

The EU Active Inclusion Strategy

In 2006 the European Commission recognised the need to integrate employment and social inclusion policy and developed the concept of active inclusion in order to help Member States mobilise those who can work, and to provide adequate support to those who cannot.

The EU Active Inclusion Strategy aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion for those furthest from the labour market by combining three elements: Adequate income support; inclusive labour markets; and access to quality services including housing, employment and health services.

The Cities for Active Inclusion project

The Cities for Active Inclusion project is a dynamic network of ten European Cities, including Birmingham, which examines how active inclusion matters are addressed at the local level. It is funded by the EU PROGRESS programme.



Cities for Active Inclusion

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For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>.
The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.



PREVENTION THROUGH ACTIVE INCLUSION Transforming Lives Through Housing Related Support

ACCESS TO HOUSING & ACCOMMODATION



The purpose of this booklet is to highlight some of the exceptional services that are delivered through the Supporting People programme to help support vulnerable people to access emergency accommodation and housing.

Cold Weather Provision

Cold weather provision for those sleeping rough has been put in place by Birmingham City Council in preparation for weather predictions of harsh winter. The William Booth Centre provides food and shelter for those sleeping rough on the streets of Birmingham, and will open its doors as soon as a cold snap kicks-in. Preparation includes advising outreach teams and referral agencies of the provision and means of accessing the service.



The Cold Weather Provision is a partnership approach to providing food and shelter to those without a roof over their heads and is based at the Salvation Army's William Booth Centre, Shadwell St in Birmingham. It is funded by the city council's Supporting People programme and run by the Salvation Army with support from Midland Heart and Trident Reach.

Duty staff provide additional cover and are available to carry out risk and needs assessments of rough sleepers, look at temporary and permanent accommodation options, and refer those sleeping rough to relevant agencies who can help where appropriate. The city council monitors weather reports, and when it is predicted that the temperature will fall to zero or below the Centre is opened between 10pm and 9am, where they will be given a place indoors to rest for the night. Upon arrival they will receive light refreshments and a hot breakfast in the morning.



Birmingham City Council is nationally recognised as one of only fifteen community based rough sleeping champions in the UK. The council won the award of 'Ending Rough Sleeping Champion' for its pioneering work in this area.

The City Council works in partnership with agencies to tackle the causes and solutions of rough sleeping in the city. It works with a range of statutory and voluntary organisations including The Salvation Army, St Basils, Trident and Midland Heart



Fry Housing Trust

Fry Housing Trust has over 50 years experience in working with offenders. It was established in 1959, in memory of Margery Fry, to meet the needs of offenders leaving prison with nowhere to live.

Margery believed that there must be help and support for people leaving prison in order to give them a chance of rebuilding their lives.

The Trust aims to prevent people from offending or re-offending to move on successfully from the criminal justice system.

Their main focus lies with offenders, but they also work with those at risk of offending due to their circumstances, e.g. homelessness, substance abuse, mental health.

"Research has clearly identified that re-offending rates are far higher for offenders that are homeless..."

For people leaving prison it is difficult to claim benefits, get signed up for medical help or access training and education, therefore making employment very difficult.



The trust helps people to make the connections to these basic requirements that everybody in society needs.

"Fry Housing Trust operates a 'no exclusion policy...'"

Each applicant is assessed individually regardless of previous or current offences.

Fry have supported housing and floating support schemes that operate intensive staffing which allows them to manage a higher risk client group.

When managing risk, staff work alongside probation officers, police, persistent prolific offender managers and also public protection workers, to ensure the safety of the client and also those who share the communities they live in.

The supported housing schemes have various operating times which allows the placing of clients in the most appropriate accommodation to manage their support needs and risk.

The floating support services also vary across the Midlands, with some schemes dedicated to a higher risk client group.

Fry Housing Trust works in partnership with the probation services and the police at an operational and a strategic level.

The Trust has very close links with the Strategies Management board of Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in the West Midlands, the West Midlands Offender Accommodation Forum and the West Midlands Region Accommodation Pathway Group.

At an operational level there are excellent working relationships with probation officers, police offender managers, resettlement teams within prisons and other voluntary organisations that provide specialist support.

There is also vital work across the various local authorities in developing move-on arrangements and managing risk within the context of multi-agency public protection panels.

The most dangerous time for women and their children affected by domestic violence is at the point of, shortly after leaving, or attempting to leave the abuser.

Birmingham has a population of approximately 1 million.

- During 2009/10, **15495** domestic violence incidents were reported to the police, of which 30% were repeat calls (*West Midlands Police April 2010*)
- **1149** homeless applications were made due to domestic violence. **1548** women and their children sought emergency refuge accommodation (Birmingham City Council 2011)
- **8591** referrals were made to Birmingham Children's Social Care where domestic violence was the primary referral reason (*Birmingham Safeguarding Children's Board January 2011*)

Situated in a quiet area within the West Midlands Ashram refuge, one of the largest in the UK, provides 24-hour support to children and women who have been affected by domestic abuse.

The refuge is a comfortable and safe community designed to offer temporary accommodation. It offers a wide range of support to those affected by domestic violence to develop their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Modern, self contained apartments give clients privacy and independence. All apartments are fully furnished and are fitted with robust security systems. The refuge also has communal areas, including a spacious lounge and playroom which provide a meeting place for clients to relax. Many of the clients and their children have fled from their home, leaving behind all their belongings, so it is important to staff to ensure that all clients are reassured that they are in a secure and friendly environment. A typical day at the refuge will see communal meetings on parenting skills, independent living skills, budgeting and life skills.



Trident refuge is an emergency, 'temporary', confidential and safe place to stay for women and children escaping domestic abuse. Clients receive practical and emotional support from qualified, experienced staff who understand the impact of domestic abuse on family life.

As well as a safe place to stay clients will also receive individual support and advice for:

- Finding permanent housing
- Finding nurseries and schools for children
- Access to health services
- Legal advice and advocacy
- Counselling for clients and children
- Access to training, education and employment

Domestic Violence REFUGeline

The REFUGeline service operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. It offers support and options for safe accommodation within Birmingham and can refer to other refuges.



Young Men at Risk – Guns and Gangs

Young men involved in gun and gang activity are extremely vulnerable and have a range of different and complex support needs that require effective coordination through a series of timely interventions.

Unlike many offenders this group is unique in many of the issues they present. They are restricted in where they can be accommodated, and in most cases only one client can be placed in that area, both for their safety and that of support staff. Predominantly they have never been in the benefit system or registered with a GP and avoid activities that would require them to register details. They are unable to use public transport due to travelling through other gang territories or being recognised. They are exempt from any group activities both with probation and **DORCAS** (counselling and mentoring service) due to risk of/to grooming of others.

The **YMAR** service supports male gang members aged 16-26 within the Birmingham area seeking to exit the gun, gang and knife culture.

These are provided via access to housing related support in conjunction with a range of existing 'wrap-around' services delivered by a range of community based providers. These include conflict resolution, mediation, mentor & peer support, specialist counselling, drug treatment, employment opportunities, as well as access to training and leisure activities.

Referrals

Referrals are identified by **MAGGU** (Multi Agency Guns and Gangs Unit) and Probation in the order of priority for interviews. (This does not necessarily follow the dates of referral but the severity of referral need)

Accommodation

The provision of accommodation for this client group is restricted and controlled by exclusion zones, postcodes and gang associated people living or passing through the area. Through partnership working with both FCH and Midland Heart accommodation has been secured for this particular client group.

Once accommodation has been identified it is then subject to Police intelligence scrutiny before being approved. All offers of accommodation are subject to a robust risk assessment based on location, groups actively living in or around the vicinity or vulnerability to drugs or crime in the area.



The Snow Hill – A Place of Change

The Snow Hill building first opened its doors in 1885 as a theatre, later becoming a cinema, until being largely destroyed by bombing in 1944. In 1951 the building re-opened as the Birmingham YMCA, became Aston University Halls of Residence until becoming a private hostel and falling into poor condition.

Following a Council Control Order the building was redeveloped by SHAPE Housing Group, and in 199 became a 157 bed direct access hostel for men aged 25+; as it remained for the next 20 years, latterly under Midland Heart.



“The Snow Hill provided a vital role in accommodating and supporting homeless men in Birmingham, this included a central role in achieving an 80% reduction in rough sleeping on the streets of Birmingham”

Increasingly, however, the offer to homeless people felt too institutional – each man had a small room with a single bed, toilets were shared on the corridors, and the ground floor of the building was mainly dedicated to feeding 157 breakfasts and 157 dinners in a communal dining room. The limitations of the building, along with limited independence, could hamper positive move-on and employment prospects.

“Places of Change is the name of a government funding programme to transform the buildings in which homeless services are provided and the ways in which the services are delivered. A partnership of Birmingham City Council, Midland Heart, The Homes & Communities Agency and Advantage West Midlands successfully secured the support and funds to transform The Snow Hill”



The vision for this transformation came from a number of directions including the mixed community living within Common Ground in New York, and the Greyston Bakery social enterprise in New York State. The vision was to create a mixed community living within The Snow Hill – people who are homeless and moving on, alongside people who have never been homeless, with at least half the residents in work. This mix would create a positive culture of work, added to by a social enterprise bakery and coffee shop.



The Snow Hill re-opened in May 2012 following a complete refurbishment, plus new build extension. It is now home to 92 people reflecting the vision of a mixed community. Those who have been homeless have a Supporting People funded Support Worker to assist them in gaining independent living skills and moving on; beyond that all residents have an identical accommodation, service and cost offer.

Frost and Snow Bakery began operation by selling cupcakes while The Snow Hill was closed. This Social Enterprise has now sold over 55,000 cupcakes and won awards for its training programme working with homeless people. Half of the Frost and Snow staff are people who have experienced homelessness.

