

Dorchester and Weymouth Working Directly with Rough Sleepers

What We Do

There are 5 members of the Weymouth Meeting who are all on Weymouth's Rough Sleeper Initiative Group, which is struggling against a Council with little desire to have *any* service in the town for homeless people. I am from the Dorchester Meeting and am a founder trustee of the Hub – a day centre for those who sleep rough in Dorchester. The Hub has about half the local population supporting it and the other half strongly opposed and wanting it to close down!

The Hub opened in December 2002 and we received a grant from QHA then, and have just last month received another one for work together to slightly improve the existing day service in Weymouth by making undercover seating for the church-run canteen. So working together works well!

As far as mentoring those who are moving into accommodation is concerned, it is very necessary and it is a part of the Hub's constitution that it offers continuing support. Similarly the Weymouth day service tries to continue to offer food and practical support and advice to those housed locally. However, nothing deals with the shortage of adequate treatment for the underlying addiction and mental health problems, which are liable to continue unabated despite being housed – and are all the time at risk of causing homelessness once again. No amount of mentoring is going to deal with this shortage of professional service.

What We Have Learned

There are good sources of information already in existence. Homeless Link (www.homeless.org.uk) has tried to pull these together well into detailed books and folders of guidance. The Hub has bought their Day Centre Handbook and we have heard that their book 'Resettling Homeless People: theory and practice' is very good. The biographical novel 'Stuart: a Life Backwards' gives such insight that we bought several copies for all our volunteers.