irrevocable offence;
- risk of inappropriate staff behaviour influencing the reputation of the project;
- major structural failure of the property;
- financial risk which include funding reduction or withdrawal and reduction in donations due either to recession or to change in perception; although Colchester Emergency Night Shelter is not dependent on a single source of funding, loss of any one of the sources would be seriously detrimental to continuation of the project; the recent climate of no increase in core funding is in effect a regular reduction in income levels against inexorably increasing costs.

The worst case scenario in any of these would be the failure of the project. Whilst the likelihood of one risk happening, or even a combination of several, is very real, contingency measures are put in place to mitigate potential risks:

- Individual service users are risk assessed before entry to the project and are subject to ongoing risk assessment throughout their stay;
- Staff and volunteers are screened before appointment and there is an intensive induction programme as well as ongoing training for all members of staff;
- A full set of appropriate policies and procedures are in place; staff are trained in their implementation and outcomes monitored closely;
- Consultancy services are bought-in for health and safety and staffing from Peninsula Business Services;
- The Trustees undertake a complete survey of the structure of the property annually and receive regular maintenance and issue reports from the Coordinator at every meeting ;
- Insurance is taken out for all insurable risks; these are subject to regular reviews by Ecclesiastical Insurance in liaison with the Trustees;
- Funding bids are prepared and submitted for every new strategy and project and every effort will be made to further diversify income to reduce risk;
- Costs are constantly monitored in order to ensure cost-effective provision and value for money;
- Benchmarking exercises are carried out regularly against similar organisations to ensure that the level of income and costs are commensurate with the level of service which funders expect Colchester Emergency Night Shelter to deliver; the result of these exercises will be shared with funders where levels of income are identified to be insufficient.

#### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

The outcomes of Colchester Emergency Night Shelter's operations and strategic aims monitored and evaluated regularly through reports to funders as required in contracts and service level agreements. Regular reports on outcomes are given to the Trustees.

Case studies are used to illustrate specific points and will be expanded to provide further information about project developments.