



Chiltern Area Quaker Meeting and Thames Valley Partnership Joint Housing Project – Scoping Study

Background:

It has become increasingly apparent that there is a growing housing crisis in the country and particularly in the Thames Valley. The shortages in social and supported housing, the increasing gap between housing benefit and rental values and changes in the statutory housing rules rendering offenders as non-statutory cases have led to a huge increase in the number of homeless people we support. It is becoming increasingly difficult to even source night shelter or hostel style temporary accommodation for our service users and without suitable accommodation it is very difficult for people to break free from the cycle of crime.

Furthermore it is clear from desistance studies that in order for a person to desist they require more than just housing; a “place to belong” and a “new identity” have been cited as being crucial in long term desistance (Fergus and McNeil – check references). Work experience, new positive relationships and a sense of purpose have been shown to be crucial in developing the new identity.

We are therefore seeking to develop a new supported housing project encompassing holistic support including mentoring, counselling and training, and providing daytime support, training and practical opportunities to give residents a sense of purpose and self-worth.

The proposal would build on current good practice from residential housing project such as Emmaus, May Day Trust, Stonham, Langley Trust; day centres such as Aspire; women’s centres such as Alana House and residential rehab centres such as The Carpenter’s Arms and the Old Tea Warehouse.

We would look to acquire and renovate a commercial premise, such as an old pub, to provide living accommodation, training rooms and workshop space. The kitchen could provide secondary training opportunities and if outside space was included landscaping and horticulture opportunities could be developed.

In order to progress the vision we need a scoping study to provide the following insight:

1) Governance and start-up

- Research and recommendation on legal structure allowing for investment, partnership or a stand-alone approach and safeguarding against risk to existing stakeholder charities.
- An assessment of the issues involved in partnerships providing the finances for the house with consideration of the benefits of investment or conditional donation of funding

- Consider different ways that the project could be established and describe them. Outlining the operating model of income and expenditure during the life of the project and producing a business plan for each model.
- Develop issues for Thames Valley Partnership and Chiltern Area Quaker Meeting to consider in relation to the strengths of such projects, the weaknesses, the risks involved and the opportunities.
- Develop a possible project plan for the steps needed to work from consideration to implementation.

2) Assessing the need

- Identify the level of demand and the optimal geographic location for provision in the Thames Valley.
- Knowledge of existing provision to meet needs and identifying gaps – (e.g geographical location of similar projects, specific groups of offenders who are most in need e.g working aged men or females).
- An understanding of level of need and risk of harm and the type of support that prisoners released NFA have and how the need fluctuates across specific groups of offenders (e.g male/female prisoners, short-term prisoners, repeat offenders).
- Assessment of the numbers of people likely to be interested in this support.
- Review the experience of charities and faith groups who have provided such housing for ex-offenders through a literature survey to establish the key issues involved, including similar Quaker housing projects and the Quaker led provision in Winchester.

Costs and time scale:

The cost of the scoping study comprises of paying a consultant for a period of 6 months to undertake reviews of current projects and potential social enterprises including travel, time at £200 per day (maximum 42.5 days) and production of an interim report at 3 months and a full report and business plan for the scheme.

Funding has been secured from the Big Lottery and the full report needs to be completed by March 2018.

There will be travelling expenses for some stakeholders as we explore different models to help produce the plan. This will be paid at the HMRC rate of 45p per mile and we would expect a round trip to be of no more than 100 miles. We are therefore budgeting for 5 visits. This is a complex study involving aspects of criminal justice as well as property and planning law. The governance issues involving two or maybe three partners will also add to the complexity of the study.

Based on the finding of the full report there may be an opportunity for further development work.

Expressions of interest including a CV and letter indicating your relevant experience should be emailed to caroline@newleafproject.co.uk or sent to Caroline Stevens, Thames Valley Partnership, Dorton Road, Chilton HP189NA to be received not later than 25th September.