

Minutes of the CTiS&D Forum held on 8th July 2025 at the Quakers.

Present: 18 people from 10 churches attended the Forum.

The meeting was opened in prayer by the Chairman, Jim Stewart

Apologies: Rev Ruth Ridge, Ann Smythe, Roger Pullan, Graham Gilbert and Jane Jowitt

Minutes of the previous Forum: the minutes of the Forum held on April 29th 2025 were approved as accurate and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising from the minutes:

- The Chairman said that the current version of the Constitution had not been circulated so would not be discussed at this meeting. It would be tabled for the AGM. The important thing now was for churches to identify their reps so that when the Constitution was adopted the reps could vote for trustees
- It had not been possible to appoint a successor to Ian Copeman. Prayers were requested
- It was noted that Roger Pullan had been working with Eleanor on a history of CTiS&D. Eleanor felt she would like to stand back from the project. If anyone would be willing to continue the project please talk to Roger or Jim
- The silent demonstration around the Gainsborough statue on Sunday afternoon had been a successful event but it needed to be decided how to follow this up. The press had been informed but it was not known if they would produce an article. Jim had contacted the MP who had replied to him. Jim asked whether a procession through the town should take place. It was noted that it would be necessary to seek permission if a procession were planned and it also might be necessary to have trained stewards in attendance. A prayer vigil in St Peter's was suggested but it was felt that although the relationship with St Peter's was improving, it might not yet be an acceptable activity. Additionally, a meeting outside would be more visible.
- Andy J circulated copies of the Prayer Breakfast timetable and added that it would be nice to see some new faces

Homelessness

Jim introduced Vanessa Nicholls, who has worked with churches through the charity Housing Justice and been instrumental in developing the churches' response to homelessness in her own town.

Vanessa gave a powerpoint presentation which gave a lot of background information together with links to sites on the internet which gave even more information. The contents of the slides have been reproduced in Appendix 1.

Other points made by Vanessa were:

- Local authorities have a duty **to support** those who are homeless or in danger of becoming homeless, not necessarily to re-house them.
- Education for youngsters was urgently needed
- Rural homelessness has risen by 73% since 2018
- Local authorities do have powers to something about empty houses

At the end of the presentation, there was an opportunity for comments and questions.

- Jim said that the important thing was to work in partnership with others – and across churches
- Tom asked what we could do and Vanessa suggested looking at the Hope into Action website <https://www.hopeintoaction.org.uk/> and see what was involved in working with that organisation in supporting one of their houses. All details including costs would be on the website
- Vicky said that she was working alongside people who needed somewhere secure to keep their possessions, and access to a washing machine and somewhere to dry clothes. She said one of the main problems was having enough people to engage with the projects. Befriending was most important. Vanessa suggested the Citadel project might be considered. [*Citadel is a volunteer-led homelessness prevention **project** which supports people experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, to find and/or sustain their tenancies and establish a home.*]
- Tom said churches needed to be welcoming and supportive. The church has a responsibility to do something – it is not just down to the Council. Vanessa added that addictions are a problem
- Ann L drew attention to a project in Colchester where housing was provided to homeless people for two years so that they had an address.
- Vicky asked if tokens for the launderette could be financed. It was important to use local facilities

Jim said we should have discussions on how to follow up what had been learned during the evening. Consideration could be given to financing launderette tokens. He asked that any other ideas should be forwarded to him. Vicky said she would contact the Council about the accessible flats in Cats Lane lying empty to see if they could be used. Jim suggested that perhaps everyone should be approaching their local councillors to see what action could be taken.

Vanessa was thanked for her thought provoking presentation and the Friends were thanked for their hospitality.

The Forum closed with the Grace at 9.00 pm

Churches Together Sudbury and District

Homelessness

Isaiah 58:7

‘Share your food with the hungry and give shelter to the homeless.’

Proverbs 31:8-9

‘Speak up for those that cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy’

The average age of death for homeless individuals in the UK is a mean age for men of 45 and women at 43. [For those who are not homeless for men the figure is 76.5 and for women 81]

What is homelessness?

Homelessness

- 🏠 A person is homeless if they have no accommodation in the UK or elsewhere which is available for their occupation and which that person has a legal right to occupy.
- 🏠 A person is also homeless if they have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it.
- 🏠 Where the accommodation is a moveable structure and there is nowhere it can lawfully be placed, a person is deemed homeless.
- 🏠 A person who has accommodation is to be treated as homeless where it would not be reasonable for them to continue to occupy that accommodation.

Priority Need

The following categories of applicant have a priority need for accommodation:

- 🏠 A pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides
- 🏠 A person with whom dependent children resides
- 🏠 A person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason
- 🏠 A person who is homeless as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster
- 🏠 A person who was owed duties under the Children's Act (1989)
- 🏠 A person under 21 who was looked after, accommodated or fostered between the ages of 16 and 18
- 🏠 A person aged 21 or more who is vulnerable as a result of having been looked after, accommodated or fostered
- 🏠 A person who is homeless as a result of that person being a victim of domestic abuse
- 🏠 A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been a member of Her Majesty's regular naval, military or air forces
- 🏠 A person who is vulnerable as a result of having been in custody



Figures [collated by the countryside charity CPRE](#) show that rural homelessness has risen by 73% since 2018, with nearly 28,000 people now homeless in rural areas. At current rates of construction, it would take 82 years for the 300,000 people waiting for social housing in the countryside to be offered a home, says the charity.

University of Kent and University of Southampton published in March 2023 a research paper entitled 'Homeless in the Countryside - A Hidden Crisis'.

Drivers of rural homelessness

- 1) Rural employment
- 2) Energy costs and rural poverty
- 3) Affordable and accessible transport
- 4) Lack of emergency and move on accommodation
- 5) Planning, development and building

Contemporary Issues

- 1) Austerity
- 2) The cost of living crisis
- 3) Brexit and Immigration
- 4) Impact of COVID 19.

Tackling Rural England's Hidden Housing Crisis

‘Mind The Gap’

Key findings include:

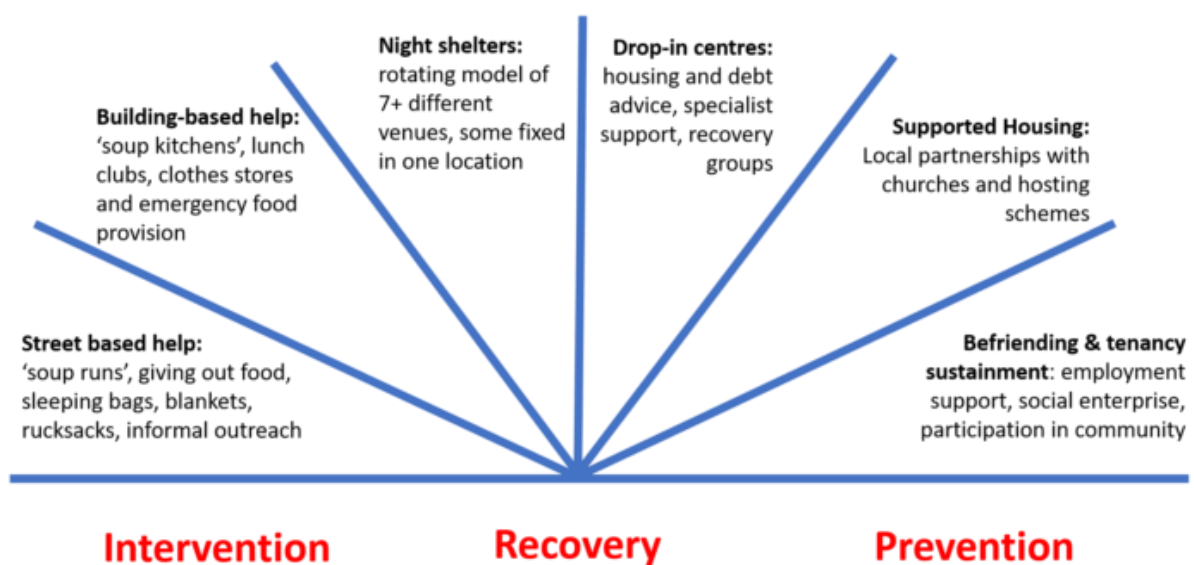
Rural need outstrips urban: 16.6 homes per 1,000 households needed annually, vs 11.1 in urban areas.

Severe shortages in villages and hamlets.

Social housing gap: Only 9% of rural homes are social housing—half the urban rate.

Community impact: Shortages are forcing out young families and key workers, threatening local services and economies.

Spectrum of faith & community activity with homeless people



Local Initiatives

- Turning Tides <https://www.turning-tides.org.uk/bus/>
 - SELIG
 - Hope Into Action

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSKsGkF8lqw>

- Green Pastures

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYYU-ttiF5k>

- Housing Justice housingjustice.org.uk.

From Homelessness to belonging. Community Driven and innovative responses to homelessness and housing need.

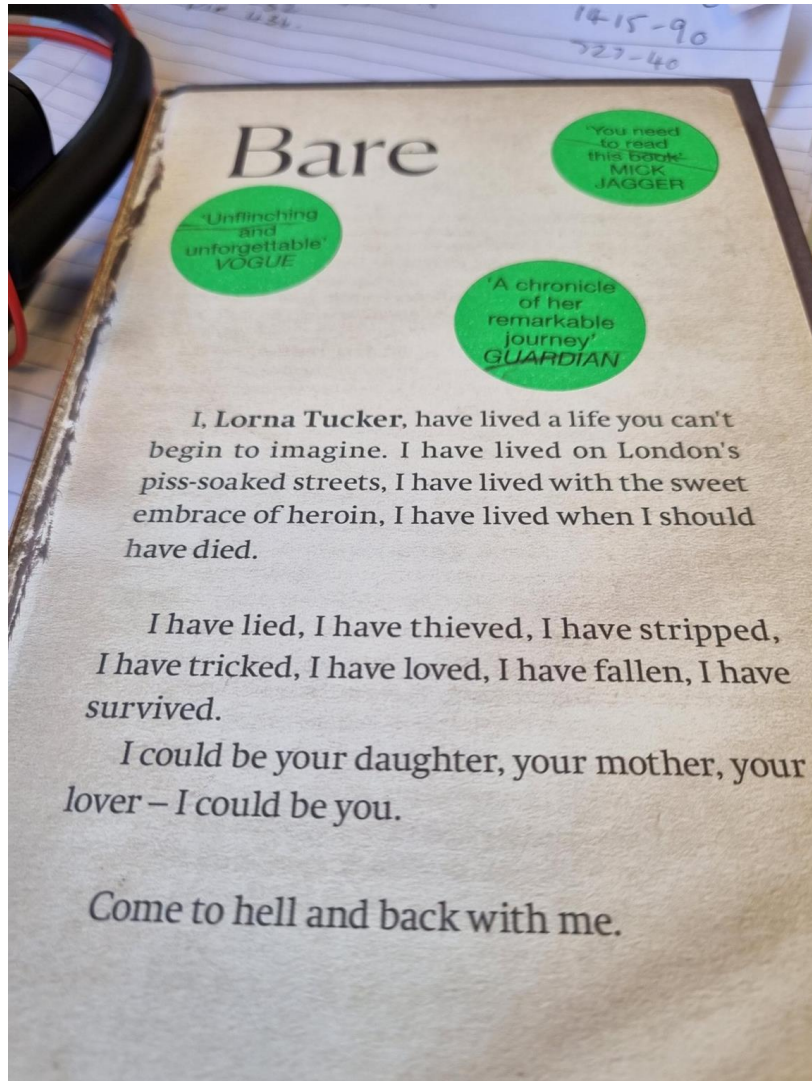
And Finally

‘I made trenches made sure they were water secure...out there all winters.’

‘I’ve slept in abandoned hotels by the river, and under the bridge by the river, and woke up covered in snow..’

‘Rural homelessness is by far one of the worst things...nobody knows you’re there, nobody cares you’re there, you are on your own and you’re just...free..’

Ed described how ultimately the thing that most helped him in the end was ‘people believing in me and being there for me and me being able to feel like I could trust someone.’



BARE by Lorna Tucker ... The unflinching true story of one woman's fight to survive living on the streets of London
