

Hope 4 Media Release: Thursday April 14th 2016 - The new Hope Centre one year on

At their April Meeting, the Directors of Hope 4 (Rugby) Ltd reviewed their work among the town's homeless and badly housed people, soon after the first full year of operating from the charity's new premises on Newbold Road. The charity oversees four sources of practical help for people in need in the Borough of Rugby: Hope 4U, the Winter Shelter, the Hope Centre and the Rugby Foodbank. **Hope 4U**, an evening food distribution ministry, has been operating from the Hope Centre for the first time this year after nearly a decade in St Andrew's. "The transition to the new Centre has gone really well", said Hope 4 Director, Cathy Hemsley. "Numbers have increased significantly at many of this year's sessions, and the new facilities, especially the kitchen, are perfect for what we do".

Revd Dr Michael Bochenski, who chairs the Hope 4 Board of Directors, has now co-ordinated the town's **Rugby Winter Shelter** for the past five years. Reviewing this year's shelter project, he commented: "This has been another year of tremendous interchurch and community partnership involving some over 200 volunteers across 7 local church venues. We have welcomed guests on many more winter nights than in previous years", he observed. "Particularly sad this year has been the number of new local people who have found themselves caught up in the nightmare of repossessions, harsh evictions by landlords, or relationship breakdowns. They have then found themselves quite literally on the streets this winter as a result". This winter 51 guests, 8 of whom were female, slept overnight at one of the venues for some 1526 bed nights - a 50% usage increase compared to last year. "This winter too", Dr Bochenski continued, "there were 19 nights where the temperature fell to 0c or below and the Council stepped in to help us with SWEP (Severe Weather Emergency Protocol) measures. This eased the pressure considerably for us on those nights". The oldest guest using the shelter this year was 64 and the youngest was 18. The average age of the guests was 37.

The **Hope Centre** too had had a very busy year. Sarah Malone, Senior Support Worker at Hope 4, shared these figures at the Directors' Meeting. Last year's statistics are in brackets. "Over the course of the charity year 2015-16, we have been privileged to serve some **141** (121) newly referred guests who visited the Centre on **8763** (5878) occasions. They were served with **8522** (5609) meals. **1133** (961) signposting interviews -conversations with a purpose- were held and **47** (30) guests were helped towards finding housing of some kind" , she reported.

The Directors also received an update on the **Rugby Foodbank** from Hope 4 Director Diana Mansell who reported to the Board that the main reasons for people using the RFB in the charity year just ended were low income (with money for food running out before the end of a month), followed closely by benefit delays and reductions. In the charity year just ended, the Foodbank had helped over 3000 local people, including over 1000 children in their families, and had distributed over 40,000 kgs of food. The

Directors also agreed to support the move of the main Rugby Foodbank office into the new Hope Centre over the course of the next few weeks.

“The need for the work of Hope 4, and the numbers we are helping each month, continue to grow”, Dr Bochenski noted. “Remember too that this is in just one relatively small West Midlands town, and one blessed by good co-operation between the charitable, voluntary, housing and statutory sectors. We are so grateful to the team of over 300 volunteers who help us deliver these services, and for the ongoing financial support we received from so many local people, organisations and businesses. Because all the signs are”, he concluded, “that the factors which have led to this significant increase in the numbers of those using our services are - sadly - unlikely to disappear in the near future”. **ENDS**

Further information:

The participating churches in the Rugby Winter Shelter 2015-6 were:

St John the Baptist, Hillmorton, St Marie's, St George's, Hillmorton, Rugby Baptist Church, m20, the Salvation Army and the Rugby Methodist Church Centre.

Hope 4 (Rugby) Ltd. is a Registered Charity (no. 1126487). It is also a Private Company, limited by guarantee, (Companies House no. 06614898). Hope 4 was established in 2004 and is a charity for relieving poverty - especially among people who are homeless and badly-housed - in the Borough of Rugby. Hope 4 (Rugby) Ltd has a number of strategies for this:

- Operating a day centre for homeless and badly-housed people in Rugby - **The Hope Centre**, (8 Newbold Road) which is open at the following times: Mondays to Fridays: 11am to 2pm / Saturday: 9am to 11am / Sunday: 1pm to 4pm. In 2014 the then Hope Centre welcomed some 120 referred guests on 5237 occasions and served some 5514 hot meals.
- Running **Hope4U**: these are sessions providing hot food & drink in the town centre to anyone in need in the Hope Centre at the following times: Mondays Wednesdays & Fridays 6pm to 7pm. On average around 30 guests a night attend this open cafe style food ministry.
- Overseeing the inter-church **Rugby Winter Shelter** - which is open every night in a local church hall between December and March.
- Working with local churches and the national Trussell Trust to deliver the **Rugby Food Bank** (RFB) which has now helped nearly 11000 local people since its launch in March 2012.
- Networking with, and supporting, local agencies and charities who help homeless and badly housed people or those who are in danger of becoming so.

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