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EMPLOYMENT CHARITY LAUNCHES SCHEME TO HELP SOUTH WEST HOMELESS BACK INTO WORK

A new project has launched in the cities of Bristol, Exeter and Plymouth to help unemployed recently homeless people. The project in these three homeless priority areas is designed to help individuals re-enter employment, or in some cases find jobs for the first time.

The voluntary 'Homeless to Work' programme, funded by the European Social Fund and administered by Jobcentre Plus, is run by national employment charity Tomorrow's People. The charity is based in these cities and has a 21-year record of helping people out of long-term unemployment.

The service is free, one-to-one and confidential and begins with an informal meeting to explore options. Non-judgemental and impartial advice is provided by specialist senior employment advisers who understand the effects of homelessness and other barriers to securing work.

Support provided to people registered to the programme includes skills assessment to explore options and training needs, confidence building, interview techniques and basic computer skills. The employment adviser provides CV writing advice, help with job searching and application forms, work placement and volunteer opportunities.

David Sayer, Operations Manager for Tomorrow's People Devon said: "This project is particularly suited to individuals within temporary accommodation, such as hostels or those that are on a waiting list for a house, who require support in their journey back into work. Many of these individuals are stuck in the cycle of being unable to find a job as they have no home, and unable to find a home as they have no job.

"We are flexible to each individual's requirements, rather than imposing a rigid programme which they may find threatening. Some of these individuals have no structure in their lives. We provide a support mechanism that clients can dip in and out of as they chose. As an independent organisation we are able to devote extensive time to each person, which is vital with a client group like this who have considerable barriers to overcome before they can return to work."

Tomorrow's People has excellent links with local training providers and potential employers and a strong knowledge of the local job market and vacancies. The charity also has good connections with a wide number of local organisations that help the homeless, including key support workers, ensuring that a consistent approach to helping the homeless is provided.

The programme includes aftercare support for the first few months once individuals have found a job. Tomorrow's People continues to stay in touch, giving advice and liaising between the client and their employer. This recognises that many people have problems when they start working including facing the pressures of a new job, meeting new people, learning to fit in, but also how to assert themselves with colleagues. Tomorrow's People can also offer free debt and money management advice to clients based in Plymouth.



The 'Homeless to Work' project is complemented by the Tomorrow's People 'Getting Bristol Working' and 'Plymouth Workroute' employment programmes. These both involve regular contact between Tomorrow's People and local employers and therefore open additional avenues for ex-homeless job seekers.

David Worthington, Operations Manager for Tomorrow's People in Bristol, said: "This is an exciting new project that will target an extremely needy group and will help them to get back on their feet. We don't judge their past we look into their future."

The 'Homeless to Work' programme operates within local centres like community and training centres and hostels and from the following venues:

- No. 6 The Crescent, Plymouth
- 11 Gandy Street, Exeter
- Salvation Army Hall, Dean Lane, Bristol
- King's House, 14 Orchard Street, Bristol

Anyone requiring further information about the scheme can telephone Plymouth 01752 672200, Exeter 01392 258995 or Bristol 0117 953 9746/01179 055 003.

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Notes to Editors:

Tomorrow's People is a national charity that has helped change the lives of nearly 400,000 people across the UK who had been resigned to long-term, even life-long, unemployment, since it was established in 1984. It helps the hardest to reach long-term unemployed, by giving individuals one-to-one support, helping them find the right job and more importantly, to stay there. On average, 76% of people helped by Tomorrow's People are still in employment 12 months on.

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