

# Emilia's Place: Safe recovery spot for festive revellers in Hereford to open this Saturday



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HEREFORD'S new safe haven for "small hours casualties" is set to open this weekend.

From Saturday, the city's old youth court on Gaol Street becomes Emilia's Place – a new unit to help people on a night-out recover from excess alcohol and help reduce the pressure on the ambulance service, A&E and police.

Run by the city's volunteer Street Pastors, Emilia's Place will be an alternative to hospital or a police cell when all someone needs is to be able to sober-up safely.

Cliff Medicott, West Midlands Ambulance Service community response manager, said: "This unit will be the first of its kind. The pastors have developed an excellent facility for a maximum of 12 people who just need to get some rest or sleep it off before going home.

"It will be a great help to the ambulance service, freeing us up to get to genuine life-threatening emergencies quicker."

The centre is called 'Emelia's' after Emelia Venn, sister of the Rev John Venn – both of whom devoted themselves to helping the city's poor – and features an assessment area, recovery space and supervised sleep-off room.

It is part of a wider project called 'Lean on Me' which involves Street Pastors patrolling the city to help anyone they find to be in difficulty.

Jason Borlase, project leader with Hereford Street Pastors, said: "Teams drawn from 30 trained volunteers will run 'Emelia's' from 10pm until 4am on Saturday nights.

"Anyone who ends up in difficulty through excessive drinking will be referred to the unit for the special care we will offer. The unit will have direct links with our patrols, the door staff of bars and clubs as well as the ambulance service and police."

The project will also allow paramedics, police and A&E teams focus on those who really need emergency help and get to them quicker.

"Improving response times will make a real difference for people in serious and sometimes life-threatening situations," he added.

The unit is due to open on Saturday December 20.