



Bury Drop In choir launched

On 27th October, the Bury Drop In choir had its first rehearsal at the Quaker Meeting House. I was a little nervous. How many would turn up? How would it go? Would I have enough helpers?

I was thrilled that 21 arrived for the first rehearsal. We sang together and then ate together, and a good time was had by all. Weekly rehearsals followed with lots of hard work. One month later, on 26th November,

wearing our new, blue Bury Drop In choir scarves with logos, the choir performed at Garland Street Baptist Church for the celebration of the charity's second anniversary. The choir and two superb soloists, Will and Antoinette, sang original songs—*Kind and Lost* and *Alone*—to an extremely appreciative congregation.

Rehearsals continued to go well, with an equal number of guests and volunteers. Every week Som, from the Golden Chip, gave free portions of sausage and the best chips in Bury to those who were homeless. To show our appreciation, on 15th December the entire choir visited the shop to say thank you, and we sang a Christmas carol for Som.

In December the choir sang four more times. When Bishop Mike visited the Drop In on 12th December, the choir sang songs and carols. Then on 19th December, Trinity Methodist Church hosted the choir for a full performance of original songs and songs for Christmas. Our soloists included Drop In guests Caron, Kamil, Will, and Antoinette and volunteers Mary Soman and Debbie Marshall. Jerzy (Yurik), another of our talented guests, backed up the singers on his guitar. It was our first complete programme, and the choir sang beautifully and were very warmly received. Finally, on 22nd December we performed at West Road Church.



We have continued rehearsing, working on our new programme for Easter time. We're planning to perform in several other places around the area.

Ros Pitcher has played the piano every week at our practises, and I thank God for her talent and selfless giving of her time for rehearsals and concerts. Volunteers have helped in the kitchen, and I can truly say I am amazed at how God has made this choir happen and supplied all our needs.

*Sheila Mitchell
Drop In Trustee & Choir Leader*

2018 holds challenges and opportunities

As we begin a new year at the Drop In, we anticipate challenges but also new opportunities. God has been evident in many ways over the past year as He has provided for us both spiritually and practically. We move forward trusting that He will be with us as we step into the unknown with confidence and faith in Him.

We are very grateful to and humbled by all who have made donations and supported the work of the Drop In over the past year. Thank you.

With the retirement of Mike Coleman as Chairman of our Trustees, we will miss his enthusiasm and vision, which have been instrumental in leading the work for the past few years. We look forward to seeing him at the Drop In as a volunteer. All volunteers and guests wish Mike a blessed retirement.

At the end of 2017, we were pleased to support the work of the St Edmundsbury Housing Department when they set up a Severe Weather Emergency Provision (SWEP) at the Elven

Mike Coleman steps down as Chairman

Centre in Garland Street, Bury St Edmunds. Not only did a number of Drop In volunteers help in setting up and clearing away each day, but the Drop In was able to pass on some of the food donations received from town businesses that so generously support us.

We continue as charity partners with many in the town, receiving regular donations of surplus food.

Greggs the Baker, Marks & Spencer, Nando's, Tesco, and Street Level Cafe in Abbeygate Street contribute lavishly on a regular basis, and that makes the provision of healthy and nutritious meals much easier and more cost effective. We have also received generous supplies from British Sugar and Rattlesden Farm Foods, a local wholesaler. Without these donations, our costs would increase dramatically.

Guests are always assured a warm welcome at the Drop In sessions, but Tuesdays now provide an extra warm welcome! This is because Valley Connection, the award-winning Indian restaurant in Churchgate Street, now supplies curries, naan bread, and vegetable dishes. Our guests are delighted to eat such tasty and wholesome—and sometimes hot and spicy—food.

With all the donations we receive comes the logistical problem of how to manage the collection and distribution of the food surplus to Drop In's requirements. We would welcome anyone who has time to volunteer in collecting food from some of our donors and distributing it to various hostels supported by the Drop In in the town.

We look forward to another year of working with the local council, both councillors and the staff of various departments that are involved in this project as well as all the housing organisations that provide shelter and support to the guests we welcome each week. We thank them all for their

help, and we trust that as we continue our work, we will be able to achieve greater levels of cooperation between us.

David Bonnett
Chief Executive
Officer



After serving with Bury Drop In for more than three years, Mike Coleman has stepped down from his position as Chairman of the Trustees.

Mike's association with the charity began early in its history. After the St Edmundsbury council asked representatives of Garland Street Baptist Church to help mobilise local churches to support the homeless and vulnerable in the town and surrounding villages, Mike was one of the first to come forward to volunteer. He became a prime member of the committee that established the charity.

With his background in running another local charity—Aid to Hospitals Worldwide—Mike was a natural candidate to lead the Drop In team. He was named Chief Executive Officer and headed efforts to prepare for the group's care for those in need, which took just short of a year.

Drop In opened its doors to the homeless and vulnerable in September 2015, when two guests attended the first session at the Elven Centre in Garland Street. Since then the charity has expanded from opening a single day each week to serving our guests on Tuesdays and Fridays. Attendance has climbed significantly, with between 40 and 50 coming in for meals and help during each session.

In June 2017, Mike handed the CEO baton to David Bonnett but remained a leader of the charity as Chairman of the Trustees. He helped to oversee the organisation's move to Trinity Methodist Church as the Elven Centre was being prepared for renovation. His tenure in this position ended on 8th January.

'It has been a real honour to serve, especially as I have seen BDI develop from its inception to the life-changing and much respected charity it has become,' Mike explained. 'It has been my privilege to share office with some very dedicated and godly people with obvious compassion and a wide range of skills.'

David commended Mike's efforts over the past three-plus years.

'Mike's vision and drive as a member of the team that created BDI were instrumental in enabling us to first open our doors to the homeless and vulnerable of Bury St Edmunds.'

'Under Mike's leadership, we have seen massive developments in our charity, both in terms of the support we offer and the numbers attending each session. His contribution to BDI is immeasurable, and we thank God for him and all that he means to us.'

Mike has pledged to support Drop In as a volunteer at Tuesday and Friday sessions.

'BDI is right where my heart is, and I hope I can continue to have some input into what I know is a God-given opportunity for us all to show the love of Jesus to some of the most vulnerable and lost individuals in our society.'



Max Derbyshire (pictured with Elysia Sharman) is 16 and, as part of his Duke Of Edinburgh Silver Award Scheme, he has been cooking meals for us each week. Max has been doing a fantastic job, and we will be sorry when this comes to an end after the six months the DofE stipulates. He has produced some wonderful chilli, soup, and quiches. Next on the menu will be sausage casserole! Thanks so much, Max. Your cooking is very much appreciated.

In partnership with the Bury Drop In, West Road and Westley Community Church are launching their third

CAP Release Group

on Friday 2nd February at 12:30pm

Each session starts at the Drop In for lunch in Trinity Methodist Church.

This is an 8-week course based on the 12-step programme to help those who suffer with life-controlling habits and addictions.

If you would like to join us for the course, please sign up at the Drop In or call or text Graham on 07716 942381.



Support for when you want to stop

Find freedom from life controlling habits, like smoking, gambling or drinking.



Kitchen leadership transitions

In December, Rosie Hills, who had served as Drop In Kitchen Manager for more than a year and a half, decided to stand down from her role. We were all very sorry to see Rosie move on, but she does have a formidable list of other commitments and is also awaiting surgery on her hip. Hopefully she'll be back with us again before too long. We all owe a huge thank you to Rosie for all she has done at the Drop In, and we wish her well in the coming months.

I stepped into Rosie's shoes on 1st December. Having volunteered in the kitchen since the start of the Drop In, I have witnessed firsthand the steady increase in the number of meals we've prepared each session. When we first opened, we were feeding less than five guests at one session each week, and now we serve an average of 53 meals twice a week.

Our record over the two-plus years of our existence was 73 guests in one session, so we've had to learn to adapt quickly! We moved premises a few months ago, so we've definitely had our challenges. Keeping our guests fed without losing the plot has, at times, been all but impossible! However, we have now settled well into Trinity Methodist Church, and we have a great, fun, hard-working team of kitchen volunteers.

This year may well bring in even more guests because of changing government policies. We'll be prepared, and we look forward to welcoming everyone with a smile and a hot meal.

We're very grateful to all the local companies that are coming alongside us to help. Recently we've received food donations from The Taste of Suffolk, Silver Spoon, and Rattlesden Farm Foods. These companies have been most generous and have agreed to support us through the coming year. Waitrose also donated £400 worth of Christmas food as part of their Isolation Campaign, and this enabled us to give our guests some wonderful festive food.

VC Curry House has also been providing curry each week, which everyone loves! We're still very well supported by Marks & Spencer, Nando's, Greggs, and Tesco. We can't thank everyone enough for the food donations we receive.

Anthea Marshall, Kitchen Manager



Bishop Mike visits Jo Jennings and Lesley Horn in the kitchen

Bishop of Dunwich drops in

The Right Reverend Dr Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich, visited the Drop In early in December. He talked with guests and volunteers about the support that takes place during the twice-weekly sessions at Trinity Methodist Church.

According to Bishop Mike,

'The Bury Drop In is a wonderful example of Christians expressing their faith and the love of Jesus through practical service to those who are among the most vulnerable in the local community.'

In exchanges with volunteers, Bishop Mike conveyed his support of and commitment to the work and said he would return and visit the Drop In again. During his time with us, the Drop In choir enthusiastically sang a couple of songs written by Sheila Mitchell, the choir leader.

The Bishop's visit attracted the attention of not just the local press, but also local radio. Radio Suffolk recorded conversations with Bishop Mike, one of the trustees, and one of our guests.

His comments can be read on the Diocesan website.



Winter night shelter opens

The local authority contacted Garland Street Baptist Church on 4th December to ask whether or not the Elven Centre could be made available for emergency night accommodation for homeless people ahead of a cold snap. Following several helpful conversations with insurers, risk assessors, and other users of the building, the shelter opened on 7th December and remained open during some of the coldest nights of the year.

Airbeds and sleeping bags were provided, and the Elven Centre proved to be a warm and safe place for its guests. The council's overnight staff were supported by Bury Drop In volunteers to help set up in the evening and clear up in the morning. It was a wonderful team effort!

At the same time, the housing team worked urgently to establish a more adequate winter accommodation. West Suffolk councils together with Havebury Housing Partnership recruited specialist care staff and opened a shelter at Northgate Lodge in Bury St Edmunds on 20th December. It can serve up to 16 people and will care for rough sleepers from across West Suffolk every night during the winter until the end of March.

If you're aware of people sleeping rough, they can be referred to the winter night shelter through the Housing Department at West Suffolk House at 01284 757178.

Reverend Robert Green, Drop In Trustee

A NOTE FROM THE COUNCIL

I would like to thank you formally on behalf of Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury councils for your kind support of our emergency winter night shelter which was set up at very short notice.

Your help, not only in terms of allowing the use of the Elven Centre but also assisting in organising the people to run it, has been invaluable to us. With the support of the church and volunteers, the council and Havebury have now been able to open the winter shelter at Northgate Lodge, which we will keep open every night through until the end of March.

You and your volunteers work tirelessly throughout the year to support vulnerable people in our community, particularly at the Drop In centre.

Providing this safe space for people to talk and seek support is so important. It provides a vital lifeline for many and is greatly appreciated by the council, and the housing team in particular.

You are very much one of our main partners in the work that we do to try to help homeless people so I am very grateful for all your on-going support which, sadly, no doubt will continue to be needed into 2018.

All the best

Sara Mildmay-White

Councillor Sara Mildmay-White



**St Edmundsbury
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Drop In receives feedback from Citizens Advice Bureau

I have been attending the Bury Drop In on behalf of the Citizens Advice Bureau once a fortnight since it opened. The Drop In offers CAB an opportunity to engage with people who need our help and who we might not pick up any other way.

When the Drop In first started, I anticipated the guests who attended would be people we were already working with or aware of. I have been surprised at the number of new clients we have engaged with over the past two years. We thought attending the Drop In would be an easier way for our clients to keep in touch with us, but actually it has proved useful for extending awareness of our service amongst some of the people who need our help most.

My participation also enables me to liaise with other agencies that attend the Drop In. This greatly improves the way we work together. We better understand the work we do and how we can refer clients between us. We can share knowledge about other agencies and changes that we become aware of. For me professionally this has been immensely useful.

The volunteers at the Drop In are extremely welcoming. They are always willing to talk with guests and to help investigate any issues they may have.

They are also fully aware that not all guests want to engage—certainly not on their first visit—and are adept at knowing when guests are ready to chat.

Drop In volunteers are fully aware of the limits to what they can offer and are keen to signpost guests to



the agencies best able to help. The charity's trustees are constantly looking for gaps in what is available to vulnerable people in Bury rather than trying to offer what is already provided.

The Drop In not only provides food, warmth, and access to agencies for the guests, but it is also a place for much needed interaction with other people.

The chance to have a conversation and be treated as normal people as opposed to being invisible or lonely on the streets is vitally important.

In my opinion, the Drop In has got the balance right in providing practical help and a friendly, safe place to go to talk to people and share a meal.

Sarah Truman
Citizens Advice Bureau



Special thanks to our loyal sponsors

We are very grateful for the generous support of these businesses and other organisations.



WAITROSE GAVE THE DROP IN a sizeable contribution in the autumn through their green token scheme that helps charities throughout the year. In addition, Waitrose named Bury Drop In as

one of three organisations eligible for its Isolation Campaign, which supports those working with the homeless and vulnerable at Christmas. We were able to go to the store in early December and collect food to the value of £400. This has been a great help in providing meals for the guests that visit the Drop In week by week.



Staff of Valley Connection recently visited the Drop In. Khaled Hussain, waiter, talked with our kitchen staff. Abdus Shahid, Director and Chef, was pleased to see the obvious delight of our guests in their appreciation of the donated food.

How you can help

PRAYER

Please pray for our many guests, most of whom have serious challenges to overcome. Please ask the Lord for continued wisdom, favour, and protection for our volunteers as they find themselves working in quite difficult and sometime traumatic contexts. Pray for supernatural guidance for our trustees and managers as they plan for the future. Ask the Lord to bless our fundraising efforts as we seek to better serve the homeless and vulnerable in our community. And pray God will continue to be glorified through the work of the Drop In.

VOLUNTEERS

We continue to need more people to help in the kitchen, at the reception desk, and as befrienders for our guests on Tuesdays and Fridays. We're also looking for people to coordinate our publicity efforts, help manage our website, head up our volunteer training, and assist with administrative duties. If you'd like to help, you can obtain information and an application by clicking on VOLUNTEERS at burydropin.org or contacting Di Ruddock at theburydropin@btconnect.com.

GUEST PROGRESSION

If you or someone you know is willing to provide volunteer or paid employment for some of our guests who are ready to move on in their lives, please let us know.

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

If you would like to make a one-time donation, please make your cheque out to 'Bury Drop In' and post it to Bury Drop In, c/o Garland Street Baptist Church, Pump Lane, Bury St Edmunds, IP33 1HN. If you would like to contribute regularly, please contact us for a Standing Order form.

Thank you very much.



Jane Popham (centre) and her husband, Michael, delivered several items of clothing as well as various sweets and biscuits for our guests at Christmas. Janet Simmons, a Drop In Trustee, received their latest donation.

Bury Drop In

Trinity Methodist Church, Brentgoval Street, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP33 1EB

Opening Times: Tuesday & Friday, 11am to 2pm

Email: theburydropin@btconnect.com **Web:** burydropin.org

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