

# Business Plan April 2017-March 2020

## 1. Foreword

2017/18 has been a year of considerable activity and transition for us and although internally we have been fully focused on making good progress on a number of key goals, this has meant that we have only recently finalised our Business Plan for publication. As the Chair of Cambridge Cyrenians, it is a pleasure to launch this, the new Business Plan for the next three years.

The previous Business Plan (2014-17) contained some real challenges, and it was good to look back and see that we met or exceeded all our Key Performance targets and to appreciate just how much we achieved. We look forward to what we might accomplish during the life of this new Plan.

The Plan provides a guide to how we will respond to changes that we know about, or that are already having an impact, but we also want to anticipate future changes and how we need to develop and shape our organisation and the services we provide to ensure that we can provide the best possible support to the homeless men and women of the future who come to us in need.

Like the many organisations that work with and support people in their local community, the economic downturn that started in 2008 is still having a measurable impact on the resources available to meet the needs of our service users. The increase in rough sleeping and homelessness has led to extra pressure on our services and the outlook continues to remain uncertain as year on year we are seeing more people, often with more complex needs, seeking our assistance.

During the life of this Plan, there will also be major external changes that will impact our services, such as Universal Credit (which has still to be fully applied locally), the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, changes in the way supported housing is funded and a new cycle of tendering for new and existing contracts.

However, the Board and staff are of one mind; that we can not only rise to these challenges, but go further in developing a service fit for the future, building on the support of our friends, partners and the public.

We are fortunate to have a great team of staff, workers and volunteers led by our manager, as well as a committed Board of Trustees and continuing support from the local community – all of whom I would like to thank for helping develop this plan and support in progressing our goals.

Neil Offley  
Chair of Cambridge Cyrenians.



## 2. Our Vision, Mission and Values

**Our Vision** – Anyone who finds themselves homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, is able, without delay, to access decent, safe and secure accommodation that meets their needs. They will be treated with dignity and respect, suffering no disadvantage because of circumstance or who they are.



**Our mission** - To serve those who are homeless or vulnerable to homelessness and to make a positive difference to the quality of their lives.

We will do this by being flexible and innovative in response to the changing needs of homeless people whilst accepting responsibility, and accountability, to our service users for our actions.

During the period of this plan we intend to review our vision and mission to ensure they reflect our long-term goals. We will also look to review and refine our stated values that help to underpin the services we provide.

## 3. Our services

Cambridge Cyrenians' supported accommodation service accommodates 101 single homeless men and women in 20 housing projects across the city. The houses offer different levels of support based on individual needs.

The flexibility of the service allows referrals to be made directly to any of the houses and most of our users access one of two 8 bed short stay houses or our 10 bed ex-offenders service where an individual's support needs are assessed, before moving on to the most appropriate level and type of support. Each stage is designed to enable the individual to maximise their independence. For most this will mean ultimately moving to their own tenancy, be that social housing, private rented, or sheltered. Cyrenians also provides dedicated housing for ex-offenders and women only accommodation.

Working with a range of partner landlords, we currently provide 31% of all temporary bed-spaces in the city and there continues to be a strong demand for our housing services which is unlikely to change during the life of this plan.

Cambridge Cyrenians also offers a range of specialist services, such as a mental health service, meaningful activities, a floating support service for older clients (to enable them to move on, or retain their existing accommodation), and dedicated staff to assist with securing employment, volunteering and training.

Resident satisfaction continues to be high with the majority (78% in 2017 increasing to 88% in 2018) reporting that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received. No residents reported that they were dissatisfied with the services received.

In summary, we are well positioned to meet future demands. We are a small local provider and understand the local need, both from a user and a Commissioner point of view. Financially we have a low-cost base and are financially sound.

## 4. The changing external context

As we look ahead there are a number of external challenges that we anticipate will have an impact on what we do. These include:

- Rise in homelessness/rough sleeping – Both nationally and locally we have seen a steep increase in the numbers of men and women sleeping rough since 2010 (rough sleeping has risen nationally by 269% from 2010 to 2017). Locally, all agencies working with the homeless are reporting increasing support needs, often relating to substance misuse, offending or mental health issues. A recent dip in the numbers of rough sleepers locally has been attributed to increased investment in new services, but most agencies are experiencing an increased demand for their services.
- Homeless Reduction Act – The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act in 2018 has significant implications for local authorities, although the full impact won't be felt for some time whilst the Act is being phased in. It is not clear just what impact it will have on organisations like Cyrenians, but we anticipate increased pressure to take on and support additional referrals that the City Council will have new responsibilities towards.
- Changes to Supported Housing funding – Central government proposals to change the way Supported Housing is funded has been delayed until April 2020. For those living in temporary housing, the proposal is to replace Housing Benefit with a grant. Many of the details are still to be resolved, but it could remove the problems we face with collecting rents and residents getting into debt, so long as the grant levels and the rate of uplift are set at the right levels. However our assessment is that funding under the new scheme will almost certainly result in reduced income. Cambridge Cyrenians is doing what it can by responding directly and with other agencies to government consultations on the proposal, so that the needs of service users is not lost in the process.



- Pressures on funding – The recent removal of one local authority grant, as well as the County Council asking providers for cost savings from our Housing Related Support grants means increased pressure to cut costs at a time when demand for our services continues to increase.
- Benefit changes – Universal Credit (UC) will begin full implementation in Cambridge from October 2018 and should the housing element not be replaced by a grant, then

recovering the rent owed is likely to prove to be more difficult. Benefit sanctions are also becoming more common with UC, which could impact on resident's ability to pay their personal contribution to the rent.

- Increased costs – At the same time as pressures on income, we find ourselves having to manage significant cost increases. In the last year, we have seen demands from landlords for very large increases in fees or rent, including one increase of 188%, which we vigorously resisted, but still had significant financial consequences as we cannot and would not wish to pass this sort of increase on to residents.

## 5. Our Key Objectives

During the life of this plan we set out to address the key challenges we face in providing a high-quality service to those in need. To this end we aim to:

- 1) Maintain the consistency and high quality of our core housing services, focussing on our strength in providing supported accommodation.
- 2) Increase our accommodation capacity in response to local demand, this includes both “move-on” and more long-stay accommodation.
- 3) Investigate new services for specific groups, who require specialist support not being provided for by our core services or other Cambridge providers.

### **Enabled by:**

- 4) Recognising the organisation’s most valuable asset, our staff, workers and volunteers, and empowering them to achieve the most they can in their roles.
- 5) Optimising infrastructure, internal processes and governance, to include developing an action plan to address key issues highlighted in a recent external organisational review and the further refinement of key performance indicators.
- 6) Developing new activities and methods of assistance for our residents, to improve their general outlook and ensure their long-term departure from poverty and homelessness.
- 7) Work proactively and collaboratively with partners across all sectors, to offer solutions and promote good practice in providing long-term solutions for Cambridge’s homeless.
- 8) Investigate and develop our approach to building our public profile, and our role in campaigning for homelessness issues in Cambridge, with the ultimate goal of influencing funders, local business and government to assist our mission and objectives and
- 9) Striving to maintain the long-term financial security of the organisation.

### **In support of this we will:**

- 10) Prepare for future tenders for services, which provide funding for a significant part of our core services for residents.
- 11) Continue to pursue options for more suitable office accommodation to provide a base for our staff to provide services for residents.
- 12) Develop longer-term goals beyond the period of this business plan.

## 6. Key Performance Indicators

Work has been carried out to develop a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to help highlight current performance and guide future development.

The following KPIs have been agreed:

- Residents’ overall satisfaction
- Residents’ move-on rates

- Funding in place to maintain all current specialised services & meaningful activities
- Number of residents accessing employment or volunteer work
- Staff motivation
- Occupancy levels and voids
- Level of residents' bad debt
- Financial health
- Setting a strategy and policy for our public profile and role in campaigning

Further work will be carried out on KPIs as we seek to refine our longer-term plans.

## 7. Organisational Development

We recognise in our objectives that it is important to optimise our infrastructure, internal processes and governance.

To assist with this Cambridge Cyrenians recently commissioned an external review of the organisation, which was very positive in its assessment of the strengths of and outlook for the organisation, and made some recommendations of areas to develop.

Our continuing approach to organisation development will include developing an action plan to address key issues highlighted in the review and the further refinement of key performance indicators.

To support us to manage the changing context we need to develop not only our public profile, but also to have the voices of service users heard. Developing our public profile will help us achieve our goals as we need to be understood by those who have influence or can provide support, so that they better understand the challenges and the potential solutions.

At the same time, we also need to be sure we remain on a secure financial footing and will also be looking at how we can become more efficient, keeping costs down whilst also looking to secure alternative funding streams.



In response, we have already expanded our supported housing service to provide an additional eight houses and six one bed flats, providing a total of 33 additional bed spaces. The increase in the staff team to support this service, plus taking on new staff for other services has meant an urgent need for additional office space.

A recent attempt to acquire new office accommodation was unfortunately aborted in the final stages (for reasons beyond our control and despite our best efforts). We continue to explore options for new office space as a more suitable base for our expanded staff team.

Recently, the Board of Trustees has welcomed new members, who bring new ideas and skills to complement the valuable experience of longer serving members. With the new plan in place we are confident that we can

deliver a service that enables all those who look to us for support to realise their potential as we look ahead to celebrating our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2020.

## 8. Accommodation Service

The Cyrenian ethos, which has influenced us for the past 50 years, still offers a guide to good practice today and is a model which we will continue to pursue and promote for the benefit of, not just our service users, but all homeless men and women.

Early in the life of this plan Cambridge Cyrenians agreed to the transfer of additional bed spaces from another local supported housing provider. The service model for the transferring properties closely matched our own, which is more akin to a home rather than a hostel, and hence was seen as a good fit. The support of the County Council, as commissioner, for the transfer, shows that they value what we do. The transfer, plus the introduction of another service, has increased our capacity to 101 bed spaces in all, approximately one third of all the temporary bed spaces in the city.

During the life of this plan we are aware that central government proposes to change the fundamental way in which supported housing is funded, plus the fact that local authorities are still under pressure to cut costs. But at the same time as we have financial uncertainty, we are also seeing, year on year, a rise in homelessness and an increased demand for our services. This is why Cambridge Cyrenians is committing itself, working alongside key partners, to ensure we can provide a service that flexes and develops in response to changing need, including introducing new services if they are needed and the Cyrenians is certain it is the best agency to respond to that need.

Cambridge Cyrenians will also want to work closely with Cambridge City Council and other partners to try to address the real lack of appropriate, secure, long-term housing, which is one of the main barriers to residents moving on.

## 9. Support Services



To enable the homeless men and women who come to us for support to move on, we must be able to help to address, not just their housing need, but enable them to become full and active citizens.

Cambridge Cyrenians has recently been able to re-introduce a number of services lost due to previous funding cuts. This includes dedicated mental health support for the significant number of men and women, often with an undiagnosed mental illness, who can now benefit from the support of a Registered Mental Nurse on the staff team. Our Older Homeless Floating Support Service, which recently received national recognition as an example of good practice,

continues to support older homeless men and women to move-on, or those at risk of homelessness to remain in their homes. Demand is such that we will be assessing the need to expand this service.

In addition our Meaningful Occupation project, which has been very successful in assisting service users to access employment, training and volunteering and our counselling service, which is accessible by all our service users, will both be reviewed and assessed as to how to develop the services for the future.

## 10. Employee and Volunteer Development

Our employees and volunteers are the organisation's most valuable asset and we must continue with their development as the delivery of our services is only made possible through their efforts, and with the support of Board Trustees. So it is essential that we have in place the right people by providing the right environment, training, support and reward, as well as providing them with opportunity to follow and explore new ideas or areas of interest as these will ultimately benefit the those we are here to support.

To facilitate this we will review our recruitment, induction, support processes, plus our terms & conditions.

## 11. Finance

Historical sound financial management has enabled Cambridge Cyrenians to maintain a strong financial position in support of its core objectives. And careful management of our resources and forward financial planning over and beyond the life of this plan, plus strict financial management, including quarterly monitoring of expenditure by the Board, annual accounts after each year end, and three year budgetary planning, will protect Cambridge Cyrenians from the challenging future financial environment.

It is important that over this period Cambridge Cyrenians maintains a level of reserves that ensure we can respond to short and medium term fluctuations in income and maintain a high level of service. At the same time it has been our intention in recent years to secure more appropriate office accommodation as the base from which our team provide services for residents. Limited office space has become a more pressing issue following the transfer in of additional housing, residents and staff from another local provider. To make it possible to secure new office space we have, through careful financial management and planning, built reserves to help part-fund an office move. Funds of £200,000 have now been designated specifically for the purpose of purchasing new office space.

At the same time we recognise that, in order to provide the best service possible, we need to continue to develop existing and new services to better respond to the needs of our service users and hence will need to continually explore possible sources of new funding to make this possible.

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