

## Down Not Out in Leicester video transcripts – 31 January 2012

Rob Parkinson:

I'm Rob Parkinson, Chief Executive of Action Homeless. You're joining us here today for the launch of Down Not Out, which is our brand new community news agency funded through the Big Lottery and working in partnership with Citizens Eye which is one of our established and very successful news agencies in Leicester. Down Not Out is all about creating a voice for homeless people in Leicester on issues that matter to them and community news. It's also about creating training and work and volunteering opportunities for people who are currently in hostel accommodation and other homeless situations around the city, who really want to create chances for change and a new way of living, and to rebuild their lives. That's what Down Not Out is trying to achieve.

Around you today you can see our first sub-editors who are going to be working on different strands of the community news agency, strands like our community news website, our FM radio station, our magazine and our filming projects. You can also see the start of our volunteers who are all going to be doing ten-week training courses to develop their skills as community reporters and to go out and be able to find the content on the issues that matter to homeless people and local people in Leicester.

Through the next two years we are going to create great opportunities for people to build up their skills and confidence, a great community news agency here in Leicester and also to help people change their lives. That's what Down Not Out's all about and it's what the Lottery funding here in Leicester is going to achieve.

John Coster:

My name's John Coster, I'm the editor of Citizen's Eye and we are at the Coffee Republic where we meet for an hour every Tuesday morning for a community news cafe. I started it four years ago and we now have twenty news agencies in total, one of which we started with a guy called Keith, a former service user of Action Homeless about three years ago, and we set up Down Not Out. We were talking about what to call it – people are down not out, not down and out. So that's kind of ticked along as a Facebook group for the past three years.

Then I was introduced to Rob Parkinson, the CEO of Action Homeless, and he said he would really love to get a service user newsletter going and for them to lead it and edit it. So we did some training and it progressed onwards and upwards as we had about four or five issues. We always realised that to deal with some of the bigger issues around homelessness, the best thing to do would be to create a news agency where service users from other homeless projects could get involved, because then you can talk about city council, local or national government funding and issues. If you did it through an in-house newsletter it might affect your funding.

Rob and Jonathan Cryer, their fundraiser, said let's put a lottery funding bid together, and here we are – the funding has come through. The four sub-editors of Down Not Out and all the service users are here now and we're in our regular community news cafe to launch the

project. The next two years are going to be really exciting – the best way of myth busting and turning people's perceptions around is if you speak to people who are actually affected by those issues. If we can get this right by the end of the two years and if we could get one more of our news agencies funded and established like this, I think we've come across a model that can really help to empower people.

Maggs Scragg:

I'm Maggs, one of the sub-editors. I actually started as a resident of Action Homeless. It was Rob's idea to start up a newsletter to help the residents if they had problems and issues and to fight stereotypes and stuff like that. We originally started a newsletter for the current residents and from there expanded the idea. Within Action Homeless we have certain restrictions so in order to broaden what we would like to discuss and do, we needed an outside forum.

We've got the opportunity now to give those people a voice. The current residents already have a voice – we can contribute to the newsletter, we can post as much as we like on the website, through the radio and through television. The people on the street don't have the opportunity to do that, so now we can do it on their behalf.