



York Road Project

*Defeating
Homelessness
in Woking*

BUSINESS PLAN

2017-20

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Business Plan summary

1) Overview

The business plan 2017-2020 replaces the existing plan which was agreed by the board of trustees and the Senior Management Team (SMT) in 2013. This plan will enable York Road Project (YRP) to help clients who are homeless and socially excluded to access sustainable and appropriate accommodation, build relationships and lead meaningful lives.

To achieve this, this business plan has four themes:

- Involving those we support in what we do.
- Being a valued and well-respected part of our community
- Extending the range of services we provide through effective partnerships
- Maintaining and improving the services we provide and the premises from where we operate.

2) Environment

The operating environment continues to be challenging with demanding targets from our statutory funders who are themselves faced with significant financial, political and demographic challenges. The forthcoming Homeless Reduction Bill and the roll-out of Universal Credit may have a significant impact on YRP and this business plan seeks to make a pragmatic response to all these challenges.

3) Clients

Those who access YRP services for support are demographically very diverse and have widely differing needs. YRP works with individuals who:

- May need short term support such as early intervention, signposting and advice from the day centre service and/or our outreach team.
- May need to access the night shelter in an emergency.
- May need long term support and access to our move on accommodation and who we manage with a reducing level of support as they move through the services.

Whilst YRP will offer support and/or advice to anyone who approaches our services, we remain focused on supporting individuals aged 18 and above who are experiencing homelessness. We will focus on a personalised support plan, where the client will be involved in setting targets with an emphasis on change and living meaningfully. Where appropriate, we refer clients to external agencies for specialist support.

4) Service delivery

We will continue to focus on delivering a start to end service, offering support to those who are or are about to be rough sleeping, who can then move through our properties and ultimately into their own accommodation and into work or using their time meaningfully. We will support people to address any drug, alcohol, mental health and physical health and offending problems, working alongside our partners locally and further afield when required to meet specific client needs.

YRP will continue to be innovative, creative and responsive to the needs of both clients and our community. Being a small autonomous organisation allows for flexibility in our approach and enables the fast implementation of new models of working, often working closely with partner agencies which will continue to be strengthened in the coming years.

YRP will build on its excellent community involvement, focusing on being a respected part of the community during the life of this business plan.

We will continue to investigate new opportunities and actively seek to broaden the support offered to those facing homelessness.

5) Geographical range

YRP will focus primarily on those in Woking borough but we will continue to work in partnership with neighbouring boroughs where joint working supports our clients or if we can offer specialist assistance or services. These partnerships will always have the needs of the client at the centre of any decisions taken.

6) Organisational robustness to deliver objectives

To deliver on the business plan it will be essential to ensure that we operate effectively and efficiently and offer excellent value for money to our funders and stakeholders. To achieve this we will:

- Ensure that staffing models are flexible and adaptable and staff are trained and supported to deliver our services to a high standard.
- Increase funding streams and include a greater variety including statutory, social investment, grants, trusts and individual donors.
- Review and address issues of governance and audit to ensure that best practice is achieved.

Introduction:

The business plan sets out the strategic direction of York Road Project for the period 2017-20 and outlines the key outcomes the organisation is seeking to achieve as it remains true to its original belief-based ethos of demonstrating God's love and compassion to those in need in the Borough of Woking and surrounding areas regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion, belief and sexual orientation.

Our vision is that everyone has a right to a home, regardless of the difficulties and issues they may face in their lives. Our values are:

- empowerment
- inclusion
- belief

Business Plan overview

1. About York Road Project

York Road Project (YRP) provides a range of services to people who are experiencing homelessness and social exclusion. The organisation's roots lie in Woking since 2001. Over the period of the last Business Plan we have diversified our services, increasing the number of people it supports and type of support offered. The services YRP now offers include:

- Street outreach to homeless people in Woking and the surrounding areas
- A direct access night shelter
- Supported housing in four local properties.
- Day centre offering advice, training and a variety of activities.

Most of our services are Woking based although in the past two years, funding has been secured to provide homeless outreach services in Waverley borough as well as Woking borough. This initiative has proved very successful in supporting both a neighbouring authority and clients in need who do not always remain in the same area. During the life time of this business plan, YRP will continue this work whilst always remembering our primary focus on Woking borough.

Many of our clients are not just homeless and often have a myriad of associated issues such as poor mental or physical health, substance misuse or an offending history. We recognise that everyone has a right to support and no one in Woking should have to sleep rough. Once we have managed to place them in accommodation, we can help our clients to address problems, make positive plans and achieve their goals. YRP is committed to helping people to find realistic housing solutions and also to supporting them to address their problems and move on in their lives.

Our clients may have experienced disadvantage previously that may have led to social exclusion, this may have included poor education and difficult family situations amongst other issues. One of the aims of YRP is to support clients to develop emotional resilience and self-sufficiency which will give them the skills to manage their emotions and behaviour and achieve their goals.

Our services are designed around the individual client and, for those clients who have a lower level of needs, YRP will offer brief interventions to avoid their situation worsening.

2. The business planning process

The business plan has been developed by the Senior Management Team (SMT) at York Road Project and all staff have been consulted. The YRP board has final responsibility for agreeing the business plan and aspects have been discussed in previous board meetings and away days. Via client involvement meetings and informal conversations, the views of our clients have shaped the content this plan.

Despite a challenging financial environment during the previous business plan, YRP has managed to maintain all services and has increased the number of beds provided with support from non-statutory funding.

Recognising that we live in a changing world, the business plan will look at other areas of potential growth including specialist mental health support and back to work initiatives. The objectives will be cascaded to the SMT and frontline staff and work plans.

All plans will include outcomes and robust measures in place to measure efficiency and effectiveness which will be reported on at team and board meetings.

Vision, mission, ethos and values

York Road Project's mission is to provide a set of caring and integrated services where vulnerable single homeless people in Woking and the surrounding areas can go for support with housing and life skills. We believe in the ability of the individual in their own right to achieve in whatever sphere they so choose. Everyone is worthy and all are entitled to support, security and housing in an inclusive environment and to make a valuable contribution.

Professional

YRP is committed and passionate about the work we do and will ensure that we have the necessary skills to provide the service. We value our staff, always expecting their best.

Involving

We will engage our clients in actively shaping the future of YRP and will seek involvement from the local community and build partnerships with associated agencies.

Empowering

YRP aims to build trust through communication and understanding and will support clients to make changes in their lives by offering support which meets their needs.

Responsive

YRP always strives to respond to clients support needs and demonstrate flexibility in our approach at all times. We will adapt to changing needs and demands within the sector.

Inclusive

YRP respects all differences in both clients and staff and value them for who they are. We will encourage participation in all aspects of the organisation and will do our best to bridge the gap between those directly affected by homelessness and the wider community.

Aspirational

YRP will work to achieve consistently excellent positive outcomes and we believe that clients can reach their full potential with support. We will focus on having a well trained and experienced staff team and will look towards future opportunities to broaden and improve the services we offer.

Learning

YRP will be a reflective organisation, celebrating our achievements and learning from our

3. Core business and target group:

a) Distinctiveness

For York Road Project to achieve the challenges of both the sector and the business plan, we must find more solutions to help people to escape or avoid homelessness. We are distinctive both in the agile way we work as a small and flexible organisation and in the integrated range of services we are able to offer. We must preserve our distinctiveness as an autonomous, creative and responsive organisation and extend this into new initiatives. We understand that people may not be ready to change in our time frame and are able to offer multiple chances to access our services.

We must build on our distinctiveness and remain true to our values. This business model will allow us to be responsive to new approaches in support, new legislation and ready to deliver new services to our clients.

b) Core business

The core business at York Road Project has always been a commitment to ending rough sleeping in Woking with a direct access night shelter at the heart. Whilst accommodation remains at the core, other aspects of service delivery have been explored and moved into during the life of the previous business plan.

4. The different needs of clients, commissioners and community

Our philosophy is that by providing a client centred approach, we can assist people to gain confidence and self-esteem, successfully gain secure and appropriate accommodation and to realise their full potential. However, more than ever before, a 'one size fits all' approach is redundant as the needs of our stakeholders have changed over the years.

It is vital that YRP meets these needs by offering new models of working alongside new initiatives. In the life of the previous business plan services at YRP have been extended to include:

- Standalone Day Centre offering a holistic approach to rough sleepers and those in accommodation. Drop in sessions as well as workshops offering tangible skills training and confidence boosting activities are delivered four days each week, meeting the needs of our clients and the wider community.
- A 'no' support property offering 4 beds for clients who coming to the end of their journey with us and who are ready to access employment. The rent is affordable and the clients seek support from us if needed which differs from the way support is delivered in our other accommodation.
- A specialist outreach team who respond proactively to the needs of clients, commissioners and the community. The team is not project based allowing them the ability to be on the streets of Woking and Waverley boroughs, actively supporting clients where they are. This has been a hugely successful initiative reaching people we would never have reached before, including those living in more rural areas. The service supports clients for as long as is needed allowing for rapport and trust to be established.

Strategic aims

The business plan will focus on four strategic themes which will bring clarity and focus. This section will illustrate why each theme is important and the existing initiatives that currently contribute towards its achievement and what else needs to be accomplished within this business plan.

1. Involving those we support in what we do.

We have identified the level of involvement from clients in developing our services as a priority to extend and improve over the life of this business plan. Monthly client involvement meetings and individual conversations with those we support take place but we do not have a cohesive process of learning from them. This may be due to the fast-paced nature of service delivery, but it is an area that clearly has room for improvement and is one that is needed to ensure we are an inclusive organisation.

- A model will be developed to involve our clients in all aspects of the organisation from planning day centre activities, to reviewing the licence agreements and attending SMT and board meetings. They are the people who experience our services and they are best placed to give their views and opinions. **Year 1**
- We will develop a client involvement champion amongst the existing staff team and they will have a remit to grow the involvement of our clients. **Year 1**
- Client feedback will be sought via a questionnaire which will be developed with client involvement. This will not just be a paper exercise, but instead will actively shape our services where possible.
- We will research peer support as we recognise that clients who have been on the journey have the experience to support those just beginning. This will help us to avoid over dependence on staff and reduce the likelihood of institutionalisation.
- We will seek to provide more opportunities for those who have used our services to volunteer and get involved in service provision and support.

2. Being a valued and well-respected part of our community

YRP believes that it is essential that we are a valued part of the local community. Our clients already experience social exclusion due to being homeless and being involved in community activities will lessen this. The day centre regularly takes part in local events and without the support of the community, YRP would not be able to offer the high level of support it does.

- We will increase the number of community based activities during this business plan. This will include taking part in activities such as gardening and decorating where the community will benefit.
- We will invite more community groups into the day centre to give talks, interact with clients and to educate.
- We will increase the number and type of talks given to the community and will include clients in these talks.
- We will continue to ensure we build on the support we receive from our community, using social media to promote all we do and to invite the community to be an active part of YRP.
- We will be responsive to community concerns about rough sleeping – visiting them, educating them and reassuring them by engaging with any rough sleepers they perceive as problematic.

3. Extending the range of services we provide through effective partnerships

York Road Project has greatly improved its partnership working during the previous business plan, creating alliances where beneficial and has extended the services delivered to include collaborations with other organisations. During this business plan, we will:

- Foster new beneficial partnerships with agencies who provide services appropriate to the needs of our clients.
 - Where appropriate, we will develop and deliver services with partners which enhance the support we can offer
 - This will include local authorities that border on Woking to that services are not fragmented as clients move across boundaries, local health providers to ensure we support the health and wellbeing of our clients and justice services to ensure we reduce the community burden from antisocial and offending behaviour.
4. Maintaining and improving the services we provide and the premises from where we operate

The current shelter is in an old building close to the town centre. It is not ideal for our use due to the small size, winding stairs and age of the infrastructure. The current day centre is close by and is perfect for our use but is due to be demolished within the next 12-24 months. Our aim is to have purpose built modern premises with the night shelter above a well-equipped day centre. It is likely that in the intervening period, the day centre will move to a temporary home close by. During this business plan, we will:

- Work with Woking and Surrey councillors evidencing the need for new premises.
- Develop plans of our ideal building and provide costings.
- Look locally for an appropriate site.
- Continue to collect data which will demonstrate our impact. This data will be robust and can be evidenced.

To achieve our ambitions in the business plan, we must have:

- The structures and processes that enable us to deliver on target.
- A flexible, experienced, competent and happy staff team.
- Financial resilience.
- High standards of governance.

During the business plan period, these areas will be scrutinised and addressed. Policies and procedures will be reviewed annually and updated with this business plan in mind.

Financial robustness

a) Buildings

YRP does not own any properties and this is likely to remain the same considering the uncertain financial climate. However, we have been able to gain income from renting the day centre premises to a partnership agency outside our operating hours. This income has offset the costs of running the building.

This arrangement is likely to continue until the day centre moves premises and depending on space and legalities, YRP will look to continue this arrangement.

b) Mainstream commissioning opportunities

YRP has been involved in successful bids for statutory funding during the last business plan and will continue to embrace such opportunities if appropriate. We will give high priority to retaining current contracts and bidding for new work commissioned by local authorities, regional government, CCGs and others.

c) Wider commissioning opportunities

There are new opportunities emerging for work via health and criminal justice routes with an emphasis on providing value for money. If the contracts are in line with our values, and ethos, YRP will investigate them further.

d) Other income sources

Currently, only 8% of income received, is voluntary – far lower than other similar charities and YRP will focus on increasing direct donations in the first year of the business plan. This will include using methods like Just Giving, by text and In Memoriam giving. This income enables YRP to provide additional services to clients which sit outside the existing statutory contracts.

Equipping YRP to deliver the 2017-20 plan

2017-18 focus:

- We will deliver a specialist mental health project, based within the existing outreach team for which we will secure longer term funding. This will be in partnership with an organisation in a neighbouring borough.
- We will seek to evidence how the impact of our services creates savings to the public purse and use this information to demonstrate to commissioners the value of working with us.
- We will extend the welcome and training we offer to bring more volunteers into the organisation and embrace the skills they have. This will require the development of new recruitment processes, volunteer induction and training. Volunteers will enhance the existing team and not replace them. An increase in volunteer numbers will enable us to increase the activities offered, particularly in the day centre. Volunteering can also provide an opportunity for those who have used our services in the past to play a rewarding role in our future.
- We will extend the opening hours at The Prop to Monday - Thursday. This will mean that we no longer have to send clients away with nowhere to go and allow clients to stay in the building until the shelter opens at 6pm.
- YRP values all its staff and want them to feel supported and confident. The annual salary review will move from October to April in line with the financial year. YRP will ensure that all staff are paid at least in line with the sector norms.
- To meet the needs of the clients, commissioners and the community, YRP will provide a 24/7 on call service where those in need can access advice and signposting to services.

- To support the expansion in our work, we will employ an additional part time administrator.
- We will employ a part time fundraiser/comms post to support the SMT with funding applications, maintaining the organisations website and social media accounts.
- We will work with Woking Borough Council to ensure that when the existing day centre site is redeveloped we are able to move to a new day centre and plan the move if it occurs during 2017-18 with the minimum of disruption to clients.

It is important that our aims are realistic and achievable and in the life of the previous business plan, YRP has demonstrated a track record of delivering best practice and positive results. To maintain this forward progress:

- YRP uses Inform, a customised database hosted by Salesforce that holds all our internal data. This is easily audited and can be adapted for new contracts.
- We will continue to be responsive and flexible in our approach and offer the greatest level of support possible. Our delivery models will be adaptable to meet the needs of our clients, commissioners and the wider community.
- We will focus on the training of our staff, particularly relating to new practices both within the sector and governmental changes.
- We will invest in our buildings ensuring they are welcoming, tidy and fit for purpose. This will involve a rolling programme of redecoration – particularly in the shelter - and planned replacement of furniture in the move on properties.
- Where it meets the values and ethos of YRP, we will be open to the consideration of contracts that extend outside Woking borough.
- We will continue to research other income streams including grants and foundations.
- We will ensure that all trustees meet the needs of the organisation and are adequately trained. This will include an insistence that all members of the board have the time and skills required for their responsibilities as trustees of a growing organisation. We will continue the annual away day which allows for discussion about new initiatives, funding streams and reviewing the business plan.