

CARE – Christian Action & Resource Enterprise Ltd

Mercers' Charitable Foundation
Church & Communities Programme

Providing housing and support for vulnerable people in North East Lincolnshire

CARE is a charity dedicated to relieving poverty, homelessness and hardship for people living in **North East Lincolnshire**, through a range of advice and support services. Most people supported by CARE are homeless or vulnerably housed. Their needs are complex, often including inter-linked issues such as; domestic violence, debt, crime, disability, drug use, and mental health crises. CARE received core funding from Mercers' to support the day to day running of the service.

"It's made a huge difference in my life. I've made friends here and it gives me a sense of community and belonging that I'd miss otherwise."
Participant



Why the work is needed

Grimsby is sometimes described as a 'left behind' neighbourhood in North East Lincolnshire, ranking in the top 1% of most deprived areas nationally. CARE is a lifeline for many people in crisis who feel they have nowhere else to turn.

Approach

CARE is open to anyone in the area in need of support. Project participants praised staff for their friendly, supportive and non-judgemental approach. They build genuine trusting relationships:

"With [support worker] coming around every week it's just that someone to talk to outside of the family... he doesn't judge, he helps me see things from a different angle..." **Participant**

Partnerships with local agencies and organisations are important. Some regularly refer residents into the service due to its breadth and flexibility of support. CARE have good relationships with landlords who value the specialist housing knowledge:

"[Housing Manager] has all of that experience of dealing with landlords and knowledge of compliance and processes..." **Project Lead**

Key approaches include:

- Providing housing advice
- Sourcing suitable housing
- Offering 1:1 support focused on individual needs
- Offering a drop-in service

"it's not time limited – it's not a 12-week programme – it's not counselling, it's actually just helping people re-build their lives."
Project Lead

Impact



Growing Reach: There has been a shift from providing general support to focusing closely on helping people to secure suitable, safe accommodation. Over the past two years the numbers of people housed through CARE has increased significantly

"we have housed 49 people this year already... that looks set to increase, so we're likely to house up to a 100 this year." Project Lead

"I was on the streets constantly drinking, it was no good for my epilepsy because, I couldn't take my medication as I had nowhere to live... I reckon I'd be dead by now if it wasn't for CARE." Participant

"They go above and beyond... I suffer from a lot of health problems and if it wasn't for [support worker] I wouldn't have made a lot of those appointments, she helps by taking me to them." Participant



Challenges

There has been an increase in numbers accessing the services due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. At the same time some local agencies have closed, placing additional pressure on CARE and partner organisations.

The shortage of affordable housing in Northeast Lincolnshire is a critical issue and although CARE have secured additional properties, demand continues to exceed availability.

Recruiting and retaining staff continues to be a challenge, due to short term funding contracts. Volunteer capacity has reduced in recent years.

Funding is a common challenge and although Mercers' grant has helped, there are always concerns about over reliance on one or two funders.

Learnings

- The leadership team was strengthened in 2023 with the appointment of an experienced Housing Manager and Operations Manager, which supported day to day delivery. In 2024 there were further changes to staffing as CARE navigated ongoing financial pressures.
- The funding challenges have highlighted the need for the organisation to diversify its income sources. Securing Enhanced Housing Benefit from the Council has contributed to sustainability.

Organisational Resilience

As an organisation CARE feel they are resilient and able to adapt to changes but admit they are sometimes reactive rather than proactive. Mercers' funding has made a significant difference to their ability to be more resilient at a critical time.

The Future

CARE has recently moved into, larger, more suitable premises in the heart of Grimsby, providing a community hub that is attracting a sevenfold increase in footfall. Future plans include building an extension and developing the building to provide more services for rough sleepers.

"Once completed, it will significantly enhance our capacity to provide support and sustain CARE's future"
Project Lead