**NOTES FROM HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING GATHERING**

**BIMINGHAM 8 FEBRUARY 2020**

**PART ONE**

**POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING**

**Some avenues:**

Within the Church to change restrictive Standing Orders and to challenge Nimbyism

In our relationships with MPs and Local Council Leaders/Elected Mayors (listen to the prevailing issues and offer “What can we do to help?”)

Encouraging members of congregations to sign up to JPIT Newsletter

“Compassion in Politics”

“Taxpayers Against Poverty”

“ALTER” – “Action for Land Taxation and Economic Reform”

Become a McKenzie Friend (**mckenzie-friend**.org.uk)

**Some issues:**

Private rented sector needs reform and regulation - rent levels must be linked to local incomes and sort out LHA shortfalls – abolish section 21 no-fault evictions – stronger enforcement of standards with registration of landlords

Young people – intergenerational justice

Families growing up in dangerous temporary accommodation

Warehouse accommodation which has no regulation and no support

Intermediate housing

Migration – abolish No Recourse to Public Funds which produces destitution

Advocacy – walking alongside people

Provision for people coming out of prison- rebuilding a pathway

Mental Health

Universal Credit

Access to Drugs and Alcohol services

What does “affordable” really mean?

Politics as important as emergency provision

Pilots are fine but will they be replicable elsewhere? Need policy change

Is there enough support and positive engagement built into the Housing First Model?

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**PART TWO**

**PROJECTS**

**Some examples:**

Community asset transfer and nil value transfer at Huddersfield Mission

Temporary Use of land by Redbridge Salvation Army for The Malachi Project

The Haven Project, Porchlight

**A suggestion:**

Could MHA/ MMHS consider helping develop some provision for 18 to 35 age group?

**A request for help:**

How best to form a partnership between the church (with land) and a housing provider to overcome Section 106 issues, affordability definitions and the viability of using a small site? (Darlington District)

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**PART THREE**

**PRACTICALITIES AND BEST PRACTICE**

**4 main elements** to the discussion

1. Connexional Property Strategy
2. Ecumenical working
3. Partnership with Local Authority and other sectors
4. Models and Expertise
5. **Connexional Property Strategy**

The difference between making suggestions and requiring action

Speak of “releasing” our properties for mission

Provide suites of documents to go with each bullet point of the strategy

Produce models of partnership

Got to identify properties that are appropriate – what do we do with difficult properties we are “stuck with”? - graveyards and other such difficult problems

How many manses are currently redundant?

Does every Minister need 4 bedrooms?

Fostering a “can do” approach, an enabling attitude and perseverance to solve the problem

Helping congregations to go on a journey, consider taking a risk, addressing their fears head-on, see what they can contribute

People in churches can be afraid of those experiencing homelessness so don`t hear their stories. Needs bravery to break the barrier. Encounter reforms us and can bust myths, blame and stigma

Be aware of the lack of people and resources in the Circuits to pursue novel projects

There is often a tension between financial pressure within the circuit and the needs of society

“Highest value” may hinder mission so need joined up thinking connexionally

Will require a strategic approach that is proactive not reactive

Balancing income generation and housing provision

1. **Ecumenical working**

Do we have good examples and models of this to share?

A partnership approach that shares people and buildings

1. **Partnership with Local Authority and other sectors**

Do we have good examples and models of this to share?

Finding appropriate partners – thinking widely and creatively

Using buildings for family space and meeting needs of the hidden homeless – can we connect to an already existing provision e.g. “Places of Welcome”?

Can we offer befriending and social support? – especially within Housing First Model – would local authority be open to our involvement and could we ensure we were using the right methodology?

What if you are not sure of the direction being taken and you feel on the edge of decision-making?

Bare walls tenancies are very inefficient to make emergency bespoke provision

Prisons are now releasing people into homelessness- need stronger links with Prison Chaplains

 **4. Models and Expertise**

Policies and procedures

Sharing protocols

Risk assessments

Where and in what form do we capture the expertise that is out there?

The importance of lived experience and the need to watch the language we use- being prepared to listen carefully and to learn and having our privileged eyes opened- intentional recruitment (e.g. The Brick in Wigan)

**PROPOSAL**

Work up 10 contrasting models

and provide a legal framework and suite of documents for each model

and give access to

grant application expertise,

professional services experience,

governance advice,

and charity law compliance.

Answer the following questions:

Who did what?

What will work best for us?

How do we go about doing it?

What sort of partnership?

What does the team look like?

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**PART FOUR**

**NEXT STEPS**

1. **Who might join us?**

-add suggested names to our feedback from the gathering

-evolution of Network of Methodist Activists

1. **How should we lobby?**

-**Internal**: Report to Conference/Links with Connexional Property Strategy and Property Development Committee/Change Standing Orders re. affordable homes/Congregations

-**External**: MPs/Leaders or Elected Mayors/Academic Research/Citizens UK/Compassion in Politics/Taxpayers Against Poverty

1. **Where do we capture the learning?**

-a web-based resource (perhaps a page on [www.methodist.org.uk](http://www.methodist.org.uk))

-a booklet

-Twitter and Facebook alerts when new material is added to website page

-involvement in Church at the Margins Stream

1. **When do we continue the conversation?**

-provide a list of names and contact details with areas of interest

-provide feedback from the gathering

-arrange future gatherings

1. **How do we embed this issue?**

-Add our own learning to Homelessness Sunday Resources

-Amplify local and national stories

