

# Street Pastors Belfast 2018 Report



## Love & Care all over Belfast

Belfast Street Pastors have been a firm anchor for many people in our city who find themselves, for whatever reason, in a vulnerable situation. We work alongside many other agencies who each bring their experience, training and professionalism to ensure that people are safe while going about their business or enjoying a night out. Street Pastors bring together Christians from different churches to be a blessing on our streets.

Teams of three or four Street Pastors, led by experienced team leaders, give out flipflops, pick up bottles, listen, give basic first aid, stay with people until they have a safe way home, help re-charge phones, prevent anti-social behaviour, refer to other services and lots more. Although motivated by our faith in Jesus who spent a lot of time helping people on the streets, we don't preach *at* people or judge them, but rather care, share and pray if and when people want. Since our launch 9 years ago, we have focused on the **City Centre** on Friday and Saturday nights from 10:30 pm to 3 am. We meet individuals and groups, locals and visitors, younger and older people. Every evening is different and our teams are on constant look-out for anyone who is in need of assistance or simply wants to chat. Some situations can be dealt with immediately, while others need a longer-term strategy and we signpost to other services where appropriate.

When our teams come across drugs paraphernalia, they call the Council's Community Safety Unit (Sharps Removal Service) to ensure that the relevant items are lifted and secured, so that members of the public are not in risk of infection or injury.



*care, listen & help...*

# Belfast Street Pastors-2018 Annual Report

## East Belfast

In April 2017 we started going into the parks and residential areas in East Belfast on Saturday evenings from 6 -10 pm. We have engaged with large groups of 12-18 year olds with the aim of getting to know them, keeping them safe, and preventing anti-social behaviour.



As the teams befriend the young people, show care, and listen to their opinions and viewpoints, we are able to encourage them to find solutions and use more rational thinking. Topics discussed include drug abuse, underage drinking, individual and group rivalry, sexual health, mental health, self-value, the future, faith, self-harm etc. By showing respect, we earn trust, which in turn often leads to young people avoiding anti-social behaviour, accidents and difficult situations.

## West Belfast

In January 2018 we were asked to go into West Belfast where up to 180 young people were gathering in Falls Park, City Cemetery and other areas. Once again we found that when they realised we were there FOR them and trust was built, we were able to engage on many different issues. Many times the young people have responded positively to us pointing out unsafe behaviour and this has meant a reduction in noise, bottles and broken glass, no fires started while we are present and young people increasingly looking after each other safely.

*The team managed to defuse a fight-in-the-making by engaging major players in both groups to assist in resolving an issue between two individuals without the use of fists. After about 45 minutes, the two rivals sat on the grass and calmly talked to each other. There is hope! All young people involved were willing to cooperate within the framework the team set. If treated with respect and given the chance to play their part in solution-finding options, they are often willing to engage and are open to alternative ways of thinking. Fantastic result.*

*The team came across a woman feeling low, standing on a bridge. We engaged in conversation and established some mental health issues. As there was no imminent risk to the person, we encouraged the continuation of good habits and regular contact with her health workers. In this case, the woman simply needed some chat and encouragement which we provided. Positive outcome.*



It can be fun as well!

# Showing and sharing good news..

Facts & Figures 2018	TOT	Per month
Volunteer Hours	3,025	253
Teams out	171	15
Nights out	235	19
Bottles/glasses lifted	6,722	571
Flip-flops used	905	75
Spontaneous thanks	1,600	137
SP cards given out	917	80
General assistance	1,319	113
Spiritual conversation	211	18
Help to transport	144	11
Prayer	47	4
Refer to other agency	52	4
Anti-social behaviour	97	8
Prevention of assault	32	2
First aid kit used	73	5
Emergency services	42	5
Encounters with youth	4,517	380



## Events

In cooperation with the Council, PSNI and others, we helped out in a number of special events, for example St Patrick's Day in the Holyland. Our presence helped maintain safety and avoid anti-social behaviour - a smile goes a long way!

**School Pastors** go into Malone College twice a week at lunch time. In 2018 we had 467 conversations on a wide range of topics including relationships, ambitions, image, faith, different cultures, value, knife crime, cancer, teenage pregnancy etc. We provide an additional layer of support to the impressive work this very diverse school does.



## Word on the street

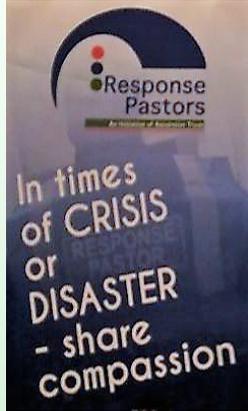
*'Heroes... Our community is safer with you guys x'*

*'My friend's drink seems to have been spiked in a bar tonight. Can you help?'*

*'You guys helped my bother-in-law, and my sister told me she didn't know what to do without you. Thank you so much for your help. If there's anything I can do to help, let me know.'* (They put their names down for helping us when we do fundraising bag-packs in local supermarkets.)

*'Thank you for staying with me this evening and helping me find safe way home - I was raped a few years ago and feel vulnerable alone.'*

# *the church has left the building...*



The four Street Pastor schemes in NI now have about 300 volunteers. 43 of them have had additional training as **Response Pastors** who are able to assist the Emergency Services in the event of a major incident. Response Pastors provide emotional support to those affected and it's another example of the church in action to serve our communities in flexible ways.

We have been assisting the development of a new Street Pastor scheme in **Lisburn and Castlereagh** and already some volunteers have been trained. Some churches in **Mid and East Antrim** are interested in developing Street Pastors in their area. We have also had enquiries for School Pastors in other locations. Watch this space as the family grows!

At the same time, we don't want to stretch ourselves too thinly. Doing more and continuing to develop in other parts of Belfast, requires strengthening our core and more volunteers - could you be one?!

**You can help** Belfast Street Pastors develop:

- **Pray**
- **Give** - we keep costs to a minimum, but we do need support
- **Invite us** to a church or group to share more about what we do
- **Get involved**, join a team as an observer one night, and encourage others to do the same. Be aware - you might enjoy it and become addicted!

*Thanks to all the amazing volunteers who continue to give their time and effort to making Belfast a better, safer city. Thanks also to all those who support us: individuals, churches, trusts, companies, agencies and other voluntary organisations alongside whom we work.*

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*Be like Jesus -  
GET INVOLVED...*

Support Street Pastors by **Text Giving**  
**Text SBSP22 £5 to 70070** or, go to  
[www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com) and search  
Belfast Street Pastors

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*the church in action on the streets to care, listen and help*