

GEAR Day Centre to Close

Day care services at the Vaughan Centre for the homeless will be ending from January as a result of funding cuts - unless more than £80,000 can be found.

Donations have been keeping the centre in Southgate Street afloat since the Gloucester Emergency Accommodation Resource joined forces with the Elim Housing Group earlier this year. To maintain a service, £82,000 is needed to fund a three day operation for the next six months.

Unless that figure can be raised soon, the Vaughan Centre will solely be used as an administrative base to continue providing support for the homeless healthcare team, the Gloucestershire outreach service and time to heal projects from January 3rd.

Shared supported houses will remain operational, and are unaffected by the decision.

Mark Stuart, chairman of GEAR, said: "GEAR does not have the current resources to continue to maintain the existing day service whilst we take forward the work on this new strategy. It would be possible to remain open if we can secure interim funding in the next three weeks.

"The Vaughan centre will continue to open through December and over the Christmas period, during which time we will be working closely with local service providers to ensure referral partners are aware of the planned closure."

It is the latest blow for homeless services in the city after the Night Shelter closed in March 2013.

The Homeless Healthcare Team began in January 1998 with a community nurse and later that year by two GPs, Dr Iain Jarvis and Dr Allan Harris. From modest beginnings the clinic grew with the addition of invaluable nursing and administrative staff, and could not have existed without the support of the project staff from GEAR.

Dr Harris said: "Although GEAR is ok with its outreach work, time to heal and dry houses, the Day Centre is not.

"There is no money left and unless stakeholders can find some it will close in the new year. "The staff will continue to support the Homeless Healthcare Team sessions but the crucial work of patient advocacy and social support will not be there."

Brian Jones, who was named Citizen of Gloucester in 2009 for his work with GEAR said the decision has failed some of the most vulnerable people in Gloucester.

"Often from broken homes they face a broken childcare system, a broken education system that leaves too many behind, a broken employment system that does not produce enough jobs that pay a living wage and an economy that does not build nearly enough housing."