



BUSINESS PLAN

2014

Charity Number 803328

Company Number 20475258

Vision:

Colchester 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 provided to the growing number of homeless people with multiple and complex needs. This 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 more secure and appropriate housing and assist them to live independently in the community by providing education, training and support services. 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. Our services are always based on the individuals needs and are offered regardless of race, gender, religion etc.

Beliefs and values:

Trustees and Staff of Colchester 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, where appropriate
- 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 short-term accommodation. We provide resettlement assistance, personal development work including training and educational projects which support the resident in obtaining the vital skills to ensure successful and sustainable accommodation, as well as signposting to specialist organisations who are able to support residents' other needs.

Background and Context:

Colchester 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 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 everyday with lunch and longer opening hours on Sundays and Special Bank Holidays.

We have witnessed in the past few years a very significant rise in the numbers of people with multiple, complex and over-lapping needs who we are able to help successfully with extended stays but this obviously impacts on resources and bed space availability.

Future trends and analysis of need:

As resources in the statutory sector become scarcer with the inevitable cuts in public spending no matter what the outcome of the general election will be, the sector is likely to become more target focused. It is also likely that these services 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.

Our focus on the provision of short term accommodation for vulnerable homeless people has helped us to identify a future need for a new building which offers crisis response but focuses on the homeless 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 more calls to the emergency services, higher A & E admissions and increases the likelihood of offending, which are costly and does nothing to break the cycle of repetition. We also have to sadly acknowledge we often find ourselves victims of the resource-starved statutory services when separately funded specialist help is reduced or withdrawn eg. Specific Support Related Workers which affects our ability to help the resident.

Asset Management:

The freehold of the property in which Colchester 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 and Management continue to improve the property and environment for residents but this does entirely depend on the continuation of donations and successful bids. The Long-Term intention is to move to new purpose built premises where we will be able to provide the resources and services to meet the demand of our service users.

Life Skills:

The need to increase and widen the range of support given to our residents is based on our experience over 30 years, but particularly because we have noted over recent years the growing complexity of individual resident needs. Our resettlement aims only succeed when our residents have the basic skills to enable them to live independently. We can assist many more people to reintegrate into society but this takes resources we do not currently have.

SWOT analysis:**Strengths:**

- As the organisation is small it is also flexible, adaptable, well placed to negotiate independently and at the same time service the needs of the client group
- Supported by the local community
- Experience and longevity of the team
- Our volunteers

Weaknesses:

- Under resourcing of staff to respond to the complex needs of our clients
- Lack of suitable move-on accommodation

Opportunities:

- Increase our profile
- Partner with landlords
- Increased funding
- Re-Brand

Threats:

- Lack of funding
- Welfare Reform
- Possible legal obstacles to effective co-operation.

Risk analysis:

The Trustees and Management regularly review risks to Colchester 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 the 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 risks which include funding reduction or withdrawal and reduction in donations due either to recession or to change in perception; although Colchester 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.

But whilst the likelihood of one occurring or even a combination is a possibility, 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 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 H.R. 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 Manager at every meeting ;
- Insurance is taken out and is subject to regular reviews with Management and 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 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 Night Shelter's operations and strategic aims are 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.