



2018 Christmas Cabin Evaluation Report

The Help us Help Christmas Cabin idea was the brainchild of retailers who attended the Sheffield City Centre Retail Forum meeting. The cabin was first launched in 2017 and ran again during 22nd and 28th November 2018.



All the different Agencies, Services and retailers joined forces with the Help Us Help providers, to spread the message about how members of the public could help making a difference to those who live and/or beg on the streets of Sheffield.

This initiative would not be possible without the partnership and collaboration between all the 75 volunteers, from over 30 Services, Agencies and the 10 local retailers/businesses.

Project Volunteers

911Project; Addaction; Archer Project, Bens Centre, Big Issue North, CRC – Probation Services, Sheffield DACT, Drink Wise, Age Well; Framework Housing Association; HARC - Homeless and Rootless at Christmas, Hep C Trust, Humankind Charity – (Formally known as Disc); Neighbourhood Watch; Places for People Housing Association (Victoria Court), Salvation Army - Supported Accommodation; SASS (Sheffield Alcohol Advisory Service); SCCRAG (Sheffield City Centre Residents Action Group); Sheffield City Council – Social Care; Sheffield City Council – Commissioning; Sheffield City Council – Community Safety Team; Sheffield City Council – Councillors; Sheffield City Council; Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Community Safety; Sheffield City Council - Independence Service; SHSC – Drugs & Alcohol Treatment Services; SMART Recovery; Soup Kitchen ; St Wilfrid's Centre; The Sunday Centre , TASC

Business and Universities support

BID – Business Improvement District; Brew and Bean Coffee Shop; Frog & Parrot Pub; John Lewis – Sheffield Branch; McDonalds, High Street, Sheffield; Nottingham Building Society – Sheffield Branch; Sheffield Students' Union (Helping Hand Students Volunteer Group); Sheffield Train Station; South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive; Tescos Kelham Island Express Store. The Bankers Draft Pub; The Benjamin Huntsman.

Percival Markets and Events – provided a Christmas Market Cabin for free;
John Lewis – provided free Christmas tree, TV, gift tags
BID – Business Improvement District – provided financial support to print shopping lists, Help us Help newspaper, leaflets and posters.
Brew and Bean Coffee Shop;
Frog & Parrot Pub; John Lewis – Sheffield Branch;
McDonalds, High Street, Sheffield;
Nottingham Building Society – Sheffield Branch;
South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive;
The Bankers Draft Pub;
The Benjamin Huntsman
All worked as a drop-off point for donations

Sheffield Students' Union (Helping Hand Students Volunteer Group) – provided a drop-off point for students

Sheffield Train Station;
Tescos Kelham Island Express Store
Publicized the initiative through leaflets and posters

2018 Help us Help Activity

A shopping/wish list was provided, together with a carrier bag, so people could take it away and fill it with items from this list.

Members of the public could then take it to one of the 10 drop-off locations across Sheffield City Centre until the 2nd of December or to the Christmas Cabin, until the 28th November.

The shopping/wish list items were:
Coffee, sugar, biscuits, chocolate bars, pot noodles, hats, socks, gloves
Items requested specifically by the Charities that we support – Archer Project, Ben Centre, HARC, Soup Kitchen and The Sunday Centre.

On the 3rd January, we took all donated items to the Domino Room at Archer Project and distributed equally all those donated items according to what Charities requests.

Footfall / engagement

This year we were unable to collect exact numbers of how many members of the public we engaged with, but we believe it was a slightly smaller number than the 2276 we reached during Christmas Cabin in 2017.

We believe the smaller number was due to the bad weather, a different location for cabin within the Christmas Market - we seemed to have our backs to the main footfall and so it felt harder to engage with passers-by. Also, the week for the Cabin being just before end of month and possibly not as much footfall in the Centre in November as in the beginning of December (when we had the 2017 Cabin).

Feedback from the Charities, who received the donations

“Thank you very much for your donations of hats, scarves, gloves and socks. We are the Soup Kitchen who supports our vulnerable people in the City Centre each evening serving hot drinks and food. It was great to share the items given with our friends as they are essential items to keep them warm and they were appreciated by each person who received them.”

Soup Kitchen

“As part of the Help Us Help Campaign the Framework Street Outreach service received socks and gloves as donations for clients. These are valuable to our team as we complete outreach from 4am across the whole of Sheffield going to visit rough sleepers in their sleeping locations and responding to referrals received for sleeping locations. Simple things like being able to offer clients something like gloves and dry socks can mean so much to them and really increase our chances of engagement. As a service we really appreciate these donations and have enough to last us for some time.”

Framework

“The Cathedral Archer Project received donations of coffee and socks. Coffee is a favourite of the people who use the centre and is like gold dust, so we always need more. And when it is cold, a new pair of socks on aching feet can make all the difference to somebody who may have to face wandering around for hours at a time in cold and wet conditions.

We give out coffee all day every day, people have access to hot drinks constantly and the socks go out as fast as we receive them. They will have been shared from the moment we received them at the centre and into the New Year.

We are proud to be part of your work.

Thank you so much.”

Archer Project

“Donations were great. We asked for chocolate & biscuits & got sacks full. This covered our pre-Christmas needs and we are using them still. Probably all gone by end of January

Our best estimate is that we got about 6 new volunteers thanks to Help Us Help.”

Sunday Centre

“We asked for pot noodles and socks!

They were given out by our volunteers over the HARC project, so from Christmas Eve through to New Year's Day. We appreciate the help and donations.”

HARC

“Before the Christmas stall we were asked what we would like for donations, so we asked for coffee and sugar as this is something we use a lot. We were pleased to say that as a result of the Help us Help campaign, we received around 30 big jars of coffee and around 25 bags of sugar which are perfect for our Project. We also received around 30 packets of 12 three in one coffee sachets, which are perfect for our outreach program, making it easy for us to supply our outreach clients with hot drinks throughout the day.

We are also pleased to say that as a result of help us help, we have three new volunteers and also had two cash donations.

On behalf of Bens Centre, thank you everyone who took part.”

Bens Centre

Help us Help Newspaper

This year, with the financial help of The BID, we were able to produce a 12-page newspaper. The paper featured articles written by Alison Riggott, a Sheffield blogger. Articles varied from information about Support Services in Sheffield, weather watch, advice on housing, hostels and other accommodation in Sheffield, outreach team, Big Issue North, treatment services, charities and other services providing different type of support to the most vulnerable. We also added some information on how members of the public can best help when they see someone rough sleeping or begging on the street.

5000 copies of the newspaper were distributed through City Centre and South & West Areas. This included City Centre, Ecclesall Road, Sharrow Vale Road, Ecclesall Road South, London Road, Chesterfield Road, Woodseats, Nether Edge, Abbeydale Road, Heeley, Millhouses, Totley, Greenhill, Dore, Fulwood, Broomhill, Crookes and Crookesmoor.

Another 1500 copies of the newspaper were handed out during the Christmas Cabin week.

Some examples of feedback we got from volunteers who manned the Cabin:

“The newspapers were a good engagement tool as we could ask ‘can I just give you one of these?’ and then those who took one, there was a chance to begin a conversation.”

“The newspaper was a great idea and the pledges on the tree.”

“The materials we had this year were very good, particularly the Help Us Help newspaper. Even people who wouldn't talk sometimes would take a paper. Those who

talked seemed happy to have info to take away too. We may need the same or an updated version next year - if funds allow.”

“The Newspaper went down very well; more than one person came back for another copy after they had read the first in a coffee bar to pass it on.

Sadly the weather did not help this year but again a great opportunity to chat to the public about the campaign and what is being done for our vulnerable people in our city.”

Social Media

This year saw a major improvement in the reach and engagement from the general public, as part of launching the Christmas Cabin via social media; in addition to the pre-existing Facebook page, we also launched our new twitter and Instagram pages, encouraging members of the public to click onto the new improved www.helpushelp.uk website.

First 12 weeks headlines (29 Oct to 18 Jan)

- 1) Total social media reach: 311,513
 - Twitter – 230,400
 - Instagram – 13,113
 - Facebook – 68,000
- 2) Engagement on posts consistently above targets (1% on Twitter, 10% on Facebook)
- 3) Over 4000 website views, with average time spent on the site around 1:30 mins
- 4) As many messages from the public wanting to get involved in donating and volunteering in these 3 months as in the previous 9 months
- 5) Total social media followers of 1351
- 6) New Help us Help video was viewed over 1.2k times
- 7) Facebook page received over 15 private messages ranging from asking where they can donate items or find out where they can volunteer.

Stall's week notes

- 1) The 3 weeks' period, with stall week being the middle week, saw significant spike in figures, in terms of engagement, retweets, shares, likes and comments across **ALL** social media platforms, demonstrating effective use of each to convey messages and engage followers
- 2) For example, on Twitter we saw double the impressions and link clicks (twice as many people saw our messages and clicked to follow links). Engagement was also approaching 2%.
- 3) On Facebook, our posts were shared hundreds of times, increasing the reach each time, and engagement was significantly higher at 13%.
- 4) Instagram saw a doubling of impressions and a jump in followers.

- 5) The updated Help Us Help website saw a 30% increase in page views, demonstrating that the social media messages and conversations on the stall were successfully driving traffic to view more information online.
- 6) Stall volunteers reported members of public approaching stall after having found out about the campaign on social media.

The website

In preparation for the Cabin, the website was updated and, in addition to more information, the site now includes blogs, stories behind the scenes. Up to now, the site had over 4000+ visitors.

From Jan-Oct 2018, we received 48 emails enquiries from members of the public, ranging from wanting to know where they can donate items or find out where they can volunteer. From those, 6 of them turned into volunteers for the different Charities we support.

Nov 2017 to present we had 45 enquires

HelpusHelp Video

We also produced a short video aiming to give members of the public an insight into the work that takes place, often behind the scenes, by different services and agencies. Up to now, the video has been viewed by 1.2K people.

Please click on the below link to see the full video.

<https://www.facebook.com/HelpUsHelpSheffield/videos/vb.128134964522483/628190850912491/?type=2&theater>

Some of the feedback from volunteers who manned the Cabin

Comments:

The public was interested once they stop and listen to what we had to say. Overall all conversations were positive. Young people were not engaging as well despite that they are more likely to give money to a homeless person.

Best conversations were with those who approached us and were already interested. Quite a few people didn't want to be bothered and weren't receptive.

Many members of the public just walked past. A couple were not particularly kind in their response when approached.

However those who were interested were passionate, understanding and interested and going away better informed about how to help and the services available

One woman asked how to donate camping equipment - which showed some awareness of help us help - we saw this as an opportunity to share with her details of the services and what their equipment needs were and she went away better informed and with a willingness to act upon this.

It is a good way of engaging with some members of the public, it was professional and many people stood and watched the short Help us Help film.

It was great City Centre Ambassadors and Police coming to visit us at the stall and it was good to have the Big Issue seller use the cabin as a place to store his bag, giving us an opportunity to chat and engage with him.

It was good to have a mix of services represented in the Cabin and having a wealth of knowledge and experience to address any questions from members of the public.

Virgin media lounge was much appreciated for the warmth and coffee.

Good to meet up with other agencies on the stall & get to know what they are involved in.

People were open to discussion and seemed aware and wanted to help. One person had seen someone sleeping out and wanted to do something to help – Framework details given.

Having the bags with information was a good tool to get public engaged.

Those people who stopped were concerned about homelessness and wanted to know more about where there was help & how to help. Some wanted to know about making donations. There was some (but little) hostility to people begging & the hostility seemed split between the effect on them ("I feel uncomfortable") and on the image of the city, although there were references to other cities being similar or worse.

General discussions about homelessness but also about the council's inability to explain why so many people are still being refused homelessness assistance, even when the weather is really cold [cold enough to trigger Weather Watch].

Handed out a lot of leaflets to members of the public to try and get them aware of services. Also had some people sign a tag to pledge on the Christmas tree.

Conversations mainly focused around the HUSH work and purpose, most engagement I had was with people already involved in similar work, e.g. employment or volunteering, or members of the public who wanted to donate clothes/food.

Information given regarding a multi-agency approach, what services were available in Sheffield. Discussed with people the homeless process, what the Help us Help website was about.

Difficult to engage with members of the public in evening when cold and wet. The positioning of the Cabin meant we were easier to by-pass than last year, especially given the weather.

The public were much more aware of Help us Help and willing to support. They were more understanding of the support and help been given to vulnerable people. They listened, although it was a busy time of year. Some walked past but on the whole the public showed their care and wanted vulnerable people to receive the right service and support for them.

I spoke to a variety of people who both came back and made donations and advised me that they already donated to charity such as the Salvation Army. One person in particular stated that he didn't give money to homeless people and appeared to understand the reasons why, stating that he generally buys them food instead.

I found that not many people approached the stall. Therefore, I walked up to Barkers Pool and onto Fargate. I found that an outreach approach worked better to engage people into discussion and explain Help Us Help. This worked particularly well because the stall had been overly staffed.

Mostly people agreed it was a very positive idea and were pleased with the simplicity and ease of filling a bag and dropping it off.

Some people wanted to know what other provision was available for people at Christmas and over winter.

There was a couple of enquires about volunteering over Christmas so a bit of info to give out to people would have been useful.

On the whole people wanted to help. Seemed like good interest from parents with children explaining the idea of giving something to people less fortunate.

This initiative, gives the opportunity to explain to those who will stop what's being done and how to help.

Hard work trying to engage men with "Would you like to know what's being done to help the homeless and rough sleepers in Sheffield?" Most women say "Yes". Most men say "No". Always interesting to try and find a short opening line that makes most people stop.

I found the paper carrier bags to be extremely helpful. My most successful technique was to have all the leaflets in each bag and to offer the bag to people passing with a range of opening lines.

One advantage of the cabin is that we meet some wonderful people involved in charitable work in the city and find out what they do, what ideas they have on helping people get back into society and what they need by way of resources. It becomes a hub and meeting place for those involved and an opportunity to exchange ideas.

The reaction of the many people who did stop to listen and talk was that they were very pleased to find just how much is being done to help the homeless and street community. And the message "Help-us-Help" is getting through.

Suggestions:

Having a permanent place in town to give out information for the homeless.

Someone said is overdue what help us help doing now, make a big banner to catch the public eyes at distance, find a catchy name instead help us help. My experience was a good one and looking forward to do it again.

A survey perhaps, to start a conversation, may have been useful sometimes. Perhaps used as an opportunity to ask about people's awareness of help us help.

Appreciate the agreement made about opening times, but after about 5.30 / 6.00 there was little interest and reduced footfall near the stall

If possible, put the Help us Help banner at the front of the hut and more visible posters so the public could see us.

More visible signage outside the cabin would be useful to try attracting more people to the cabin.

I thought the previous year's survey could be used again to gain more insight into the public's views and opinions e.g. how many people do you think are rough sleeping/homeless in Sheffield and then respond to this with actual stats and figures to reduce stigma etc.

Have regular awareness events/stalls throughout the year- Moor Market, Moor area, Fargate, Old market area.

The campaign does need to be in front of the public 24/7 X 365. How do we achieve that aim?

A more visible indication of what HelpusHelp is about on the Cabin.

Sometimes a stark picture is needed to explain a complex subject succinctly. A picture IS worth 1,000 words and one suggestion that came from an interested visitor for display on front and both sides of the cabin is shown below in a mock-up form. He thought something like this should be on all sides of the cabin.

Pledges

This year, we have also tried something new and more engaging.

We tried to make members of the public feel more involved and understand that any small help can make a difference.

We don't want to be another campaign where public feels disconnected because we only ask for money as a way to help.

There are different ways members of the public or organisations can pledge their support

For members of the public

- Go to the help us help website and make informed choice on how they can help and share that information with friends, family member and others.
- Check out volunteering opportunities
- Check out how to donate directly to the local charities
- Check out what items charities are short of and organise a collection
- Check out any upcoming fundraising events and take part
- Find out how to report someone you might see sleeping rough
- Find out about which Charities organisations you can signpost/encourage people on the streets to access
- Go to, like and follow Facebook page – go to the review page and tell others what you think?
- Go to, like and follow the Instagram page
- Follow Help us Help on Twitter
- Take a pic and tag HelpusHelp in it
- Come down to the stall and fill in a pledge, show your support, get a sticker
- Come and get a shopping list – purchase some items
- Purchase a Big Issue
- Do a team collection

For businesses

- Displaying information about help us help in shops
- Display information amongst staff teams
- Share the help us help website on social media
- Offering work experience, training or entry level jobs to people who are or have been sleeping rough, begging or homeless
- Host the help us help stall on your premises
- Hold a collection/donation point
- Have a charity box
- Give HelpusHelp information out to customers

Social Media/News

The Star

HOMELESS AT CHRISTMAS: Sheffield campaign urges residents to think twice before giving money to those on streets

<https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/homeless-at-christmas-sheffield-campaign-urges-residents-to-think-twice-before-giving-money-to-those-on-streets-1-9492538>

“Help-us-Help Collaboration”

<https://www.thestar.co.uk/news/your-say/help-us-help-collaboration-1-9481212>

Sheffield News Room

“Businesses join campaign to help the homeless”

This year’s Christmas ‘Help Us Help’ campaign to tackle begging and help the homeless launches this week with more local support than ever.

<https://sheffieldnewsroom.co.uk/news/help-us-help/>

Equality Hub Network

“Help Us Help: Homelessness in Sheffield”

<https://equalityhubnetwork.org/2018/11/27/help-us-help-homelessness-in-sheffield/>