

Handouts makes life more comfortable on streets

From page 1

Ms Heywood said only 16 of those living on the streets had accepted help from the pink vest programme as handouts from the public made life on the streets comfortable and some of the handouts could be sold for drugs or alcohol.

Simon's Town resident and businessman Gary Carlton manages the pink vest project, who said it had come about to address the problem of street people harassing locals and tourists in town.

He said the programme gave the street people a chance to earn money and get back on their feet.

However, it was not that simple, said Mr Carlton, as many street people suffered from addictions that prevented their reintegration into society.

"They need to be rehabilitated

before they can find work and handouts from the public make street life bearable giving them no incentive to rehabilitate themselves," he said.

The pink vest programme requires them to wear the vest when on duty, attend workshops and to sign a code of conduct. They are also screened to establish if they have a criminal record or not.

He said it gave them a sense of purpose and responsibility and since the start of the programme last year, there had been a huge improvement in Simon's Town with less aggressive vagrancy on the streets.

"With this programme, we have achieved a semblance of order in town," he said.

However, with the understanding and help of the residents, he feels more can be done.

Last year, Mr Liell-Cock allocated funds for this project which enabled

the services of field and social workers to work closely with the street people.

A team of six field workers who are part of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) along with social workers from DSD have been working closely with the Simon's Town street people offering them various opportunities through detox programmes, job opportunity programmes, skills development workshops and rehabilitation shelters.

Mr Liell-Cock said rehabilitating street people was a long process and not something that would happen overnight.

He said having field workers on the street was the only solution, he said. The field workers

work very closely with each street person, evaluate them and get to know their needs.

"Every person is different and needs a different solution," he said.

Mr Liell-Cock said it was hard convincing residents they were doing more harm than good with handouts.

"They often think we are heartless. Residents want to help, but they are doing the wrong thing for the right reason," he said.

Tasneem Fielies, who used to live on the streets and now works as a field worker on the programme runs workshops for the street people every Wednesday at the civic centre.

She stressed the importance

of working with the system rather than giving handouts and said as that soon as a comfortable environment was created on the streets, street people lost interest in working for that comfort.

Ms Heywood said they were collecting goods such as toiletries and clothes for the street people in Happy Valley Shelter and will have donation bins next week at the Glencairn Spar and at the Simon's Town Amenities Development Company (STADCO) office off Jubilee Square in Simon's Town.

For more information about the programme or to make a donation, email Ms Heywood at chairpersoncpf.simonstown@gmail.com