

BCAN
Homeless Forum
City Road Baptist Church
13 November 2003

Introduction

Steve Abbott welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer.

Those Present

Steve Abbott (BCAN), Anni Davey (Crisis Centre Ministries), Paul Hazelden (Crisis Centre Ministries), John Knuckey (Carmel Christian Centre), Ailsa McWilliam (Caring at Christmas), Barry Penn (Bristol Methodist Centre), Martin Spink (Bristol Soup Run Trust), Paul Tipler (Aspire) and Betty Wear (Saint Nicholas of Tolentino).

Apologies Received

Apologies had been received from Peter Bruce (Easton Salvation Army), Helen Hill (One25 Project), Val Moore (Christ Church, Clifton), Clive Richards (Trinity Tabernacle), Kevin Stone (Candle Project, Salvation Army), Mark Stonham (Redland Parish Church) and Graham Wheeler (Bristol Soup Run Trust).

Previous Meeting

The notes of the last meetings had been posted on Monday. The notes were approved without change.

However, there was a mistake reported in the notes from the previous meeting: the email address for the Bristol Methodist Centre is really methodistcentre20031@yahoo.co.uk (the '3' had been missed out).

Matters Arising

Barry reported that the Mental Health worker mentioned at the last meeting visits the Bristol Methodist Centre each Tuesday lunchtime, roughly between 1:00 and 2:30 pm.

Paul H circulated publicity about the First Aid training, but this had not taken place, for reasons that are not entirely clear. We hope to be able to offer the training in the new year now.

Peter Bruce has made contact with the council, and will attend the next meeting of the Supported Housing Forum.

Paul H circulated a document ('BCAN Homeless Forum: An Introduction') describing ideas for the future of the BHF. Please read it and let him know what you think.

Kevin Stone sent Paul H the weekly programme for the Candle Project to be distributed.

Nobody has yet offered to help design publicity for the volunteer training.

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| Action: Everyone |
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Nobody has yet commented on the idea of membership fees for the BHF, or suggested what might be a fair level.

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| Action: Everyone |
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Nobody has commented on the idea of a BHF Newsletter, or offered to help produce one.

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| Action: Everyone |
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Information Share

Bristol Methodist Centre

Barry reported that Lee Barnes, the new Support Worker, has been in post around a month. He asked at Trinity College if anyone would be interested in taking part in a Soup Run, but there was very little response.

(Paul T said that in his experience, it was very rare to get any response following an announcement: you get better results if you write an article and then talk to people.)

The Methodist Centre now has a full complement of staff, which makes life much easier, but it is still ‘two steps forward and one step back’: it takes a great deal of work just to get one person to take up the opportunity they have. It is the same with the *Ready to Work* scheme – you put a lot of work into getting someone to the door, then something goes wrong and they don’t take part after all.

The Methodist Centre produced a ‘Harvest’ newsletter in July, and have been overwhelmed by the generosity of the response this year.

Aspire

At the time of the previous meeting, things had been extremely difficult in almost every aspect of Aspire’s activity. But Paul T and his family got together to pray about the situation one evening, and from that point everything changed; for the next two weeks, almost every day there was a significant step forward.

Aspire has started a window cleaning business with some clients from the Methodist Centre: while they need more customers, they are currently picking up new ones at a rate of around two a day.

Paul T is working to establish another new business from May 2004. His landlord is offering another warehouse, and this can probably be used to refurbish office furniture, old computers and printers.

BCF gave Paul T a 5 minute slot in their service recently, which turned into 15 minutes. Paul took with him an ex addict and serial offender who has been clean for five years, and who told BCF that he is not sure what his faith is, but he is sure it was prayer that got him off the drugs. They then did a Q&A session together, and this was really appreciated.

Paul T asked if there was some way of getting more people to pray for our work. He has a standing invitation to the CCM Prayer Meeting, which happens every two months (the next one: 7:30 pm Monday 17 November – everyone is invited), but would like to see more. He suggested we might arrange another prayer meeting on the alternate months. Several people thought this would be a good idea, but doubted whether people would be likely to turn up as we are already so stretched for time. Another suggestion was to email Naomi Knapp

(info@bristolprayerwall.org.uk) with prayer requests and ask her to pass them on to the Bristol Prayer Wall.

If you have any suggestions about ways to encourage people to pray for our work, please let Paul H know.

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| Action: Everyone |
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Carmel

Carmel have moved recently, which generated a great deal of extra work. Emmaus Gloucester took quite a lot of items they did not want to transport – Bristol Emmaus was not yet ready to accept it.

John K is now officially the *Mercy Ministries Coordinator*. He has arranged for someone to film their work on the streets of Bristol, for presentation to the church to help them better understand the needs we come across and the importance of responding to them.

Carmel are also in the process of setting up a charity shop in Filwood.

Bristol Soup Run Trust

The Soup Run teams are still going to the usual places, but finding fewer people at them. People are being moved on from the city centre, which makes it harder to find and help them. It is hard to tell exactly how many people are missing, because the numbers are always lower at this time of year: over the Summer they were feeding an average of 70 people a night, while at present it is closer to 40.

Recently, the teams have been experiencing more aggression, mostly coming from a small minority of the homeless population.

Caring at Christmas

The anticipated web site is under construction, and may go live before Christmas. It should contain a directory and a set of 'Hot Topics', describing what is happening both locally and nationally, and intended to be of interest to people working with the homeless.

If you have any news or information that may be of interest to the wider community, please email Caring at Christmas at their normal address, caringatchristmas@lineone.net.

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It was reported that The Hub is bringing out a new, updated version of the Bristol Homeless Directory, and this should be available by January 2004.

St Nicholas of Tolentino

Betty reported that persistent and aggressive clients demanding help at antisocial hours have caused the people at St Nicks to reduce the times at which they will now offer food. Paul H will publicise the new times on the 'Food in Bristol' information sheet.

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Cosmos has been threatened with an HIV infected needle, and another worker has been headbutted. As a consequence, they are now ensuring there will be two people on the door while they are open.

Barry mentioned that the plan to set up a new day centre on the site, while still not certain, was moving ahead slowly; and should address this problem if and when it is completed, which may be in the next two or three years.

One25

One25 have appointed Rhi Day to be their new Project Coordinator. She will start work at the beginning of December.

Christmas Activity

The details of Christmas opening times have already been circulated. Other details of Christmas activities were noted as follows.

Caring at Christmas

A range of activities and treats have been arranged: a couple of bands are coming, along with a physiotherapist, a chiropodist and an Indian meal. They are doing quite well for volunteers during the daytime and supervisors for the night shifts, but need more volunteers to stay overnight.

They have booked an advert on the public screen at Broadmead for two weeks at a special discounted rate: time will tell whether this produces any response.

Salvation Army, Hassell Drive

Peter B reported that they always provide a Christmas lunch, but they like to know in advance who is coming so it won't go on the list of places open at Christmas. Many of the people who come have been recommended to them by Social Services: they start to arrive from about 10:30 in the morning or someone goes to pick them up, and the Salvation Army band plays for them in the afternoon.

Others

Carmel are providing hampers for young people in Knowle this year, so they will not be supplying the bags with gifts and food for homeless people as in previous years.

CCM are organising a Christmas party for the clients on the evening of Friday 19 December – another change from previous years. However, as usual, they will be making use of the large room at City Road Baptist for the event, as it hold far more people than the Wild Goose.

After Christmas

The Julian Trust Nightshelter's current plan is to be open on the evening of Tuesday 30 December, then closed for two nights on the Wednesday and Thursday. This seems rather a shame. It is not clear if this is simply because it is too difficult to find volunteers to keep the place open on New Year's Eve: has there been this problem in previous years, or is there some other reason – have they been warned to expect trouble, for example?

Summer Activities and Closures

Paul H asked when groups start to plan their Summer activities and closures, so we can talk about it in time. However, none of the groups present reported a fixed pattern for Summer activities or a fixed timetable for making plans.

We agreed to come back to this question. Please can everyone let Paul H know of any plans for the Summer, or any timetable for making plans.

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| Action: Everyone |
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Street Begging

Paul H reported that an item had been broadcast on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Broadcasting House* the previous Sunday about Michelle Evans and Bristol Council's initiative against street begging. There was a lively discussion of the subject.

It was generally recognised that there continues to be a problem with persistent begging in Bristol. The places where people can be found begging are changing, possibly due to the new initiative. There are now very few people begging in the Triangle, for example.

Ailsa attends the *Homeless and Begging Forum* meeting, along with John Hurst, representatives of Broadmead Baptist Church, the Police and others. The next meeting is to be held on 24 January 2004. It had been reported at the previous meeting that a persistent beggar was wanting to stay in prison when they were entitled to be released.

As reported at the previous meeting, one ongoing problem is the way people choose to beg around cashpoint machines. The Bristol Soup Run Trust have been asked not to stop beside cashpoints, and all the teams have been instructed accordingly. But this doesn't seem to make any difference: homeless people follow the Soup Run team to get some food, and then move back to be near the cashpoint once they have it.

A number of questions and issues were identified.

- If given the choice, most people will choose detox rather than go to prison. But what is the point of putting people through detox if they don't want to get clean?
- Does the policy of stopping people from begging increase the probability that they will get the money through criminal means instead? Do the Police statistics show any link with the street begging initiative?
- Does a clamp-down on begging in certain parts of Bristol solve the problem, or just move it somewhere less visible?
- What actually is the policy, how is it being implemented, and is it working?

Paul H will contact Sue Strickland and ask if she or Michelle Evans can come along to our next meeting and talk about the council's policy.

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| Action: Everyone |
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[Post meeting note: both Sue and Michelle can come to our next meeting in January.]

Other Business

Farewell to Steve

After a break of 23 years, Steve Abbott is returning to the Church of England as the Priest

in Charge of St James in Mangotsfield. He will be moving house in January 2004 and starting his new position in February. He will have to lay down a great deal of his present interchurch activity, and hence is stepping down from the BHF. He hoped someone else from the BCAN Steering Group would be able to join the BHF in his place, although this would not necessarily be the best person to chair the meetings.

Would someone like to volunteer to act as the chair of the BCAN Homeless Forum meetings?

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Steve was wished the very best in his new role by all present.

Documents

The usual set of documents were made available for people to look at and pick up, along with a few new ones:

- [Volunteer Training 2003-2004](#) – BCAN and CCM
- [Information about the Volunteer Training 2003-2004](#) – 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
- [Weekly Programme](#) – The Candle Project
- [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
- [BCAN Homeless Forum: An Introduction](#) – BHF
- [Communities of Practice](#) – BHF
- [Bristol Employment Action Team \('BEAT'\)](#) - 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 15 January 2004, 18 March and 13 May, all between 7:30 and 9:00 pm.

Please Note: most of the previous meetings have been held at City Road Baptist Church, but it was agreed to change this. The next meeting (15 January) will be at the offices of Crisis Centre Ministries, 12 City Road; and the meeting after that (18 March) will be at the Bristol Methodist Centre, 31-33 Midland Road.