

Safe Space launched in CT for street people

The City of Cape Town has launched its pilot Safe Space facility for street people which aims to augment the work of its Street People Reintegration Unit.



The 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. Use of the Safe Space is entirely voluntary.

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.



Reintegration

"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.



Access and placement systems

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.



Fully operational mid-July

The Safe Space opened on Friday, 29 June, 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 Smith.

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