

# **Bristol Homeless Forum**

## **14 January 2016**

### **Caring in Bristol**

## **Open**

### ***Present***

Alexis Woodward (Julian House), Di Noone (Christ Church Breakfast Run), Ed Reed (Caring in Bristol), Laurie Grandi (ACE Service), Paul Hazelden (Christian Action Bristol), Paul Sargent (ACE Service), Richard Drake (Julian Trust), Val Moore (St John Ambulance, Churches Together in Clifton Cotham and Redland) and Val Thompson (Spring of Hope Manager, Crisis Centre Ministries).

For the purpose of clarity, it was noted that Julian Trust and Julian House are two distinct charities. Julian House started in Bath and now runs over 20 projects in Bath, Bristol and Wiltshire; Julian Trust runs the Night Shelter in Bristol (and, confusingly, is based at Julian House in Bristol).

### ***Apologies***

Jonnie Angel (Wild Goose Drop-In Centre Manager, Crisis Centre Ministries), Judith Gardner (Spring of Hope), Lindsey Jones (Caring in Bristol, Bristol Methodist Centre), Steve Jones (Bristol Soup Run Trust), Gillian Nowland (One25).

### ***Previous meeting***

Paul apologised for one minor inaccuracy in the notes from the previous meeting: the increase in registration fee is because costs have increased, not because catering costs have increased. With this correction, the notes from the previous meeting were agreed.

There were three matters arising.

- Val Moore has not yet received the promised poster for the Sleepout: Val Thompson will email it to her.
- We have heard no further news on the reported pending legislation to prevent people sleeping rough in Bristol.
- The Survival Handbook should be back from the printers by the end of next week (22 January); please make arrangements to collect the copies you were expecting. This print run will be 10,000 copies. This edition will be orange, and is planned to last for 18 months (through to July 2017) but with an interim update available in 6 months (July 2016).

## **Information Share**

### ***Previously Circulated***

Paul highlighted some key points from the previously circulated news. There are offers of help with employability skills, food provision and money advice.

### ***Caring in Bristol***

Please contact Caring in Bristol if you need supplies of items such as toys and crayons.

### ***Julian House***

Julian House began in Bath as a night shelter, but over the past four years or so it has grown and now has projects in Wiltshire, North Somerset, Devon, Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

The project in Bristol, St Vincent's provides 19 beds in 3 properties close together. It is an abstinence based service, carefully monitored to ensure there are no drugs, alcohol, gambling or female guests. Access is either through referral or self referral.

They run social enterprises such as Aspire, providing window cleaning, gardening and a bike workshop. Referrals are welcome; they are willing to collect bikes for the workshop. There is a complex needs service for ex-offenders in South Gloucestershire, taking referrals from Horfield.

They are currently changing the back room at Barton Hill into a training facility: the plan is to take apprentices and provide them with personal protection equipment and lunches, cover their basic expenses, offer help with CVs and offer qualification and online accredited training. They plan to employ a Training and Mentoring Coordinator later this year.

### ***Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham and Redland***

The Lent Conversations organised by Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham and Redland this year are called 'Life in all its Fullness' – looking at spiritual, ethical, and social Issues in health and care today.

## **Notified Business**

### ***Caring at Christmas***

In brief: the planning was better than in previous years; the numbers were up; but there was much more trouble – in part due to the increased numbers, but mostly due to the amount of Spice being used.

The initial feedback is that there will need to be substantial changes next year to prevent a repeat of the problems.

## ***Sleep-Out***

Pip 'n' Jay have confirmed they are expecting us on the night of Friday 26 February through to the morning of Saturday 27 February 2016. Richard did the walk round and updated the risk assessment a few days ago.

Only half a dozen groups have registered to take part in the Sleep-Out so far: all the usual large ones. We have begun to release more spaces to them, so time is running out for other groups to register. Paul will chase the other participants from last year, but please can everyone contact the groups you know to remind them?

Please point any interested groups to the new web site ([bristolhf.org.uk](http://bristolhf.org.uk)): Paul needs to change the old BCAN web site as the details there are now out of date.

Crisis Centre Ministries have asked what time we will have access to the kitchen at Pip 'n' Jay: Paul will find out and let them know.

## ***Homelessness Awareness Week***

The main focus of Homelessness Awareness Week this year is on prevention: recognising the problems which can lead to homelessness and working together to prevent it. A range of activities have been organised, including a 'trail' of places where organisations work to help homeless people. A trail map will be available.

There will be organisation displays in the Bearpit on Saturday 20 and Wednesday 24 February, and at the New Street centre there will be a small exhibition of art work by homeless and formerly homeless people as well as more organisation displays. The trail map will be available in both places.

The Supported Housing Forum will be running a closed hustings for the mayoral candidates to quiz them on their plans for dealing with homelessness, with questions raised by and asked by homeless people.

We need more case studies: either stories or people who are willing to be interviewed about their experiences.

## ***Emergency Winter Accommodation***

Following the initial proposal there was a meeting with the Council and others, with plans to create emergency overnight accommodation for the coldest months. There have subsequently been several Winter shelter initiatives. Richard was concerned that some 'mixed messages' have been circulated by the press, so we need to be clear about what is actually happening.

### **SWEP**

Each year, the council and partners operate a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) to find accommodation for people who would otherwise be sleeping rough in periods of particularly cold weather. This includes additional temporary hostel beds. The arrangements operate when temperatures are predicted to be zero centigrade or below for three nights in a row. It will happen as usual this year.

In addition to the usual provision, the Spring of Hope and Julian Trust will be open when the SWEP is operating. The Julian Trust will provide the accommodation and a supervisor; the council will provide volunteers and refer people. On these nights, only a bed is on offer: no meals will be provided.

### **Property Guardianship**

Four properties that can be rendered habitable have been made available and low risk homeless people put in with a low, affordable rent. The scheme provides accommodation for homeless people and prevents properties from being used for squatting; the only problem is lack of finances.

### **Assessment Centre**

The Compass Centre has opened overnight again, taking 20 people while they are being assessed.

### **Winter Shelter**

This is a 15 bed overnight shelter, operating out of the building of a local faith group for people who have been assessed and are ready to move into supported housing when a space opens up for them. It is mixed gender.

### **Other Possibilities**

The council are looking for other places to use as overnight shelters: please contact David Ingerslev if you know of somewhere which might be suitable. They require storage space for 15-20 sets of kit plus tea and coffee making facilities and can probably cover any marginal costs. These shelters will probably remain open until the end of March.

David is looking for both volunteers and financial support for both the Winter Shelter and the SWEP sessions. Please help publicise the needs.

Some training will be provided, depending on the volunteer's experience, but probably not very much. Please see the Volunteers page on the Bristol Homeless Forum web site for more details of volunteering opportunities ([bristolhf.org.uk](http://bristolhf.org.uk)).

### ***Access to mental health services***

Paul Sargent and Laurie Grandi from St Mungos came to come to talk to us about the ACE (Assertive Contact and Engagement) service and how to help people access the mental health services they require. They gave out a leaflet about ACE and a fold out directory of the services in the Bristol mental health system

There are lots of different parts in the Community Mental Health part of the Primary Care system. ACE is for people who will struggle with mainstream services. They target homeless people, those with drug and alcohol problems, asylum seekers and refugees, etc. It is an NHS Service but the people are all St Mungo's employees.

They employ engagement workers to do outreach, take referrals, build relationship and then pass people on to other parts of the service.

They also offer a training and capacity building service: many other organisations work with vulnerable people; if they encounter barriers, the ACE people can go out to the other organisations and train people to work with people with mental health needs. They first do a needs analysis and then tailor the training as required, providing help at different levels depending on people's experience. They can offer up to 4 hours free training.

Some of the areas they can help with include: hearing voices, dual diagnosis, suicide risk, self harm, mythbusting, how to engage with people and where you can refer people to. The aim is to provide more substantial help than you would get from a mental health 'First Aid' approach.

A large part of the problem comes from the fact that many people deny mental health problems so a cautious approach is often required: asking people about how their life is, or commenting that someone appears stressed. There is a general shift from talking about mental health to things like wellbeing and stress.

The Sanctuary operates from New Street Friday to Monday nights between 7 pm and 2 am. This is not a crisis service, but it is a comfortable, safe place for people who feel they cannot cope, for anyone who is in distress or caring for someone who is in distress.

The Crisis Service operates a 24 hour telephone support line (0300 555 0334). The web site ([www.bristolmentalhealth.org/services/crisis-service/](http://www.bristolmentalhealth.org/services/crisis-service/)) says that they can arrange for those in most urgent need to be seen within one hour, but in practice this is very unlikely. It may be that there is an emergency, but it is not purely a mental health emergency.

They also have a daytime support number (0117 919 5670) operating 8 am to 8 pm, which has staff answering at the start and end of the day and mainly volunteers in the middle of the day. They can offer advice and may be able to schedule a meeting for early the next day.

Mental health support is available from these and the other services on the leaflet to anyone aged 16 or over who is resident in Bristol or eligible to access a GP in Bristol.

It was noted that we are glad steps are being taken to make it easier for disadvantaged people to access mental health services, but the mental health services are already over-stretched and under-resourced, so increasing the takeup will only make it harder for everyone else to get the help they need from the professional services. Paul repeated his conviction that we need to develop many more community based services to support people with mental health needs.

There were some other difficult issues identified.

- The Julian Trust need an overnight referral system to pick people up from them in the morning so that an expert can do a professional assessment.
- We frequently contact the mental health services and ask for help only to be told that the individuals concerned are not sufficiently needy

The basic advice was to contact the ACE Team in these and similar situations and

give them the details of situations where the system is not working as we think it should. The problem areas need to be documented and quantified before there is any realistic hope of them being addressed in the current financial climate.

The training being offered may also help to calibrate expectations of the mental health services: we see people in distress and suffering and naturally want to do something to ease the distress and prevent further suffering; but people have the right to make bad decisions for themselves and to live with the consequences. How far this freedom should extend is a matter of judgement, and it will probably always remain a difficult question with several differing points of view.

### ***Involving the workers***

Again, there was no time to discuss this question.

### ***Ongoing Issues***

Two ongoing issues were not discussed.

- How do we encourage participation and partnership with the voluntary services from people employed to work in this field?
- How do we address the problem of inadequate toilet facilities for homeless people?

## **Close**

### ***Shared documents***

We have a set of shared documents on the BCAN web site. They have not been updated for several years, so any updates or responses to them would be welcome.

These documents are listed on the *Homeless Forum Documents* page of the site: you can navigate to it from the BCAN home page ([www.bcan.org.uk](http://www.bcan.org.uk)).

### ***Items for Next Agenda***

Please let Paul know if you would like anything on the agenda for the March meeting.

### ***Future Meetings***

Details of the next few meetings are as follows.

- 10 March 2016, 6.30 pm
- 12 May 2016, 6.30 pm