

## Street pastor scheme to help shoppers



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A BAND of volunteers are now looking to expand their service by keeping an eye on the most at need during the daylight hours.

Social enterprise Vennture is a unique initiative started by the county's churches to provide help to those most in need.

For nearly four years their volunteers have been in Hereford city centre every Friday and Saturday night to help the most vulnerable.

And now the charity is looking to help shoppers who may have lost a child, suffer with dementia or suffered a fall or trip.

"We want Hereford to be a really good place to visit the shops and hope it will help bring more tourists in," said Robert Thomas, lead executive officer at Vennture.

"Over the next six months we will be building up a caring pastors scheme on the street in the daytime.

"We will really be there to support vulnerable people so it's a very positive and will be a contact between CCTV operators and shops.

"There are times when vulnerable people just need someone to listen and care. We will be doing the simple things like helping people get home if they need that along with providing help and support.

"It's all about making the city even brighter and better place. We can also point people in the direction of the Cathedral and sites of interest."

Vennture is made up of a team of trained volunteers who work alongside the charity's lean-on-me scheme which assess, supervise recovery and reunite the patients with their friends or family.

"It allows emergency services to respond faster as if they are dealing with a drunk person then they are not able to deal with accidents," added Mr Thomas

"It's also eliminating 999 calls and keeps people out of A&E who don't need to be there.

"If they have a serious injury they are taken to A&E but if they are walking wounded or just drunk they are taken to Emilia's Place where volunteers give them a 10 point check."

Emelia's Place was opened in December 2014 and is named after Emelia Venn, sister of the Rev John Venn – both of whom devoted themselves to helping the city's poor.

The facility has recently moved from Gaol Street to Union Street and features an assessment area, recovery space and supervised sleep-off room.

It is not a self-referral unit but is a safe place where people can be monitored while family or friends are called to collect them.

Vennture also host a family pastors service across the county after being granted funding of £160,000 from **Herefordshire Council** to run the scheme from 2015 until 2017, as part of their families first initiative which aims to support over 1,000 families by 2020

Building on the success of the pilot scheme, the council will be running a full procurement process to appoint an organisation to deliver a families first family support service for three years from spring 2017.

Vennture is looking to add more volunteers to its team of 139 across the different schemes.

To help out, email enquiries@vennture.org.uk or call 0330 20 20 730.