

**What made you come to this decision?**

It has not been an easy decision. We have a team of volunteers who are completely committed to helping people in need, but we came out of last winter knowing that we needed to adapt our service. Our shelter has not been full for several years. There is so much more provision in Ipswich for those who may sleep rough that was not in place when our shelter began in 2011.

**So how many people have you been looking after at night?**

Last year we had an average of 2 or 3 people per night. Because there is now so much help available, the people who are sleeping rough are often beyond what our volunteers can cope with in terms of providing shelter. We are going to adapt our service to meet a slightly different need – but still helping those who are homeless.

**So, what will your new service provide?**

We will still be providing accommodation aimed at those who would otherwise be homeless. It will be longer term accommodation. I cannot say much more because the funding we have secured is under embargo. As soon as I can talk about it, I will tell you more.

**When will this embargo end?**

I am trying to find out! I am hoping that it will be before Christmas, but I have no guarantee.

I want people to understand that we have a very small staff team. We do not employ staff to look after the shelter unless the shelter is running. So, right now, I am the only full-time member of staff. We have a few part-time staff working on our other project. We just do not have enough resources to run our shelter this winter whilst also getting this new project off the ground.

**What do you mean by not having enough resources? You have volunteers, haven't you?**

It takes a lot of work to organise and coordinate more than a hundred volunteers to look after vulnerable adults – and this requires staff time, this is the resource that we are lacking.

**Hopefully, you will be able to tell us more soon, won't you?**

We will tell you as soon as we can. We are really excited about our new project. Obviously, we are not doing what we normally do this winter but there are other organisations working tirelessly to look after those who might find themselves sleeping rough.

**What about the people who used your shelter last winter? Are they sleeping rough because you are not open?**

No. We worked hard last winter to get them all housed. Over the last several winters, our staff have worked in the day to support our shelter guests into accommodation. We have been working with guests to end their homelessness rather than just providing some respite in the winter, so over the years we have helped a considerable number of people end their homelessness. We have almost worked ourselves out of a job if that makes sense.