



**York Road
Project**

*Defeating
Homelessness
in Woking*

**NEW BUILD PROPOSAL
BUSINESS CASE**

Empowerment • Inclusion • Belief

York Road Project is a registered charity, Reg. No. 1162835
Supported by Woking Borough Council
and Surrey County Council

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

York Road Project (YRP) exists to support people facing homelessness in the borough of Woking. The charity provides accommodation (both emergency and longer term), an outreach provision supporting rough sleepers and people in insecure accommodation alongside a specialist day centre.

Over the last 5 years, YRP has expanded its services to meet the long-term needs of our clients and to support the local authority to meet their statutory duties. This includes a day centre to provide advice, social support and skills building (since 2015), an outreach team to reach rough sleepers (2014) and three additional move-on properties to allow clients to progress through our services and into independent living. This growth has been funded by a combination of statutory funding, charitable trust grants and financial donations from the public.

The charity has been widely recognised for its innovative approaches and the Chief Executive is an elected member of the National Advisory Council. The feedback and opinions of the council are fed directly into Government, influencing future policy within the sector.

YRP's proposal for new premises has been developed in discussion with Woking Borough Council to provide a 24 hour, 7 days per week service to those we support from a single purpose-built facility.

The new premises will streamline our operations, allowing for an improved offer of support to clients alongside cost savings to statutory and non-statutory services.

1.2 New Premises Proposal Summary

It is proposed that YRP incorporates the Night Shelter (currently located on York Road), the Prop Day Centre (Goldsworth Road), the high support flats (Guildford Road) and our medium support property (Fairfax Road) in new premises on a site identified by Woking Borough Council.

The Night Shelter is leased on a peppercorn rent, as is the Day Centre. The flats on Guildford Road are leased from a private landlord and Fairfax Road is leased from Green Pastures – a Christian organisation which purchases properties specifically for homeless organisation.

The charity intends to maintain possession of the three remaining low support properties; Campbell Avenue, Portugal Road; both in Woking and Chapel Court, Milford. These three properties are let at an affordable rent, allowing clients who have progressed through other YRP services to access employment.

The combining of services will increase the total number of beds available from 31 to 45. This increase will help meet the rising demand for supported move on accommodation and specialist services rather than an increase in direct access services for new clients. It will also assist WBC to discharge the prevention or relief duties under the Homeless Reduction Act 2018 for some individuals who meet the criteria.

Accommodation in the private rented sector (PRS) is hard to source for our client group due to affordability and unwilling landlords. YRP increases the success of sustaining tenancies by providing tenancy training to all clients in move on accommodation.

The direct access beds will be available to clients during the day and the move on accommodation will be in 3-bedroom flats with communal living and eating areas. The layout of accommodation is vital to provide a near normal living arrangement and mirrors the national trend away from large hostel type accommodation.

1.3 Why New Premises are Needed

The drivers for change are:

- The Day Centre site on Goldsworth Road is due for demolition in 2020. This will force the organisation to source new premises to ensure continuation of workshops, advice sessions and rough sleeper services and back-office support.
- The current arrangement of seven separate properties is unwieldy and hinders smooth transition between services. The Night Shelter no longer provides suitable accommodation due to limited space, particularly in the communal areas and kitchen, steep and winding stairs and some shared rooms and lack of daytime access to rooms for clients.
- The implementation of the Homeless Reduction Act (2018) has placed additional pressures on the Local Authority to offer support to more people who present as homeless. New premises will allow YRP to assist Woking Borough Council with the provision appropriate accommodation enabling the fulfilment of the statutory requirements.
- Ability to offer accessible accommodation to individuals who have transitioned from high support accommodation and who are ready to access employment and/or education but who would otherwise struggle to afford accommodation in the private rented sector.
- YRP has been in existence for nearly 20 years and during that time, there has been a shift in how homelessness is addressed. There is a move away from institutional settings and greater focus is placed on providing a holistic pathway through services. The funding arena has also changed with a need to be less reliant on statutory funding for support costs and instead a focus on securing funding from charitable trusts and foundations.

1.4 Benefits Summary

- New premises would allow the implementation of new models of support and will enable us to increase the length of stay to more of our client group. The Government preference is for evidence-based holistic pathways to support people away from the cycle of homelessness.
- The current outdated shelter model can cause institutionalisation due to the rigidity of the rules and due to day time closing. The direct access

accommodation in the proposed premises will be open for clients to access during daytime hours.

- The new premises will allow for 24 hours, 7 days a week opening, thus removing the need for clients to be out in the cold and reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviour in the community. Due to the requirement to staff multiple premises, YRP services are currently closed between 4pm and 6pm Monday to Thursday, all day Friday and Saturday.
- The new premises will have full disabled access with some purpose-built disabled accommodation. YRP is currently unable to support Woking Borough Council with accommodation if the individual has specific access needs due to the design of the Night Shelter.
- A new 'assessment flat' will offer tailored support and accommodation to individuals whose complex needs prevent them from accessing and/or maintaining any other form of housing including other supported housing providers. This intensive support will be provided by the existing outreach team and will increase the chance of successful tenancy sustainment.
- New premises will give the space needed for YRP to deliver Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) each winter, and thereby reducing the financial cost to the Local Authority.
- There may be the opportunity to work closely with WBC Housing Department to assist with the provision of B&B and temporary accommodation which will relieve the impact of the Homeless Reduction Act 2018.
- New premises will allow for greater partnership working with health and social care support services and the co-location of services offered will demonstrate cost saving to supporting agencies.
- There will be an opportunity to offer workshops and meaningful activities in the evenings as the communal area for those accessing the direct access beds, will be the day centre workshop space.
- There would be the ability to continue to offer space in the new premises to the mental health service 'Safe Haven'.
- The existing Night Shelter building in York Road will return to WBC and can be used as seen fit to benefit the community.
- YRP will be able to focus its services as new premises will allow an opportunity to update the all operational approaches we use to support clients and to ensure a more efficient use of staff time
- Volunteering opportunities will be enhanced.

1.5 Community involvement

The community of Woking supports YRP in many ways including financial support and gifts, particularly at harvest festival and at Christmas. Volunteers support our day centre and provide support with delivering workshops, assessing clients, general housekeeping and offering companionship. Local businesses are also very supportive, providing workshops, staff training and goods in-kind.

In turn we are committed to giving something back in return. Clients and staff participate in organised activities including:

- Picking up litter
- Planting bulbs
- Tidying gardens
- Taking part in community events including Diwali, the Pancake Race and Party in the Park.
- Re-distributing donations we can't use to other agencies including The Women's Centre and Woking Foodbank.

1.6 Volunteering

YRP offers volunteering opportunities for a cross section of the community. Our ethos is to recruit into specific roles to ensure we utilise the many skills available locally. These opportunities are mainly within our services but we also welcome support from those who may be unable to come into the buildings for various reasons. This includes support with social media, data evaluation and staff training.

Volunteering provides work experience for students, skills training for those seeking employment along with using their time meaningfully.

It is expected that a new model of volunteering will be implemented in preparation for the new accommodation based on a tried and tested approach in another service, and it will harness the skills which exist in the community for the benefit of the volunteer, the client and YRP.

1.7 Caring neighbourhood

Woking has developed substantially over the past 10 years and much time and energy has been spent on increasing the presence and reputation of the borough as a great place to visit, work, live and shop. Campaigns such as #WeAreWoking have been pivotal in raising the awareness and demonstrating community feeling in the borough.

This positive view of the borough is only enhanced by the clear involvement of YRP in the community and is held in high regard when compared with other boroughs.

1.8 Reducing the negative image of homelessness on the community

Due to the current opening hours, there are times when those experiencing homelessness must be out on the streets; between 4-6pm Monday to Friday and between 8.30am and 6pm on Saturday.

This requirement will be reduced in the proposed new premises as resident clients can stay in all day and rough sleepers will be able to access from 7.30am until 9pm daily.

1.9 Community Cost Savings

Whilst it is impossible to categorically claim York Road Project is responsible for reducing the costs to statutory services by our client group, in its 'Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness'¹, in 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government used this approach:

“Taken together the evidence strongly suggests the experience of being homeless can exacerbate offending behaviour and play a role in recidivism. The resulting costs to the criminal justice system and policing may be significant. For example, the total cost to the criminal justice system of a male convicted of shop-lifting is estimated to be around £3,500, while the total cost of a drug offence conviction is estimated to be around £16,000.”

Homelessness affects not only the individual but also affects the wider community. York Road Project alleviates this by providing more than just accommodation. Support around offending, substance misuse and health are an essential part of a client's pathway away from the cycle of homelessness. The staff, particularly the outreach team, support clients to attend [probation] appointments, prevent homelessness on release from prison, access healthcare, etc.

This support particularly helps with reducing the likelihood of re-offending as staff can ensure the client adheres to any requirements (e.g. probation), is accommodated on release from prison, accesses the benefits system quickly and is referred to any other appropriate agency including health.

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, 2012, 'Evidence Review of the Costs of Homelessness'

Appendix 1 – Financial Case

2.1 Introduction

This financial case sets out the affordability of the proposal and the potential to create savings elsewhere.

2.2 Assumptions

This proposal is based on a number of assumptions about how the organisation will perform over the coming years of which the most significant are that:

1. Surrey County Council (and/or partner funding bodies) will continue to invest in homelessness services (currently via Adult Social Care), after 2020;
2. Woking Borough Council continue to welcome direct funding to York Road Project from neighbouring boroughs to support their clients in response to their own rising numbers of people facing homelessness. This arrangement requires the referring borough to retain all housing duty thus avoiding additional burden on Woking;
3. Woking Borough Council and government continue to place homelessness high on the agenda both in terms of expenditure and awareness;

2.3 Expenditure

Salaries are generally the biggest expenditure for service delivery organisations and the Trustees and Management at York Road Project are mindful that staff costs are predominately met by statutory bodies and/or voluntary grant making organisations.

Despite the new premises providing additional accommodation, the provision of the Night Shelter and Day Centre in one building will allow for the support staff hours to be staggered ensuring the provision of a 24-hour 365 day a year service. Currently, we do not operate between 4-6pm Monday to Friday and 8.30am-5.30pm on Saturday.

To assist with adequate staffing and to reduce the strain on funding, there is an intention to implement a comprehensive volunteer procedure based on a similar service in Hampshire. They are keen to share their model, and this will assist permanent staff with providing an enhanced service.

We will need to rebalance our staff to include a building manager and provide concierge cover at all times. Staff salaries in 2016/17 totalled nearly £300K.

2.4 Current building costs

The cost of running separate properties in 2016/17 totalled nearly £250K with the biggest expenditure being the rent of the move on properties. Reducing the number of move on properties to three will reduce lease costs by £42,601 per annum. Maintenance costs should also be cheaper for a new purpose designed building.

2.5 New build running costs

YRP has prepared budget estimates for the new building. Based on continuation of all our current funding sources at current levels (allowing for inflation), it is anticipated that cost-savings from the co-location of services and additional charitable support will enable us to provide the services with the same level of statutory support as at present.

Income	
Housing Benefit Received	£306,255
Surrey County Council	£125,000
Client Contributions Received	£20,014.00
Income – One Off Grants	£10,000
Woking Community Grant	£54,000
Waverley Bedspace x 3	£45,000
Donations	£40,000
Total Income	£600,269
Cost of Sales	
Maintenance & Repairs	£13,800
Cleaning & Waste	£8,500
Utilities & Council Tax	£50,882
Insurance	£5,500
Lease Cost	£50,000
H&S Testing	£2,100
Sundry Office & General Expenses	£2,500.00
Total	£133,282
Operating Costs	
Salaries, Pension & NI	£362,000
Client Activities & Sundry Expense	£15,000
Food Expenses	£8,000
Accountancy & Audit	£5,300
Recruitment, Staff Training & Expenses	£11,200
Professional Fees	£8,100
IT Support, Consumables & Website	£16,000
Postage & Printing	£1,750
Mobile Phones	£4,352
Subscriptions & Licences	£5,250
Contingency Fund	£30,000
Total	£466,952
Total Budget for Year	£35.00

2.6 Lease cost

Moving the majority of YRP services into one building gives a substantial reduction in lease expenditure. It is the intention of YRP to lease the new building for £50,000 per annum from the landlord

2.7 Fixtures and fittings

YRP intends to seek external capital funding from charitable grant-making bodies to support the fitting out of the new premises.

2.8 Potential Additional Cost Savings in New Premises

Temporary Accommodation

WBC are required to provide B&B or temporary accommodation to individuals in priority need at a cost of between £50-£100 per night for B&B and £150 per week for temporary accommodation. YRP could use some of the extra beds to assist with providing accommodation of this type for clients with an appropriate agreement in place.

Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP)

During the winter of 2017/18 SWEP ran for 62 nights offering a total of 484 bed spaces to 46 individuals. YRP coordinates the provision and provides accommodation in the night shelter where possible. Individuals who cannot access are offered B&B by WBC in Slough or Woking.

In 17/18, WBC offered 177 nights of B&B accommodation during SWEP. At an average cost of £75 per night dependant on location, the total cost was around £13,275 (this excludes travel and staff costs)

In the proposed new building, YRP would have the space and expertise to deliver the SWEP provision on behalf of WBC.

Other Costs

It is more likely for occurrences of costly incidents involving the client group we support to take place when they are unable to access our services. This includes ambulance call outs, anti-social behaviour and petty offending. The increase in opening hours in the new premises will reduce the likelihood of these incidents happening thus reducing costs to public services.

According to the Investment Agreement and Partnerships Exemplar project funded by DCLG in 2015, the costs of commonly used services are:

Anti-social behaviour – cost to Local Authority =	£673 per incident
Ambulance call out =	£223 per incident
Custodial sentence =	£34,840 per annum

There are substantial financial benefits from supporting this proposal both in terms of immediate savings to WBC and longer-term benefits to other services both statutory and non-statutory.

2.9 Income

Accommodation

The primary income is from rents payable for clients receiving accommodation and support at YRP. The majority is paid via housing benefit and clients are required to make a small personal contribution towards their stay to cover food, utilities, TV licence and cleaning.

The current level of housing benefit payable has been set by Woking Borough Council following a comprehensive review of the services provided. We expect to be able to operate the extended hours at the new facility at the same housing benefit level per bed due to economies from co-location and more modern facilities.

Housing benefit along with client contributions will amount to £326,269 per annum based on 85% occupancy

The current Day Centre in Goldsworth Road is rented to Safe Haven for use during weekday evenings and at weekends. Safe Haven is a mental health service supporting people who are experiencing a crisis. The rent is currently £25k per annum.

Subject to the continuation of their funding it is expected this arrangement will continue in the new premises. Due to the proposed design of the new premises, it is anticipated the rooms will be available to rent by other support agencies at a reasonable cost.

The majority of support staff based in the accommodation services are funded via a Housing Related Support contract commissioned by Surrey County Council. In common with all homelessness support services in Surrey, York Road Project received a 10% reduction in contract income in 2018/19. There is uncertainty regarding future support cost funding as the current process is being reviewed with changes being implemented in 2020.

Appendix 2 - Additional information

3.1 History of YRP

In the 1990s members from churches in Woking identified that there was a need to offer support to the rising number of people rough sleeping in the borough. Their help began with food and kindness and evolved into providing 'winter watch' through the winter months with help from Woking Borough Council.

The organisation gained charitable status in 2001 and provided accommodation in the night shelter in York Road. In due course, 'move on' supported housing was acquired to enable people to move from the shelter into longer term accommodation with reducing levels of support as they move away from the cycle of homelessness into employment where appropriate and build healthy networks in the community.

To meet the changing needs of the organisation, client group and the community, York Road Project became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2015.

Homelessness can happen to anyone at any time regardless of age, gender, education or socio-economic status. York Road Project is passionate about Woking and the community, prioritising supporting those with a local housing connection to Woking first and foremost. If someone from outside Woking borough presents at any of the services, they are supported to reconnect to their local area.

If a call is received from outside the borough asking for a bed, it is made clear they will not be accepted as it is our policy not to import people from other boroughs just because we provide night shelter beds unless written confirmation of a guaranteed move on option is received from the referring agency (normally the Local Authority)

3.2 Current services

- 11 bed direct access accommodation
- 5 bed high support property
- 4 bed medium support property
- 5 bed low support property – affordable rent
- 4 bed no/low support property – affordable rent
- 2 bed no/low support property – affordable rent
- Outreach team covering Woking and Waverley boroughs (jointly funded by the two boroughs). The team support people on the streets, in unsecure accommodation (sofa surfing etc.) or in their own properties at risk of eviction.
- Mental health team supporting the most complex cases (supported by a DCLG grant).
- Day centre offering:
 - Basic services for rough sleepers; laundry, showers, food etc.
 - Advice sessions
 - Appointments with specialist services including GP and substance misuse agencies.
 - Workshops providing a mix of skills training (first aid, CV writing etc.) and activities aimed at boosting self-esteem and confidence (art, sport, music etc.)

Appendix 3 – YRP and National Statistics

The annual national survey for 2017 estimated an average of 4751 individuals slept rough on any one night in England². There was an increase of 15% from 2016 to 2017, while since 2010 rough sleeping estimates show an increase of 169% in England. In Woking, the increase of individuals sleeping rough on at least one night in 2017 was 11%. This is lower than the national rise and is explained by closer working with neighbouring Surrey boroughs and the refusal to offer night shelter beds to individuals from outside Woking.

It is generally suggested that the true figure nationally is more than double this.

14% of total number of rough sleepers nationally were women.

York Road Project uses a Salesforce platform database to capture all appropriate data to ensure contract requirements are met and to feed into our strategy for the forthcoming years. In line with national trends there has been an increase in individuals accessing for support.

The table below shows changes over a five-year period.

		2012/13	2017/18
Total number of clients accessing YRP services		119	242
Male		88%	78%
Female		12%	22%
Primary age range	25-34 years	22%	29%
	55-64 years	4%	14%
New to homelessness		64%	76%
Accommodation immediately prior to accessing YRP services	Rough sleeping	33%	39%
	Private rented sector	33%	1%
Mental Health as a support need		43%	68%
Local Housing connection to Woking		34%	50%
Resettled after support at YRP		22%	61%

² Rough sleeping statistics, Homelesslink 2017

Whilst some of the data captured at YRP is in line with national trends – particularly regarding in seeing clients with mental health needs, regional differences can be seen. Female clients amount to 22% of our client group. Finding appropriate housing for females is very difficult as there is limited supported housing provision for women in Surrey. YRP has no limits on the number of women who can be accommodated.

The rise in the number of clients resettled after support from YRP is particularly evident (22% in 2012/13 – 61% in 2017/18). This can be attributed to the implementation of the outreach team, an increase of 11 beds within the organisation and providing services in the day centre. Some of the clients accessing those services, do not access YRP accommodation.

The Outreach Team

Two posts joint funded by Woking and Waverley Borough Councils and The Office of Police & Crime Commissioner for Surrey.

The Prop Day Centre

A proportion of funding from Woking Community Grant is used for a project worker salary in the day centre, client travel and client activities. The remainder of the grant funds Sunday day time opening in the night shelter and the kitchen supervisor's salary.