

"Rough sleeping is the most visible form of homelessness and affects the most vulnerable people in catastrophic ways" - so quotes B&NES Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019/24.

It is also the aspect of homelessness most commonly recognised by the public. Many would like to help these members of our community who may be experiencing mental health trauma, substance misuse and/or other complex needs but fear giving cash might be used to 'feed a habit' rather than the person themselves. Well, a solution to this dilemma has arrived.

Following the tragic death of a young ambulance driver, his family, based in Bishop Sutton, decided to commemorate his vision of helping the homeless by establishing the 'Billy Chip Foundation.'

The scheme works with local food outlets and facilitates a ceramic 'chip' - like this one- which may be purchased by the public for £2, who then can give it to a person on the street. They in turn can redeem it for a hot or cold drink at any participating outlet, when they want to, where they want to, ordering what *they* want. However, this initiative offers more than just a free drink – it empowers the rough sleeper, it gives them a choice, they have received some recognition and kindness from another human being, they have been acknowledged as a person who is worth something.

It allows members of the public to make a positive contribution and demonstrate caring and friendship. It improves social engagement and inclusion. Outcome evidence already shows a strengthening of self belief and lessening of isolation among the homeless of Bristol.

Not giving cash *safeguards* the donation from misuse, and discourages *unscrupulous* begging. With the revenue it receives (£1 per redemption) the Foundation can then support existing homeless charities and community projects.

The launch in Bristol in November last year received a staggering response. It has attracted media attention from both local and national TV and generated interest around the globe.

Now, less than four months later, there are 1500 chips in circulation, operating through 30 outlets in Bristol, Oxford, Cheltenham and Keynsham but with just *three* in Bath. They had hoped to start this project in this city – being themselves residents of B&NES - but sadly met with initial discouragement (probably through misunderstanding of what the whole idea was about). They are therefore still a little reticent to roll the format out *here* because of this.

So Councillors, why have I brought this to your attention this evening? The Billy Chip Foundation is not requesting financial or practical assistance from this Council but

*would* appreciate a demonstration of encouragement and moral support for this very worthwhile initiative.