

The Friary is a local charity - we empower homeless and disadvantaged adults to rebuild their lives by providing practical services, advice and emotional support.

Brand new service for rough sleepers launched

After 30 years, the Friary has increased its Centre opening hours and launched a new service just aimed at rough sleepers. The Centre will now also open on Tuesday and Thursday mornings at 8.30 am offering a free cooked breakfast, showers and clothing – specifically for the homeless. Funded by our recent Home for Christmas campaign, the service has been launched partly because of the increase in homelessness and also because not all rough sleepers can access the winter shelter.

Whilst the Friary works tirelessly all through the year to help people into appropriate accommodation, to access jobs and to sort out benefit issues, it is acknowledged that some people do become entrenched rough sleepers and cannot access some services.

As general manager Ann Bremner explains: "There are certain people, through choice or complex needs, who cannot get into the winter shelter and cannot access the free



Photograph courtesy of Shawn Ryan

breakfasts. We are targeting the high risk people who either don't want to go there or they are not eligible, so we are meeting the needs of a minority of people."

Read the real life experience of a rough sleeper on page 6

"This will be somewhere for people to come first thing in the morning," she says. "After all, if you get wet on a Monday night, you can't wait until Wednesday morning for the centre to open. Before we started this new service we were forever at the door because people were in need of a service so we thought we might as well open and make it official."

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Brand new service for rough sleepers launched *continued*

The new sessions are staffed by Ann along with a cook and also a support worker who can give addiction advice. As well as practical help, and signposting to other services, there is always a listening ear available.

"If you're isolated and you don't trust people, it is so valuable to be able to talk through what your issues are and how you're feeling. Some people are quite desperate and things can escalate when you don't have family there to support you," Ann explained. "People are so low they just don't see a future."

It is hoped that the service, will be kept open all through the year and not just for Winter. The Friary's figures demonstrate that the highest numbers of visitors are in July and August so this is not just a winter problem. Last year 57 new people visited in August.

Eventually it is planned that some of the Friary's service users will be trained to help out at the new sessions as volunteers.

"It may be that a small number of people can be trained in food hygiene and confidentiality so that they can help out. This would increase their confidence, skills and their capacity for work."

Thank you to everyone who gave to our Home for Christmas appeal which has made this new service possible. £5892 was raised from the appeal.

Average number of non-cooking food parcels given out by the Friary per month is 296

Bin there – donated that!



A huge thank you goes to Rushcliffe residents who generously gave over 12 tons of food and clothes for the Friary when they put their bins out in January – an increase of a massive two tons over last year.

"This collection involves 80,000 households and awareness of it is growing every year," said the Friary CEO Sam Crawford. "A massive thank you once again to the amazingly generous people of Rushcliffe. These donations are already going to those in crisis providing the basic essentials they need."

The Friary also wants to thank the Rushcliffe Borough Council waste teams who spent longer on their collections so they could pick up the extra donations and also the Council's staff who contributed to a reverse advent calendar which amassed hundreds of items.

"This will really help the Friary to continue assisting local people in need on their journey to recovery and independence," Sam added.



Hold the front page!



The Friary made front page news in January when we were featured in a national magazine. Describing homelessness as a 'needless epidemic' the eight-page article inside The Doctor magazine went on to investigate "Homelessness – the victims, the politics that fuel it, and those working to tackle the human cost."

Featuring stories and pictures from the Friary's service users, along with staff comments, the article particularly looked at the cost of homelessness to the NHS, quoting facts and figures from Nottinghamshire hospitals. The theme was picked up by local and national media

and the Friary went on to feature on the front page of the Nottingham Post and on regional news programmes.

Quoting Nottingham GP Stephen Willott, who sees homeless patients at the Friary, the article says: "The homeless tend to need help with stuff relating to their being

Life expectancy for homeless men is 47 – and just 43 for homeless women

Cost of a rough sleeper to society each year £20,000 plus



Dr Stephen Willott

Photograph courtesy of Shawn Ryan

homeless – it could be mental health, or they have terrible foot care, a lot of it can be sexual health issues or to do with drugs and alcohol. Sometimes there are things we can do there and then but often it's about making a plan.

New research, done by The Doctor magazine paints a picture of a society in which homelessness is growing rapidly and the interaction between homeless people and the NHS is soaring. The figures – collected through a series of Freedom of Information requests – reveal that the number of recorded visits to England's emergency departments by patients classed as having no fixed abode has nearly trebled since 2010/11. During the last financial year, 2017/18, at least 31,924 patient visits were recorded compared to just 11,305 seven years prior.

Spring and Summer events

Fundraising Sale Saturday 18th May

11.00am – 1.00 pm Sir Julien Cahn Pavilion, West Park, West Bridgford

Serenata Concert Saturday 7th December

St Giles Church - further details to follow

Click and Collect

A job, secure accommodation or a benefit claim could be just a “click” away – but without a computer and with a lack of IT knowledge, rough sleepers and people in vulnerable situations can never access those essential things. That’s where the Friary’s computer room and IT advice worker can help out.

As we all know, increasingly everything is done online and it was to answer that need that the Friary set up the computer room in 2014 – initially with help from Experian, Boots and the Rotary Club. And as IT advice worker Becky Russell explains, one of the motivating factors was the introduction of Universal Credit. “There is a need for people to become more internet savvy,” Becky says, “In many areas of life you need to be conversant with computers and have an email address.”

People come in to use the IT room for job searches, to apply for jobs through the government’s jobseeker website, to provide evidence to show that they have applied for jobs otherwise they will have their benefits cut, as well as a range of other services – changing energy suppliers to a cheaper

alternative, printing off wage slips to prove they have been earning in order to claim benefits, setting up email addresses on their smart phones, providing ID letters for accessing bus passes, bank accounts and accommodation.

And sometimes there have been startling results, as Becky recalls: “One guy kept getting his password wrong when he tried to log into the government website. We helped him create a fresh account – he applied for a job and there and then he got a phone call offering him an interview. He went on to get the job and kept it for two years. It was instant success!”

Another man was helped to log onto a housing website to get the required ‘bidding number’ and by the following week, because of his age and disabilities, had been offered a new property.

“IT can be very frustrating and if you cannot see your way through you might easily give up,” says Becky, who was a computer programmer for 20 years. She initially came to the Friary for a few weeks – and that was nine years ago. “I was self-employed and I had six weeks to spare so I came as a volunteer,” she explained.



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As a Christian, Becky says she feels called to help the vulnerable, but says: “That sounds very ‘worthy’ – but I just love doing this work. Every day is different and I love the challenge. You come alongside people and help them on the way to a solution. I have learnt a lot about people and how the benefits system works. I have a better appreciation of what people have to deal with and I am always learning better ways to do things and how to get round problems. I encourage people to learn themselves so maybe they can go to the library in the future to use computers or use mobile ‘hotspots’ at home.”

An average morning sees 10-12 people using the IT room and it was very busy when Liz Jones visited. One regular visitor, Mohammed, comes three times a week to apply for jobs online. He has just come to the end of a sanction which saw his benefits cut by £40.00 a week for three years because he couldn’t prove he was applying for jobs. “I didn’t know how to do it. I didn’t even know how to log on” he says. “The sanctions hit me very hard.” Now Mohammed knows how to apply for jobs online and how to prove it, how to upload a CV on to a company’s website, how to produce a covering letter in ‘Word’ for employers and save documents on a memory stick. “I’ve learnt such a lot from Becky,” he says. “And now

my sanction has come to an end,” he adds with a big smile. “I can eat better and it feels good. Three years is a long time!”

Meanwhile, Jason was trying to sort out complicated tax returns from a period of self-employment. “With Becky’s help I have got further here than anywhere else and I have also applied online for accommodation with housing agencies and got a better place,” he adds. Then Pete arrives to print off an ID letter to get a bus pass.

The IT room is open three mornings a week and a band of 10 invaluable volunteers helps to keep it ticking over. “We have quite a variety of people with different skills – some are good at writing CVs and covering letters, some used to work in probation and citizens’ advice, young people are good on social media and mobile phones – they are all vital to the running of the computer room,” says Becky.

Do you have any IT or advice skills? Could you help on our rota for IT volunteers? Could you donate to help keep the service running? See back page for further information and how to help.

All service user names have been changed to protect identity.

Real Life experiences of rough sleepers



Samantha and Clayton were homeless for two and a half years. After being in housing for the past eight years, they face eviction again as their landlord is selling up.

Photograph courtesy of Shawn Ryan

What's it really like to be a rough sleeper? Liz Jones chatted to a service user about his experience.

Angus' story

"When I was homeless I once saw half a cigarette on the floor. I was embarrassed to pick it up so I waited ages – and then someone else picked it up. After a while you stop caring what people think. You're sinking then."

This is how Angus felt when he was sleeping rough on and off for about three years. "I used to come to the Friary feeling dirty and rough and leave with a spring in my step, feeling optimistic about the day ahead – like I could go out and get a job."

Angus, who now has a job and somewhere to live, ended up homeless because of his drinking. "Drinking is like putting a suit of armour on – it stops things getting to you" he says.

"I was good at getting jobs but I couldn't keep them because I would go on benders. I tried for years to get counselling but when I come to the Friary and have a chat it's just as good for your mental health. The Friary has done so much more for me than I can say."

Angus became homeless because of his drinking and then it became normal for him. "I would never sleep in the same place twice. I would go behind offices and travel quite far to find somewhere I didn't think anyone else would go. I kept myself to myself but it felt terrible. I was out of it. I always knew there was a way out but I kept making the same mistakes. Sometimes I would wake up in a different part of the country.

"The Friary helped me feel human every time I came here. They washed my clothes, listened to my problems and gave me advice. It gave me optimism for the day. It kept me alive because I got a bit suicidal."

Angus is now in a bedsit and looking for private rented accommodation. "I've had a place before but because of getting so used to being on the streets, I felt uncomfortable sharing accommodation. It feels strange and I got used to getting somewhere different every night. Rough sleepers don't always want to go to a place where homeless people are all together. I feel nervous and vulnerable about being amongst other people."

"When I first became homeless it didn't bother me. It was like an adventure but then it gets to you and it becomes normal."

"Without the Friary I wouldn't have got to the point where I didn't need help. I turned my life around and I still keep coming here," he says.

Service user's name has been changed to protect identity.

Law firm partners up with the Friary to help tackle rough sleeping



Nottingham's biggest law firm has partnered up with the Friary in a bid to tackle homelessness in the area. Concerned about the "crisis" in rough sleeping in England, Browne Jacobson have launched a two-year partnership with the Friary which will involve fund raising and practical volunteering.

Anja Beriro, partner and member of the Community Action Team at Browne Jacobson said: "Sadly recent figures have shown that there has been a 169% rise in rough sleeping in England since 2010 and charities such as the Friary need as much support as they can." Already Browne Jacobson have raised cash from a "Twelve days of Christmas" campaign which saw staff wearing Christmas jumpers, organising raffles and donating food and toiletries to the Friary.

The partnership got off to a great new year start when employees got stuck into sorting out and dating food donations given by local people. Two teams of staff from Browne Jacobson spent a day at Rushcliffe Borough Council's depot sorting through the donations given by Rushcliffe residents as part of the annual collection done in partnership with the refuse collections. The food, which will go to help people who are homeless or living in vulnerable conditions, needed sorting and



dating so that it gets used in the right order. Future plans include baking sales, a sleep out and various "challenges". They will also be providing some free-of-charge legal advice support for the Friary.

Sam Crawford, the Friary's CEO said: "This is a real vote of confidence in us and helps the credibility of our organisation. We are very grateful indeed for the opportunity to partner with Browne Jacobson and to work alongside them in empowering local homeless and disadvantaged adults to rebuild their lives."

Anja Beriro, added: "We have a strong tradition of supporting great local causes and we hope our involvement will help raise much needed funds to allow the charity to continue its sterling work in addressing the growing problem of homelessness."

Friary Centre – Services available

- Walk through the door to a warm welcome (no matter what!)
- All welcome (regardless of circumstances)
- Initial point of contact in time of crisis
- Food & hot drink, shower, clothing, footwear.
- Welfare advice.
- Health advice.
- Access to computers e.g. to apply for benefits, support with CV writing & job searches - essential with impending roll out of online only applications for state benefits.
- Hot meals - promotes healthy nutrition, helps prioritise spending on food first.
- Budgetary advice.
- Support to maintain tenancies.
- Fellowship.
- Social interaction to improve mental health and confidence building.

- Access to Drug/Alcohol Abuse counselling.
- Rough sleeper sessions.

These are some of the services/activities on offer at the Friary, please feel welcome to visit.

If you have been inspired to support us in any way, we would really love to hear from you.



This edition has been edited by Liz Jones

Where to find us

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Chief Executive; Sam Crawford
General Manager; Ann Bremner MBE

FRIARY OPENING TIMES

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 8.30 am – 1 pm

Tuesday and Thursday 8.30 am – 11.00 am

Sunday Evening Fellowship 8 pm – 9 pm

Donations Depot, Unit 6c, Ludlow Hill Road,
West Bridgford, NG2 6HF

Tel: 0115 998 1764

Open Tuesdays and Thursdays
10 am – 3 pm

www.the-friary.org.uk

the Friary Working
locally to end
homelessness



You can find out more about our events and what's going on by following us on twitter @**theFriary88**

REGULAR GIVING: Please visit our website for details on how to set up donations on a regular basis. This is the most helpful way for our Charity to be able to budget and plan for the future. Complete a Gift Aid form as appropriate.

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