

BCAN Homeless Forum

working together to combat homelessness in Bristol

Public Launch 15 April 2005

Programme of Events

6 pm Doors open & light refreshments

6:45 pm Presentations

Introduction & welcome (Paul Hazelden)

BCAN (Julian Marsh)

Keynote Address: It's the People That Matter (Val Jeal)

What the Council Does (Ollie Allcock)

Close (Paul Hazelden)

7:30 pm Display stands & networking

8 pm Close

Contact Details

Post: The BCAN Administrator,
Müller House,
7 Cotham Park,
Bristol,
BS6 6DA

Email: admin@bcan.org.uk

Web: www.bcan.org.uk



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Biographical Details

Val Jeal, MBE

Val was the founder of The Salvation Army's Candle Project and also One25 Limited. She is the Co-chair of Alabaré (Bristol), which manages The Well. She has worked with homeless and marginalised people since 1990, and also has experience of working with female sex workers in Chicago and Amsterdam.

Val was awarded the MBE in 2002 for her achievements in helping homeless people and sex workers.

Julian Marsh

Julian Marsh is the Chief Executive of the George Müller Foundation.

The George Müller Foundation operates in partnership with local churches as they work with children, families and young people. It is also involved in elderly care and the financial support of Church workers all over the world. Julian is also the Chairman of the Bristol Christian Action Network, the Treasurer of Bristol Evangelical Alliance and a Trustee of several local churches. He is also in local church leadership in Portishead.

Before coming into full-time Christian work in 1990, Julian was teaching in colleges and working in local education authority administration. He is married to Liz and they have three grown up children and two grandchildren.

Olly Alcock

Olly is the Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Manager for Bristol City Council.

Olly has lived and worked in Bristol since 1990. Initially with people with learning disabilities (1990 – 1993); then at a young people's homelessness project (1993 – 1995); then at the Hub Advice Centre, becoming the Bristol Cyrenians Team Leader there until 1999, when he joined Bristol City Council as Supported Housing Development Officer, one of the first two posts that helped to form Bristol's Supporting People Team.

Paul Hazelden

Paul is the General Manager of Crisis Centre Ministries.

Paul is also part of the leadership team at Highgrove Church, a Director of the Sea Mills & Coombe Dingle Community Project, and Chair of Voscur (Bristol's CVS). Paul is married to Sue, and they have three boys. They moved to Bristol in 1999.

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Progress So Far

Over the past three years, we have made some significant progress:

- we have improved communication with the Council and other statutory bodies;
- we have shared best practice, policies, procedures, standards and guidelines with each other and established some new shared standards and guidelines;
- we have shared information about individuals who are causing problems, or who have gone missing;
- we have coordinated opening times and closure periods across different services;
- we have brought together and published a good deal of information, facts, and news about the problems and the provision of services for homeless people - as paper documents, and on the websites;
- we have developed a shared training programme for volunteers and other interested people;
- we have invited groups such as the Outreach Team, StreetWise, NCH Nightstop, the Antisocial Behaviour Unit and FareShare to come and tell us about their work; and
- we have helped member organisations in a wide variety of practical ways, in areas such as data protection, fundraising, employment issues, and web site design.

Through our cooperation, member organisations have produced and continue to update various resources, such as:

- the *Survival Guide*;
- the *Food in Bristol* and *Accommodation in Bristol* fact sheets; and
- the *BCAN* and *Caring in Bristol* web sites.

Current plans and projects include:

- provide access to resources and improved support through corporate membership of some key national bodies;
- establish a peer-review scheme to help members improve their internal systems;
- sponsor members to attend training events; and
- run *Caring in August* as a pilot scheme this year.

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Organisation List

The following organisations were on the BCAN Homeless Forum mailing list early in 2005. We are currently setting up a formal membership system. If your organisation is missing from this list, please ask for an application pack at the desk, contact the BCAN Administrator at Müller House, 7 Cotham Park, Bristol, BS6 6DA, or email admin@bcan.org.uk.

Aspire	elim@bristol
Big Issue	Emmaus Bristol
Bristol Christian Action Network (BCAN)	George Müller Foundation
Bristol Christian Fellowship (BCF)	Hope Centre
Bristol City Council, Anti Social Behaviour Team	Julian Trust
Bristol City Council, Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Team	Key to Life, Bradley Stoke
Bristol Methodist Centre	Nailsea Methodist Church
Bristol Prayer Wall	NCH Bristol Nightstop
Bristol Soup Run Trust	Novas (was Bristol Cyrenians)
Bristol Vineyard	One25 Project
Business in the Community	Outreach Team
Candle Community Centre, Salvation Army	Pip'n'Jay
Caring at Christmas	Redland Parish Church
Carmel Christian Centre	Saint Mary on the Quay
Christ Church, Clifton	Saint Nicholas of Tolentino
Churches Council for Industry and Social Responsibility	Salvation Army, Easton
Cold Weather Group	Salvation Army, Little George Street
Crisis Centre Ministries	Shelter
Ebenezer Evangelical	Sisters of the Church
	St Pauls Advice Centre
	St Stephens
	The New Place Community Centre
	Trinity Tabernacle
	Woodlands Christian Centre



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Press Release

Disaster on Our Doorstep

All of us in Bristol, and many across the country, have responded magnificently to the Asian Tsunami disaster, and to many other disasters over the years. But we have yet to recognise and respond to the ongoing disaster on our own doorstep.

It is generally understood that Bristol has the greatest problem of drugs and homelessness, for its size, of anywhere in the UK outside London. The statistics in this area are notoriously imprecise and unreliable, but there is considerable verbal evidence that Bristol suffers disproportionately from these problems. And the cost continues to grow⁽¹⁾.

Most people think of homelessness as a problem that 'other people' suffer from. But we all pay for supporting a large homeless population, and the harsh fact is that *anyone* can become homeless – whether you are from an affluent area such as Sneyd Park, or from a relatively deprived area such as Barton Hill.

The problem of homelessness is made worse by the housing crisis in Bristol, which causes the 'bed blocking' problem in the hostels. And the priority needs of the homeless people are a major cause of the housing crisis, as the emergencies take most of the properties that become available. The two issues need to be addressed together.

What can be done?

We need a more integrated approach between the different organisations: working in partnership, both within the voluntary sector and between the voluntary sector and the statutory agencies. But cooperation and coordination requires time and energy: if smaller organisations are to work as part of a larger team, they must be provided with the resources they need to make this possible. They need more money and more volunteers.

The BCAN Homeless Forum has been making a significant contribution for the past three years: by supporting and encouraging the staff and volunteers in the member organisations, by sharing news, educating and training, by identifying overlaps and cutting out some of the duplicated activities.

By adopting a formal membership structure, with a modest membership fee, the BCAN Homeless Forum will, for the first time, have resources available to support its members in a variety of practical ways, and will be able to speak and act on behalf of its members to help them access the resources they need.

One practical example of this work is the pilot *Caring in August* scheme that will operate this year. Various organisations stop operating in August because they do not have the staff and volunteers they need. By combining our resources in this period, we can make sure that some service provision continues.

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We will be working in partnership with the Bristol Evening Post to raise awareness about the scale of the problem, and the underlying issues, and to explain the excellent work that is being done and the opportunities that exist for ordinary people to make a real contribution to helping homeless people.

We will also be encouraging our members to work in a more environmentally sustainable way by recycling their printer cartridges through Aspire.

Background Information

⁽¹⁾ The number of registered drug users in Bristol is among the highest in the country, and doesn't take into account all the unregistered users. The cost of homelessness can be broken down into the cost of providing services for homeless people, plus the cost of dealing with the problems they cause.

The services include:

- Maintaining Day Centres with high levels of staff to cope with chaotic users
- Social Security Benefits: unemployment, housing, disability
- Drug Treatment: drug scripts, detox units, rehabilitation units
- Criminal Justice System: Police, Courts, Prison, Probation
- Housing: renovating properties, administration, support workers
- Treatment of physical health problems: hospitals, GP surgeries, clinics
- Treatment of mental health problems

The cost of the problems include:

- Higher insurance premiums: private household, car, business
- Disruption and trauma caused by crime
- The cost of shoplifting and all the associated security measures

According to Shelter, there are 100,000 homeless families in the UK, with 116,000 children (reported in the Daily Mirror, 18 March 2005).

According to Crisis, hidden homelessness is costing Britain as much as £1.4 billion every year and at 380,000 it is at its highest level since 1997. This is equivalent to the population of a major city. They estimate the number will reach one million by 2020 if current trends continue.

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Quotes

Ailsa McWilliam, Caring at Christmas

The homeless Forum is a chance for the organisations involved to show the wider Bristol community that homelessness is still an issue and it can happen to anyone. Being homeless has such a stigma attached to it. The Forum will hopefully humanise the homeless and show all sections of the Bristol community what is happening in their own 'backyard'.

The aim of the forum is to respond to the needs of all homeless people not just the rough sleepers. We want to address all the issues that come with being homeless and see people moving out of the poverty spiral. There are already a number of different organisations in the forum who deal with a wide range of issues from providing rough sleepers with a bed to full time supported work. A co-ordinated response would not only help people through the system but provide better services along the way.

The Caring in August project is something I am very excited about. Some organisations have to close over the summer due to a lack of volunteers or some well needed maintenance work. The project will not only provide a much needed drop-in service throughout August. It will also highlight what can be achieved when organisations work together.

Paul Tipler, Aspire Community Enterprise

I'm passionate about Aspire being able to help many more homeless people and in a much more effective way. I believe that all of us in the sector need to form more dynamic strategic partnerships and work out how to co-operate at all sorts of levels. Bristol's homeless people aren't going away and BCAN can help Aspire achieve its objectives. That's why we're committed to the work of the Homeless Forum and I'd urge everyone to get involved and lend support in whatever way they can. This is a problem in our own back yard and we all need to get far better at helping those affected now and the potentially vulnerable. Aspire supports this launch 100%.

Paul Hazelden, Crisis Centre Ministries

We have to work together. There is no alternative if we are to do our best for the homeless people in Bristol. No one organisation can do all that is needed. People are falling down the cracks between the different services – not as much as they used to, but we still need to improve. Homelessness is the single biggest issue facing us – not only in Bristol but across the country. It touches almost every area of major concern. We must campaign to raise public awareness of the facts – not only of the problems, but also of the practical steps we can take to address those problems; and we need to see more resources devoted to caring for the most vulnerable people in our society.

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Meeting Dates

April

Thursday 28 BCAN Seminar – **Christian Social Action and its Contribution to Mission**, Trinity Tabernacle (12:00 noon - 2:00 pm) Bishop Mike Hill. £3, including lunch. Booking required: ring 0117 955 7430 or email admin@bcan.org.uk

May

Wednesday 11 **Training - Faith and Social Action**, Crisis Centre Ministries (7:30 pm - 9:30 pm)

Thursday 12 **Homeless Forum**, Candle Community Centre (7:30 pm - 9:30 pm): AGM and FareShare

Saturday 14 **Training - Faith and Social Action**, Trinity Tabernacle (9:45 am - 1:00 pm)

Thursday 26 BCAN Seminar – **Becoming an Inclusive Church**, Trinity Tabernacle (12:00 noon - 2:00 pm) “Reaching out to your community to include disabled people in the life of your church,” led by Paul Dicken of *Through the Roof*. £3, including lunch. Booking required: ring 0117 955 7430 or email admin@bcan.org.uk

June

Wednesday 8 **Training - Work**, Crisis Centre Ministries (7:30 pm - 9:30 pm)

Saturday 11 **Training - Work**, Trinity Tabernacle (9:45 am - 1:00 pm)

July

Saturday 9 **Training - Supporting People**, Trinity Tabernacle (9:45 am - 1:00 pm)

Wednesday 13 **Training - Supporting People**, Crisis Centre Ministries (7:30 pm - 9:30 pm)

Thursday 14 **Homeless Forum**, see web site for location (7:30 pm - 9:30 pm)



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Case Study

*James**

James' life had fallen apart: he'd been on incapacity benefit for 2 years before joining Aspire and was living in a Salvation Army Hostel. Yet a few years previously he was happily married, living in a detached house in Clifton and running a successful business. The failure of his business due to bad debts meant bankruptcy, the loss of his home, breakdown of his marriage and a £100 a day heroin habit living on the streets. He felt that none of this was his fault and understandably struggled to come to terms with his new life.

Referred to Aspire by the Bristol Methodist Centre - who had been providing support for some time - James was offered a way out of his predicament. Helping James find his own tenancy was a good first step in James' rehabilitation and a job meant the start of some self respect. The support and training offered by Aspire challenged James to improve his self-discipline and realise that he still had much to offer.

James is now employed by an agency advising clients many of whom are in the same position he was before he joined Aspire. "What Aspire offered me was a new start. They didn't judge me for the mistakes I'd made in the past and always pushed me to take responsibility. I didn't always appreciate it but it helped me to start to put my problems behind me and move forward."

Since starting his new job, James sometimes struggled with illness brought on by his years of addiction. The Methodist Centre has been able to step in again and pick up the support they previously provided. This is just one example of the partnership working demonstrated by members of the BCAN Homeless Forum.

* The name has been changed to protect his identity

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Expression of Interest

The BCAN Homeless Forum is working to produce an information pack, which should be available in the Autumn of 2005.

It will contain some background information and figures about the size of the problem of homelessness in Bristol, some real life stories to 'flesh out' the issues and show the human face of the problem, information about what is happening and details of the many different ways people can get involved and make a difference.

If you are interested in receiving more information about this publication, please complete the details below and hand this form in to the desk on your way out, or send it to:

The BCAN Administrator,
Müller House,
7 Cotham Park,
Bristol,
BS6 6DA

Name:

Address:

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Telephone:

Email: