

BCAN
Homeless Forum
City Road Baptist Church
7 January 2002

Introduction

The meeting was chaired by Steve Abbott, who opened with prayer.

Those Present

Steve Abbott (BCAN), Richard Barrett (Bristol Methodist Centre), Sr. Annaliese (Sisters of the Church), Cecilia Burgess (Vineyard), Paul Hazelden (Crisis Centre Ministries), Andy Pagett (Trinity Tabernacle), Clive Richards (Trinity Tabernacle), Jill Thomas (Crisis Centre Ministries), Betty Wear (Saint Nicholas of Tolentino) and Anne White (Bristol City Council).

Apologies Received

Ann Banks (BCF), Mike Bennett (BCF), Janet Bryant (Easton Salvation Army), Helen Hill (One25 Project), Medina Johnson (Caring at Christmas), Trudie Lane (Crisis Centre Ministries) and Rev Richard McKay (Saint Nicholas of Tolentino).

Previous Meeting

There were no corrections to the notes of the previous meeting.

The Council has not yet provided Paul with details of the 'Section 180' services for homeless people. Paul will circulate these details to the members of the forum when they arrive.

Paul talked briefly about the lists of 'Food for Homeless People' and 'Accommodation for Homeless people' he had circulated. He agreed to contact the people not present and provide them with an equivalent summary.

Contact Details

The people present said that they were happy for their contact details to be circulated to other members of the BCAN Homeless Forum. Paul repeated his request that people check their details and tell him of any mistakes.

Helping the Homeless

Paul talked briefly about the 'Volunteers Fair', a public meeting held in November last year to attract more volunteers to help homeless people in Bristol, especially over Christmas and the Winter. Those who had been present thought it had been a worthwhile exercise. Several suggestions were made concerning how it could be more widely advertised.

There is a mailing list for Anglican churches in the diocese, and a similar list for local Methodist and URC. The cost of mailing would be high, but we might be able to include

some publicity in someone else's mailing. Volunteering Bristol could be approached. If we print 250,000 copies of our publicity, the local free press will freely distribute it with the paper once a year.

It was noted that Caring at Christmas have 350 volunteers – perhaps we could use their mailing list, and ask existing contacts to pass on the publicity to friends, family, work colleagues and fellow church members? Other possibilities include a mailing list which Jill Thomas has access to, and asking ask the Council for access to their database – although subsequent investigations have not determined which Council database might be used in this way – does anybody have any more knowledge of this area?

Training

Paul described the three training sessions that were run after the volunteers fair for the people who signed up for one or more of the groups taking part. One session was on basic listening skills, one on drug and addiction issues, and one on dealing with challenging behaviour. All three sessions were run twice: once midweek in the evening, and once on a Saturday morning. There was general agreement that this approach would enable most people to attend if they wanted to.

The Methodist Centre runs a monthly training session, but this is mainly for team building purposes so it would be inappropriate to include lots of other people.

Some Child Protection training will be coming up soon, through Müllers. Paul will locate and distribute some details.

One25 may well be able to share some of their training, though not all. Sister Annaliese will clarify this with the management. It is likely the training that could be shared would be in subject like assertiveness and drugs.

Some other places were mentioned that might be able to provide training for our staff and volunteers:

- *Training Exchange* in Easton
- *Progress* (they offer reduced fees if your organisation is a member)
- *Freeways* in Abbots Leigh
- The *Social Services* run occasional workshops
- *ISR* run occasional training days for drug awareness
- The *Police* provide good drug training
- *Life for the World* run a comprehensive training course (more details soon)

Prayer

As well as training, we need to pray and get more people praying for homeless people and the various ministries working to help them. A great many people in Bristol are already praying, both as individuals and through groups. The Prayer Wall mailing is probably more appropriate than using the Bristol EA mailing.

Feedback from the Council Contribution

There was a brief but lively discussion of the contribution from the council officers at the last meeting. Many people were very appreciative of their willingness to come and meet us in this way, and the strong hope was expressed that this would lead to a closer and more helpful working relationship with the Council in the future.

Clive reported that he had gone out one evening with a reporter from the Bristol Evening Post, and they had found 32 homeless people.

It has been suggested that the BHF might send a representative to the Supported Housing Forum. It was not entirely clear why this was considered to be appropriate. One possibility is that we have a vested interest in moving people on from the hostels, to make room for 'our' homeless people; another is that we may be able to provide links with people who would be able to offer mentoring to people in supported housing. Paul will follow up this question and report back to the next meeting.

Paul has not yet been able to get hold of details about the 'Section 180' services for homeless people.

Policy Documents

It was agreed to ask everyone to bring to the next meeting ten copies of any policy or training documents that might be of interest or help to the other BHF members. If more than ten people would like to take a copy, we can run them through the photocopier, but it would be helpful if we could avoid doing this during the evening.

Next Meeting

The next meeting has been arranged for Thursday 21 March 2002, 7.30 pm, City Road Baptist Church (side entrance again).

We agreed to focus most of the next meeting on Soup Runs. The volunteers who take part in Soup Runs face greater challenges than those who work from a base, so we need to consider the special training needs and procedural issues that face those who work on the Soup Runs.

Paul will ask Christine Boulton, who has a great deal of experience in outreach work to homeless people, to come and speak to us about personal safety and related issues when working on the street, and to answer questions about the work of the CAT (Contact and Assessment Team).