



RUGBY WINTER SHELTER OPENS FOR A FIFTH YEAR

MEDIA RELEASE – Thursday November 12th 2015

Local church and community volunteers are responding to the problem of rough sleeping in the Borough of Rugby again this winter. Announcing the launch of the fifth Rugby Winter Shelter The Revd Dr Michael Bochenski, who chairs the local charity Hope 4 Rugby, observed: “When most people think of a homeless person they tend to think of someone sleeping rough on the streets. For some, however, it is in tents, graveyards, under canal bridges, or on park benches, rather than streets. Many people who sleep rough will suffer from multiple health problems and are also in greater danger of violence than the general population. This is why for five winters now churches across the town have got together to provide a winter shelter refuge in a church hall somewhere in the town for up to 15 guests each night”.

Autumn 2014 official counts and estimates suggested there were 2,744 rough sleepers on any one night in England - a rise of 55 per cent from Autumn 2010, when the figure was 1,768. These figures are, however, only a snapshot taken on one night. The real figures are probably significantly higher. In London alone, 6,508 people were reported sleeping rough during 2013/14 according to the homeless charity Crisis. As Company Secretary and Winter Shelter volunteer, Joyce Woodings, notes: “It is notoriously difficult to get an accurate figure for the number of people sleeping rough in England at this time. Many rough sleepers become experts at hiding for obvious reasons, especially women. However over the past four winters an average of 55 guests each year used the Rugby Winter Shelter. We are expecting similar numbers over the winter of 2015-6”.

The Rugby Winter Shelter will be opening doors again soon to rough sleepers. The shelter is open between 1 December and 31 March. One new church is welcoming winter shelter guests to their premises this year: St Matthew's and St Oswalds (m2o) on Lawford Road. This year's venues are : Sundays - St John the Baptist, Hillmorton; Mondays - St Marie's; Tuesdays - St George's; Wednesdays - Rugby Baptist; Thursdays – m2o; Fridays - the Salvation Army and Saturdays- the Rugby Methodist Centre. As Dr Bochenski comments: “This emergency winter shelter provision is only made possible by the remarkable commitment of some 200 or so volunteers from churches and communiity groups each year, responding so compassionately to human beings in need.”

Volunteers willing to help out – especially with the overnight shifts - are encouraged to contact the charity directly. And guests wishing to book a place at one of the venues need to register in person for each night at the Hope Centre, 8 Newbold Road, Rugby CV21 2LJ Tel 01788 572456.

Referral documents and Volunteer Application forms can also be downloaded via the Hope 4 web-site: www.hope4.org.uk/

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Further information:

CRISIS on Rough Sleeping

<http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/rough-sleeping.html>

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