

# Leeds Simon Community

## Amount Awarded—£5,000: The Funding Network

Leeds Simon Community, founded in 1999 to work with street homeless people throughout Leeds. There are three full-time paid support workers whose work is supported by 24 unpaid part-time volunteers.

These vulnerable clients tend to have complex support needs, they may have severe drug & alcohol abuse problems and, in many instances, significant issues with anti-social behaviour. As a result their lives are particularly chaotic and they may have been banned from important services like GP surgeries or drug & alcohol rehabilitation schemes. The team provide a network of caring relationships, one-to-one emotional and practical support as well as the opportunity to discuss their issues and begin to think about their problems. This gives homeless people a chance to start to re-build their lives, improve their behaviour and to re-engage with society.

With a grant of £5,000 the Leeds Simon Community are holding a soup run for one year. They have found this to be the best way of building relationships and trust with those people sleeping rough. They are held once a week with people coming for food, advice and support, and necessities such as blankets. They regularly get 20-40 homeless at a time, mostly men, though the number of women is growing. Most of them are in their 20's and 30's. They tend to be from deprived communities and a significant number have had a traumatic childhood with subsequent emotional problems. 95% of them have addictions to drugs and alcohol, often as a result of their earlier experiences.

A major aim of the Leeds Simon Community is to educate the public about the plight of such individuals and to dispel the myth that homeless people are solely responsible for their own situation. They run awareness-raising sessions and involve members of the community in face-to-face volunteering.

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