

CITY OF CAPE TOWN

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MEDIA RELEASE



City pilots Safe Space for street people

A new overnight facility that has opened on the Foreshore is meant to address the shortage of shelter space for the Cape Town CBD's homeless residents, but will also act as a stepping stone for those who want help with getting off the street. Read more below:

The City of Cape Town's Social Development and Early Childhood Development Department has opened the doors to its Safe Space facility for street people.

This is the latest initiative in the City's basket of services for street people and will augment the work of the Street People Reintegration Unit that has, for a number of years, been offering services and opportunities to street people across the city. As is the case with the existing offers of assistance, the use of the Safe Space is entirely voluntary.

The pilot project site, situated underneath the Culemborg Bridge on the Foreshore, is a transitional shelter facility where up to 230 street people will be able to spend the night once it is fully operational. They will also be able to access ablution facilities, water and storage space for their belongings.

The facility will also offer access to a range of social and medical services, with assessments and referrals done on site. Short-term work opportunities will also be made available through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), among others.

'The safe space concept has been something that has been talked about in the administration for many years, but the planning started in earnest in the last financial year. We hope to achieve a number of things through this initiative. On the one hand, we want to take pressure off existing shelters and reduce the number of by-law infringements that come with people sleeping or erecting structures in the open, but we also want to develop relationships with our clients over a period of time that will hopefully lead to reintegration for some,' said the City's Mayoral Committee Member for Safety and Security; and Social Services, Alderman JP Smith.

Practically speaking, persons seeking to use the facility will be assigned a storage locker, a sleeping pallet, sleeping bag and blanket as well as a wellness pack containing hygiene essentials. The City is partnering with external service providers to bring their specialist services, soup kitchens and other catering services to the site to provide meals.

A service provider has been appointed to clean the site three times a week, while daily cleaning tasks will be performed by street people appointed via the Expanded Public Works Programme. City Health will also conduct regular visits to ensure vector control and do referrals for medical services. The site will also have a dedicated Law Enforcement team to provide security.

The Safe Space opened on Friday 29 June 2018 and admitted a small group to test the access and placement systems. Thus far, 11 street people have been accommodated including two persons with disabilities. It is expected that the facility will be fully operational by mid-July 2018.

'There is no blueprint or best practice model for the provision of safe spaces for street people. We are literally learning as we go along, but I do believe it is better to try and adjust as we go along than not to attempt this at all. This pilot will inform the best way forward for the allocation and management of

safe spaces for street people within the city, with the aim of assisting street people to remain off the street and to be reintegrated back into society,' added Alderman Smith.

The City encourages non-governmental organisations and concerned citizens to give responsibly by bringing their services to the Safe Space instead of providing food and clothing directly to people living on the street, as giving to a person directly on the street may result in avoidance of the services that are available to them.

The benefits of the Safe Space for street people:

- Most shelters are at maximum capacity. The Safe Space will provide a controlled area for up to 230 street people in the CBD
- Provides a drug-free/alcohol-free/weapon-free safe space
- May reduce the number of erected shelters and accumulated waste in the CBD
- May reduce the amount of joint operations with Law Enforcement to remove temporary shelters, saving on manpower and resource costs
- Provides street people with access to social services and psycho-social support which may increase the number who are reunified with families or their community
- Provides the opportunity for street people to take part in EPWP programmes therefore reducing begging/aggressive begging on the street in the CBD
- Provides the opportunity for street people to access health services, clean water and ablution facilities thereby improving the quality of life
- Reduces the amount of human waste in and around the CBD area
- Provides the opportunity for street people to access support for substance abuse
- Provides a contained space for NGOs to offer services to street people

End

Note to broadcasters: audio clips are available for download

For English: <https://soundcloud.com/ct-media/030718-smith-safe-space>

For Afrikaans: <https://soundcloud.com/ct-media/030718-afr-smith-safe-space>

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