

BCAN
Homeless Forum
Methodist Centre
16 September 2004

Introduction

Everyone present was welcomed to the meeting.

Those Present

Paul Hazelden (Crisis Centre Ministries), Ailsa McWilliam (Caring at Christmas), Barry Penn (Bristol Methodist Centre), Kevin Stone (Candle Community Centre, Salvation Army) and Graham Wheeler (Bristol Soup Run Trust).

Apologies Received

Lee Barnes (Bristol Methodist Centre), Anni Davey (Crisis Centre Ministries), David Maggs (BCAN), Susanna Misson (Hope Centre & Christ Church), David Perry (Emmaus Bristol), Clive Richards (Trinity Tabernacle), Mark Stonham (Redland Parish Church) and Sue Strickland (Bristol City Council).

Previous Meeting

The notes from the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record.

Matters Arising

Homelessness Directory from the Hub: Graham has received a copy; Barry asked for one but was not successful; and Ailsa has recently asked for one and not heard back yet. The guide is only a set of photocopied sheets, but it is useful to have a paper copy – it is more portable than an online computer!

Homelessness Groups: Paul's strange meeting was the Inner city mental health team. James had attended!

It was reported that the City Centre Churches are establishing a new meeting, which meets tonight, and this probably explains a few of the unexpected absences.

Information Share

Trinity Tabernacle

Trinity Tabernacle are feeding between 100 and 120 each Tuesday at present; two people have recently gone into rehab.

Bristol Soup Run Trust

There have been more problems with violence on the soup run recently. They have been serving large numbers, especially in August when the night shelter was closed, and the volunteers have been feeling a great deal of pressure. Every night is operating. Most of the

groups do their own soup, but BSRT give out supplies like biscuits and coffee and flasks at the bi-monthly meeting.

Bristol Methodist Centre

Strangely, the Methodist Centre was relatively quiet in the first two weeks of August, apart from a few busy lunchtimes.

Negotiations with St Nicholas of Tolentino are still continuing: they hope to establish an ecumenical day centre, but progress is very slow. David Maggs tries to make progress, and is putting in a great deal of hard work behind the scenes. The new centre will probably be called the “Methodist Assisi Centre,” or something similar.

Second Step have been surveying members on Mental health issues. They hope this will produce an enhanced service by Second Step with the centre. It is hard to tell how many members are registered with a GP.

The Methodist Centre are looking forward to the usual harvest deluge at this time of year.

Candle Community Centre

Kevin Stone recently picked up 1,000 cans of soup from Heinz because they had changed the packaging!

An email was sent out recently with the new opening hours. Reason for a change of hours is that 95 people came in on the last Wednesday: they didn’t feel they were making any progress with the people, so opening for light refreshments should encourage contact. They are developing a key worker service for those who don’t have one by another route.

They refer all requests for furniture on to Emmaus (as does the Bristol Methodist Centre). Several people have had problems with the SOFA project not picking up furniture as arranged.

The new manager is well established now.

Caring at Christmas

The Christmas Coordinator started on Monday, the same person as last year so she is experienced.

The Survival Guide is now out: 4,000 were printed, but only 600 are left. A prison in Devon has asked for 1,000 copies for several prisons in the Devon area. Graham reported that every night on the soup run they meet someone straight from prison. Ex-prisoners are coming to Bristol, so they might as well know what is available here. However, the quoted cost for reprinting 1,000 copies is £1,400! Paul suggested we send them the PDF file and they can then print what they want.

For next year, we should explore printing the handbook in a cheaper format. Paul suggested the possibility of creating a ‘print on demand’ book: he will find out more details about this option.

Action: Paul

The *Caring in Bristol* website is going well, with 3,400 unique visitors in August.

Caring at Christmas will be open from 24 December to 31 December this year – one day more than usual because the Julian Trust does not open on Thursday evenings. Services and entertainment will be provided through the days; the dormitory opens at 9 pm and shuts at

around 10 am.

Ailsa will give some flyers to the Soup Run, as some folk on the streets seem not to know about the service over Christmas

Action: Ailsa

Crisis Centre Ministries

Paul reported that the trustees have agreed that CCM needs to plan to grow, so he is looking for funding to retain a fundraising organisation, which will bid for the money to employ two more members of staff. Pressures and workload are increasing, and more staff are needed to cope. Growing CCM is one aspect of the development plan, but working together with other groups is the other main aspect.

Paul invited everyone to the CCM AGM on 11 October. Barry sent his apologies for the AGM, and also for the next meeting in November.

Issues

BHF Future Plans

Kevin, Ailsa, Barry and Paul are planning to get together to talk about the future for BHF. Kevin would like a more formal constitution, but this desire was not shared by everyone.

Summer Coordination

Ailsa asked about running a joint 'Caring in August' next year. It might enable us to provide a better service if we pool volunteers for the month of August, and this could take the pressure off individual organisations. This year, the Candle Community Centre could not open for several weeks because they were just one volunteer short of the number they needed to open.

The Bristol Methodist Centre usually closes for a couple of weeks over the Summer because some staff are on leave, and some are working on tasks like redecorating.

Ailsa is willing to offer her time and resources to facilitate a joint event, possibly at a neutral location. The first year, we would only plan to operate a drop in day centre.

Young People

Paul circulated the NCH Nightstop information, and emphasised that people using the scheme can't have a chaotic lifestyle.

What do organisations do about young people?

Caring at Christmas have a policy of only taking people who are 18 or older, but you can't check ages. They do no one-to-one sessions with young people!

CCM only works with people who are 18 or older. Children are the responsibility of the adult who brought them in. But if a child wanders in to the shop, they can't be physically thrown out. They can't encourage young people to come in (it is not a safe place for young people), but the reality is that the coffee shop may be safer than the alternative.

New Centre

Bristol is planning a new 'contact and assessment centre'. The council will get £750,000

for capital from the ODPM, but the running costs will have to be found from the current (reducing) budgets.

Some of this money will come from the £3m spent on B&B each year, thanks to the new scheme to use private beds that were being used for asylum seekers.

General

Some local research has been undertaken into the complex needs of our clients: Paul is not sure about the accuracy of some of the figures, but having this work done is useful.

There is a need for a leaflet about the homeless groups, advertising what we do, plus the website and survival guide. Paul asked for a volunteer to put this together.

Action: Everyone

It was reported that the paper on “Church for the homeless” went out in the recent diocesan mailing. Paul has not received any feedback from this yet.

The volunteer training is happening as planned. The details were circulated in various places, but for some reason the Bristol Prayer Wall did not help as requested.

It seems there may be a volunteer available to help advertise and publicise our work. Paul will contact them.

Action: Paul

The First Aid training happened. It was very successful in the end, but Paul is not planning to arrange any more. St Johns Ambulance have offered to arrange a session at their centre if we have half a dozen people who need it, otherwise we can just slot into one of their planned sessions.

There will be another *Seeing is Believing* visit on 28 September, when chief executives and senior managers from local businesses go out to meet homeless people and some of the people and projects working to help them. This could be a very significant event, so please pray for it.

Streetwise

Michelle Evans has moved on from the Streetwise project. The job is now being done by John Atkinson.

There was a brief discussion of the information provided by Sue Strickland. The *Safer Bristol Partnership* is the old DAT, plus another group. Kevin and Paul had been at the St Pauls Drugs Forum on Monday, and it seems the Safer Bristol Partnership is setting its plans and objectives without adequate reference to either the priorities of local communities or the organisations we represent.

Future funding of the Streetwise work seems to be a major issue – it has been a success according to its terms of reference, but this has not led to the funding being secured from mainstream budgets or on a long term basis.

Usual Documents

The usual documents were made available for people to look at and pick up. These are listed, as usual, on the Homeless Forum Documents page of the BCAN web site: you can navigate from the BCAN home page (<http://www.bcan.org.uk>), or go directly to http://www.bcan.org.uk/bhf/l2_homeless_docs.html; and they are also available from the Crisis Centre office.

Future Meetings

It was agreed that we will aim to finish future meetings at 9:30 pm. The meeting on the 18 November will be at the Candle Community Centre between 7:30 pm and 9:30 pm.

After that, the meetings next year will be held on the second Thursday of alternate months, to make it easier for people to remember the dates, so the following meeting will be 13 January 2005.