

## The Homeless and the Whitechapel Centre Liverpool



One of our key areas of focus, as a charitable foundation, is that of combating poverty. When we became aware of Whitechapel's work with the homeless in our home city of Liverpool we thought that we might be able to help to make a difference. In consultation with them we

made a grant of £1000 to help fund their individual Welcome Packs for rough sleepers.

We wanted to explore how else we could support their work in a more substantial way so arranged to visit their centre to discuss how we might help.

The centre itself is welcoming but very run down and in need of some urgent upgrading. Whitechapel do not own the buildings but rent them from the Roman Catholic Church who as landlord would need to agree any work. Despite this, the place feels warm and welcoming mainly due to the friendly attitude of the volunteers and staff.

The approach is firm but kind. They won't put up with smoking or drinking of alcohol in the centre but treat anyone flouting the rules firmly but with respect and good humour, as we witnessed while we were there! This story illustrates what is a daily occurrence. There were two men sharing a bottle of 'cold' - one of the volunteers quickly suspected that there was something stronger in the bottle. She shared a bit of banter with the men and one of them agreed to leave and dispose of the drink. There was good grace all round - the men accepted they had flouted the rules. There was some laughter but no animosity - an illustration of the respect shared between the volunteers and staff and those using the service.



We met Julie Prendegast and had a tour of the buildings to understand what the priorities are and how future grants would help. The toilets and shower rooms are particularly poor but inadequate given the growing need. Also, new



equipment for the kitchens would make a big difference to those who provide cooked breakfasts for the homeless every day.

We were impressed with the work that Whitechapel are doing to tackle homelessness in and around Liverpool.

The situation is exacerbated by the increased numbers of homeless men and increasingly women, caused by immigration and asylum seekers.

We hoped that we would be able to support them with further grants - probably on a matched funding basis - to meet the cost of refurbishment of both the toilet and shower areas and the kitchen.

Financially Whitechapel are heavily dependent on Liverpool City Council for funding. The Council have ambitious plans to tackle homeless challenge and may seek to retain other and bigger charities to undertake the work.

Unfortunately following further discussions and another meeting, in May, we are having to put any plans for funding refurbishments on hold. The future of the centre and where it might be housed in the next few years is far from certain. So there is no current proposal for a project that we might support.

Meanwhile the important work that Whitechapel do with the homeless continues and we wish them success and a more secure future.

