

7 April 2014

Dear stakeholder,

I am writing on behalf of GEAR Projects to provide you with an update on our current activity. We will continue to provide you with routine updates via email, but please do contact us at any point if you need further information.

As I am sure that you are aware, GEAR has experienced significant challenges since the closure of the homeless night shelter in March 2013.

The charity is now heavily reliant on fundraising, and we are actively seeking opportunities to obtain new grants and maximise the donations we receive from the Gloucestershire community. We welcome any opportunity to work in partnership with other local providers of homelessness, health and support services towards the shared goal of reducing street homelessness and to help us resource the valuable services GEAR provides.

We are in the process of seeking new projects and opportunities that will enable us to continue to provide services to people experiencing homelessness in Gloucester, but it is very apparent that GEAR needs to undertake a significant change in the way in which it operates in order to continue as a viable organisation.

We have therefore made the difficult decision to reduce some of the services GEAR provides. As part of this reduction in our service, we have unfortunately had to make three members of staff redundant and reduce the hours of the remaining day centre team.

From the week commencing Monday 31<sup>st</sup> March the day centre is now open to service users four days a week and is closed on Thursdays and on the weekend. We are now opening earlier for our rough sleepers drop-in, from 8.45 – 10 am 4 days a week. Day centre sessions focus on scheduled activities, and service users can book appointments to receive advice or support, or use the Vaughan Centre's IT resources. We are working closely with supported accommodation providers to facilitate people they support, who have also been day centre users, to re-engage with their supported accommodation support workers. Hot meals are no longer provided and we are signposting people in need of hot food to other providers. Refreshments are limited to the 8:45-10am rough sleepers drop in session and service users attending booked appointments. We hope these changes to GEAR's service will help us offer an improved service to the people who most need our assistance.

GEAR's county-wide Homeless Outreach service continues to deliver across all 6 districts, working closely with the district councils and VCS partners to reduce and prevent rough sleeping.

There are no changes to our 2 dry houses in central Gloucester which provide a drug and alcohol free environment for 8 people recovering from addiction and needing housing support.

We are pleased to report that the Homeless Healthcare Clinic is continuing to operate from the Vaughan Centre every weekday from Monday to Friday. Strengthening the close relationship between GEAR and the Homeless Healthcare Team, we have recently been awarded a contract with Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group to continue providing the successful Hospital Discharge Project (Time to Heal) that commenced in October 2013. Led by GEAR, the project was originally funded by the Department of Health to improve the level of support and care homeless people receive after they leave hospital. Initially funded for a period of six months, the project has achieved a high level of positive outcomes and attracted support from across the health sector. The CCG contract means that the hospital

discharge service will continue until June 2014, and we are working closely with the CCG and Gloucestershire Care Services with the aim of continuing the service beyond June.

GEAR has received an additional boost in the form of £15,000 from the Homeless Link Future Ready Fund in partnership with DCLG. This funding will be used to resource an interim strategic post that will support GEAR to engage with commissioners and create new relationships with local organisations and grant giving organisations to generate new joint working opportunities and funding that will enable GEAR to deliver services more cost effectively and in a more coherent way for clients.

Our immediate priority is to stabilise our existing services and to secure the future of GEAR Projects. Our strategic alliance with Elim Housing has provided us with significant benefit from the experience and expertise of Elim's staff, and we see future benefit in the potential association with Elim. However, we are committed to maintaining a distinct ethos, character and reputation that will enable us to continue filling a gap left by statutory services by meeting the needs of street homeless people, and those who need support to avoid street homelessness in Gloucestershire.

If you are interested in discussing our current activity and plans for the future with us, do not hesitate to contact GEAR Projects on

We would be pleased to consider any new opportunities that we could develop in partnership or independently, and to receive your feedback on GEAR's services.

Best Regards



G. Pickford  
Interim Project Manager