

BCAN
Homeless Forum
City Road Baptist Church
15 May 2003

Introduction

Steve Abbott welcomed everyone and opened the meeting in prayer.

Those Present

Steve Abbott (BCAN), Paul Hazelden (Crisis Centre Ministries), John Knuckey (Carmel Christian Centre), Alisa McWilliam (Caring at Christmas), Val Moore (Christchurch, Clifton), Barry Penn (Bristol Methodist Centre), Mark Stonham (Redland Parish Church) and Paul Tipler (Aspire).

A welcome was extended to Barry Penn, who has just taken over responsibility for the Bristol Methodist Centre from Richard Barrett.

Apologies Received

Apologies had been received from Anni Davey (Crisis Centre Ministries) and Helen Hill (One25 Project).

Previous Meeting

The notes of the previous meeting were approved without change.

Matters Arising

The housing officer was not involved directly with homelessness, and is presently on holiday, but plans to join us at the next meeting.

Information Share

Redland

Mark Stonham reported that Redland Parish Church did a very successful soup run in April and the PCC have decided to plan another for October. Lots of people from the church were involved, and managed to talk with lots of homeless people who were very appreciative. This was coordinated by Pat Reynolds, and not part of BSRT. Pat organises the Clifton and Redland Council of Churches soup run every Saturday lunchtime.

Emmaus

Last week, Emmaus interviewed someone for the post of Leader. The interview was successful, the offer was accepted, and the person is now working out their notice before starting.

The building work is ahead of schedule. An offer has been accepted for a workshop around 500m from the building, and £½ million has been raised so far. The accommodation should open in the 1st week of July, and Terry Waite is coming for the official opening in September.

Summer Closures

The Wild Goose will be closed for a kitchen refit for three weeks in August, from Monday 4 to Monday 25, opening again on Tuesday 26 August. They hope to run a 'static soup-run' from a nearby building for most of the times when the shop would normally have been opened. The precise dates and times will be confirmed closer to the time.

The Methodist Centre will be closed from Monday 18 August to Friday 22, opening again on Tuesday 26 after the Bank Holiday.

Other

Caring at Christmas have two computers, both running Windows 95, which they are in the process of replacing.

Contact details were distributed for people who are part of the BCAN Homeless Forum.

The BCAN half-day consultation on the 'Rehabilitation of Offenders' is planned for next Thursday, 22 May 2003. The cost is £2, or £4 with lunch. There is a good line-up of speakers, and people are strongly encouraged to attend.

Training

Volunteer Training

There was a brief report on the last two volunteer training sessions: 'Mental Health' in April and 'Faith and Social Action' in May, with all the usual things being said. The discussion of how Christians and churches can be usefully engaged in helping homeless people was continued later in the meeting.

First Aid Training

It was agreed that the First Aid training would run from 1:00-4:00 pm on Saturday 7 June, and from 1:30-4:00pm on Saturday 14 June after the usual volunteer training session on 'Work'. The cost will be £20, including lunch and materials. Ladies must wear trousers.

Helping the Homeless

There was an enthusiastic discussion about various aspects of the needs homeless people have, and the ways in which churches can help address those needs. What follows is just a few isolated comments taken from the discussion.

People often say things like "the church is doing nothing for me" when they are receiving a great deal of care from people who are part of the church. What they generally mean is that the Minister (/Vicar/Priest/Pastor...) is not personally involved in the care being provided. Perhaps we can help educate people to understand that the church is the people, and the

people in the church care as an expression of the love of God and the life of the church?

Churches sometimes provide 'Community Houses,' and this is something else we should look at to see what is available. It was reported that Lee Abbey run a Community House in Knowle.

When we use the word 'community,' we think of a small, tightly-knit group of people. What are the core values of a Christian community? What makes something a Christian community, as opposed to any other kind of community, and as opposed to the other ways in which Christians work together?

Paul H described the 'assistance profile' he has used in various places to help people understand the needs of homeless people. A major issue is the fact that all the effective statutory help is time-limited, but the needs continue after the funding for support workers runs out. This is why the needs have to be addressed by churches and voluntary groups: there will never be enough funding to pay for all the care people require.

The transition from professional care to voluntary care is critical, and something we need to understand more clearly. People who are engaging in the process of recovery need places where they can go and feel they belong – to meet people enough like them for it to work socially, but not people who are all struggling to cope with the issues of abuse and addiction in the same way.

People need to feel they belong to something larger than themselves or their immediate friends and family: it was suggested that around 400 people can provide a suitable sized group, providing both variety and enough people 'like me,' and also providing something large enough to be important but not so large the individual gets lost. There needs to be a commitment to turn up to meeting and events, so membership actually means something in practice. This kind of involvement can help break the 'revolving door' syndrome.

People get stuck in their recovery sometimes because they don't see any easy steps from where they are to where they want to be. Sometimes we need to build more steps for people, and sometimes we simply need to help people see the steps that already exist.

Job Clubs can be a valuable resource to help people find and get jobs. But they can only be a part of the picture: helping people keep the jobs they get is even more important. And it is possible we need to re-define work to make it suitable for the people who need jobs.

It was reported that the DTI web site contains information about a new kind of enterprise, which might offer tax breaks for businesses which employ our clients.

Other Business

Shared Documents

The usual set of documents were made available for people to look at and pick up:

- [Volunteer Training 2002-2003](#) – BCAN and CCM
- [Outreach Work](#) – Shared Guidelines
- [Bristol Soup Run Trust Code of Practice](#) – Shared Guidelines
- [Cold Weather Group Volunteer Handbook extracts](#) – Shared Guidelines
- [Client Details](#) – Caring at Christmas

- [Feedback Form](#) – Caring at Christmas
- [Membership Form](#) – Voscur
- [Accommodation in Bristol for Homeless People](#) – CCM
- [Food in Bristol for Homeless People](#) – CCM
- [Confidentiality Policy](#) – CCM
- [Official Numbers of Homeless People in Bristol](#) – CCM

If anyone would like a copy of one or more of these documents, they are available from the Crisis Centre office, and on the Crisis Centre web site (www.crisis-centre.org.uk).

Future Meetings

As we have agreed to meet on the Thursday evening following the second Saturday of every other month, the next few meetings will be 17 July, 18 September and 13 November: all at City Road Baptist Church between 7:30 and 9:00 pm.