

PLYMOUTH SOUP RUN

December 2017

Shelter Conference 2017

– Report by Hilary Knight
and Lyndsey Withers

The second Homelessness and Housing Conference organised by Shelter was held in Plymouth on 21st November. There were speakers from Shelter, Crisis, Homeless Link, and Plymouth City Council Community Connections, as well as a range of informative participatory workshops.

With 300,000 people in Britain currently homeless, all agreed that there is a "homelessness crisis in this country". The growing number of people rough sleeping was highlighted throughout the day, as was the number in temporary accommodation, which has risen dramatically over the last 5 years. Home ownership in England is at its lowest level for 30 years. In the rented sector, 1 in 4 families are now privately renting – up from 1 in 10 a decade ago. 800,000 people in rented accommodation cannot afford to save as little as £10 a month, hence have little prospect of improving their circumstances.

We learned about the 'Homelessness Reduction Act' which comes into force in April 2018. It is hoped that this will improve the situation for those who are threatened with homelessness

and others who are already homeless. More information about the Act can be found online, eg at www.bigissue.com/news/homelessness-reduction-act-come-play-april-2018. As a Private Member's Bill, the Act depended on persistence and lobbying to be successfully passed. The same is the case for the 'Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation and Liability for Housing Standards) Bill' which has its second reading on Friday 19th January 2018. Bills debated on Fridays often fail due to the absence of many MPs who have returned to their constituencies. This is where lobbying is needed by writing to MPs to encourage them to not only support such progressive legislation but also to be present in Parliament to debate and vote on it.

The conference presentation by Jo Prestidge from Homeless Link was particularly interesting. Their 'Housing First' model is based on the principle that people have a right to a home and that, crucially, there should be flexible holistic support in place to help them as long as is necessary. It's particularly appropriate for individuals with multiple disadvantage who have difficulty managing in a hostel environment and complying with the necessary

rules of community living. As a consequence, they frequently experience repeated cycles of eviction and re-entry into the hostel system with progressive negative impact on their wellbeing.

There has been research into Housing First, one study finding that 70-90% of people had been able to maintain their tenancy. Jo showed a video of a man who is now living in his own home – with his "own front door". He commented: "I can't turn the clock back but I do have control over today and tomorrow".

The Homeless Link website has many useful resources and is well worth exploring, see: www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2017/oct/03/housing-first-is-unique-let%E2%80%99s-do-it-right.

The day was packed with interesting, moving and relevant material and was a great opportunity for networking. We would encourage anyone who is able to attend the conference next year to do so. There is a cost implication but we feel our money was very well spent. Next year we have offered to provide some material on the Soup Run as we feel it would be relevant to many of the delegates attending.



*Many thanks to **Café Fandom** and **Boston Tea Party** who generously provided a fantastic spread for a gathering of Hope Baptist Sunday and Monday Soup Run volunteers on 24th November:*



A BIG Thankyou...

To everyone who volunteers on the Soup Run, without whom the Soup Run would not go out every night without fail. Collecting, preparing and serving the food are all important in helping the Soup Run to provide food for those in need.

A community and faith driven service providing free food and hot drinks to homeless, hungry and vulnerable people 365 days a year.

Transforming Plymouth Together

Since its launch in 2016, TPT has been working to address issues related to poverty and inequality through informal community work and development initiatives. This initiative from the Church Urban Fund is a response to recommendations from the Plymouth Fairness Commission.

With the support of the Bishop of Plymouth and Plymouth City Council, Chris Forster (below)



works particularly with communities and churches to respond to issues such as family well-being, loneliness, debt, wage levels, food poverty, discrimination and the elderly.

Several new projects and initiatives have now been set up in co-operation with different community groups and agencies across the city.

In St Budeaux, a pilot project which fed children during the school holidays will be expanded to other areas during 2018.

The 'Food for Love' event is aimed at addressing child poverty in

some of the most needy areas of Plymouth. St Peter's Church and St Peter's School in Stonehouse teamed up with TPT and Plymouth Foodbank to host a cooking event at the school led by the school cook. Ten families were selected to prepare a lasagne.

At St Paul's (Stonehouse), Durnford Street, a Dementia Friendly Carol Service will be repeated again this year (on Tuesday 12th December) following it's success last year. Everyone is welcome, especially people living with and caring for those with dementia.

Another new initiative is the development of a simple budgeting course which, as well as helping those struggling, has also been used to train volunteers at the Foodbank, Salvation Army and Banardo's and Churches.

To support migrants who may be vulnerable, organisations are encouraged to consider what they can do to make Plymouth a 'City of Sanctuary'. For example, Citybus have offered free transport and Chris Forster (who has a keen interest in rugby!) provides a kit and a welcome for immigrants to come along to pitch up and play rugby sessions. This gives them

something positive to do as well as helping them to integrate into the community whilst waiting 'in the system'.

Chris Forster would love to help if you have an idea for a community project and is keen to encourage us to use the skills, assets, gifts, passion and heart for the community that we have, to put them into action for the benefit of the community in addressing some very current social issues we are facing.

For more information call Chris Forster on 07710096210 and/or visit www.cuf.org.uk/transforming-plymouth-together.



Can you help? ...

If you can donate any of the following to Plymouth Soup Run, please contact Hilary on 01752-404134 or email info@plymouthsoupapun.org.uk:

- Blankets/sleeping bags
- Hats, gloves, scarves
- Men's socks/pants
- Shower gel/deodorant
- Tinned sandwich fillings
- Aluminium foil, kitchen roll, sandwich bags
- Wrapped chocolate biscuits

Luke Pollard MP connects with Plymouth Soup Run



On a Soup Run outing before the election in May 2017 we were pleased to have Luke Pollard on the Soup Run bus from Hope Baptist Church.

He has since been in contact again and was able to send his

representatives Alex Beverley and Ben Cooper (Community Caseworker) to the recent Soup Run Development Group meeting. They were able to share some of Luke's vision on issues facing homeless people in Plymouth.

Luke is intending to be part of the team on the Sunday evening Soup Kitchen at Shekinah on Christmas Eve and will also be holding a surgery in the New Year for anyone to discuss the homeless issue with him.

Dear Lord...

*Please help us to recognise the gifts you have given us and grant us the inspiration, passion and courage to put them to good use for the benefit of others.
Amen*