

BCAN

Homeless Forum

Crisis Centre Ministries

13 January 2005

Introduction

Everyone present was welcomed to the meeting.

Those Present

Tim Bainbridge (Julian Trust), Paul Hazelden (Crisis Centre Ministries), Ailsa McWilliam (Caring at Christmas), Val Moore (Christ Church, Clifton), Kevin Stone (Candle Community Centre & Salvation Army), Raymond Clark (Emmaus), Dave Perry (Emmaus) and Ann Banks (BCF & Crisis Centre Ministries).

Apologies Received

Rachel Hirstwood (Julian Trust), Graham Wheeler (Bristol Soup Run Trust) and Nat Selman (BITC).

Previous Meeting

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

Matters Arising

So far there has been no feedback on food hygiene (p2). If people would like to attend another session then details will be available with regards to dates etc. In Bristol there is now a pilot scheme whereby people involved in the preparation of food must have a food hygiene certificate. It is a very good idea for people to have certificates in any event now; supervisors in the preparation of food already need to be qualified.

There are two levels of qualification:

- Where there is food preparation going on, someone who holds a certificate must be present.
- People who set the standards and procedures in the management of food preparation need to have a higher level certificate.

The City of Bristol College run courses if people are interested. If there is a group of people who want to go on a course they can come to you instead and it works out slightly cheaper this way.

Streetwise Update

John Atkinson (the new Streetwise co-ordinator) handed out his leaflet on the Streetwise initiative and took us through the pages.

Statistically it was found that 25% of people are put off by going into the city centre where there are beggars. Nationally 54% of people avoid going to cash points if there is someone next to it begging. It is clear that the presence of people begging on the streets is enhancing the fear of crime in Bristol and it is affecting people's quality of life.

The Streetwise initiative is a multi-agency partnership involving the council, the police coordinators, the Outreach Team, Street Wardens, and potentially anyone else who has an interest in this client group. They hold fortnightly meetings where they discuss which faces are regularly being caught on CCTV and which people the wardens are having difficulty with – whether they are aggressive/ violent etc. Streetwise is city-wide – it goes as far as Fishponds and Bedminster

They are receiving a good level of support from the Outreach Team with regards to the housing situation. They have a team of drug workers and 24 methadone scripts (24 people with 10 daily supervised scripts). They regularly test these people for drugs, and work with them in getting them help with Big Issue sales, employment, education and housing.

Out of about 54 people so far 6 have remained clean. This doesn't seem a lot but with their chaotic life style it is a real success. The aim is then to promote them on to a community script, which isn't supervised, but it is where people can take their prescriptions to a chemist to get their methadone.

John and Matt Clement (the Police Liaison Officer linked to Streetwise: 07812 967 422) go out into the city between 2 and 5 times a week, although it is normally 5 times a week. They go out at irregular times but it is normally during the night or the early hours of the morning. They try to engage with new faces and tell them about Streetwise, informing them that begging is not accepted and offering them help and advice. Statistically 95% of people begging in Bristol are heroin addicts.

An Anti Social Behaviour Order ('ASBO') is not an injunction, but is used because they are cheaper and more flexible. It does not give the person a criminal record but if the Order is breached they can receive a fine, 5 months' imprisonment or both. So far 20 ASBO's have been given and 32 have signed an Acceptable Behaviour Contract ('ABC'). There doesn't however appear to be a happy medium, in so far as people either tend to stop begging after they have received an ABC, or they will keep going and breach their ASBO.

The people that are on the scheme are on it for as long as it takes. One man was on it for 20 months and was then discharged, however the average is between 9 and 15 months. Some people are discharged early if they are topping up, give hassle to the staff or produce non-clean urine.

Streetwise also fund the Drug Intervention Program, which helps when someone is arrested for a trigger offence (such as theft from a motor vehicle or prostitution): they are then tested and sent to the drug referral team. If you are interested in getting a copy of the trigger offence list please speak to Paul H.

Streetwise have assessed at the start of each month what these people spend on all their drugs, including alcohol. The last batch of 16 clients spent an average of £36,200; the same client group at the end of their treatment averaged £700 a month between them. Offences such as shoplifting, prostitution, vehicle crime and other associated crime have also significantly reduced.

John will usually speak with the Street Wardens about 2 or 3 times a day. The disappointing thing is that there is no more funding for these people after March. They have been incredibly helpful, and a lot of them are applying for jobs as Police Community Support Workers. The problem is the police are the police and are viewed very differently by our client group to the Wardens. If anyone comes across a problem, they should call John on 07795 600 375 for help and advice.

Publicity: at the moment there is an advert on Vibe FM and from these there have been a good response. The idea of the publicity is to let people know what they should or should not

be doing.

Funding: the funding for this project is mostly from the Home Office and the ODPM (the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister).

The funding for Police Liaison is in bits at the moment in so far as every 6 months funding is reviewed and so no one is sure whether it will continue or not. This creates a great lack of stability in the job.

Information Share

General News

Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham & Redland: on their Saturday lunch time soup run they have been really swamped at the bottom of Park Street and the Watershed area. Also, 30 January 2005 is “Homelessness Sunday” and there will be a service at All Saints Church, Pembroke Road, Clifton, starting at 3pm, taken by Luke Walton from Christ Church. It will focus mainly on the position of children and how they are affected. There is a Homelessness Sunday once every year: it is a nationally co-ordinated event and not just a one-off this year.

Bristol Soup Run Trust: all the sessions are covered now and they are up to their full strength. They cover the same pitches as the food sheet that has been handed out in the past.

Caring at Christmas

They were very busy, but it went well on the whole. They have 40 beds and their policy is not to turn people away, but this year they had 77 people staying some nights. People also stayed all day. They will need to give some thought about this policy for next year, as the numbers continue to increase. If they decide to turn people away, they will have to work out on what basis to do so.

St Johns were there to help; they also had people giving hand treatments! Hairdressers, reflexologists and chiropodists all joined in and helped out giving their services.

The major problem they encountered was that there was nowhere people could get scripts from over the bank holiday and the weekend over the Christmas period. One of their clients had his stolen and wasn't able to get a replacement over the whole Christmas period. The GP turned him away, the BRI refused to help and the chemists were shut. It is strongly felt that something should be in place in case this happens again.

A lot of time, approximately 3 to 4 hours a night, was spent on the dressing of wounds although. One man had a fractured spine but no doctors had listened to him, and no one had taken the time to bother to look into his pain properly; but despite this, people's physical injuries seemed better than last year. They had to call an ambulance a few times, and there were a few skirmishes but nothing serious. Despite being busy, everyone was fed and they didn't have to call the police.

Caring at Christmas are starting to work on a new edition of the Survival Handbook.

Candle Community Centre

They are open now on a Friday from 10.30 until 1pm. They have increased their drop in times. They still give away sleeping bags, food parcels and clothing vouchers. The Sunday lunches are also going very well. They have recently had a problem with a Bull Terrier – it

has savaged two people and injured a little dog, which is now in a bad way. No one is prepared to complain though. They therefore wish to advise people to be cautious around dogs and to tie their own dogs up outside. If anyone does experience any problems please call.

Emmaus

They had a very happy and peaceful Christmas with a lovely lunch. Unfortunately over the New Year one of the companions was assaulted and had his teeth kicked out by a local. Another companion was injured in a knife attack whilst he was trying to protect a 16 year old girl who was being attacked. He is doing okay now and has started to settle down again.

There are 12 companions there now and they have just taken on Ray for leadership training. He will spend some time at Emmaus Bristol now, for about 6 months, and then start up or lead his own community in due course. He is technically employed by Emmaus UK but trained by Bristol. Emmaus confirmed that they do collect bikes and computers and they carry out house clearance. A full time driver has now been employed. People can stay at Emmaus for as long as they like: it is a home for life.

Cold Weather Group

Over Christmas and New Year they had a drop in numbers and were shut for a couple of days. Bristol Council have received £850,000 to create a 24 hour drop-in centre and shelter with a range of professional services: the plan is to renovate the New Street building, but some details still need to be finalised. The target opening date for the new/renovated centre is March 2006.

Crisis Centre Ministries

Over Christmas this year they had a large number of presents and parcels donated. The main difficulty with this was that a lot of the time they didn't know what was in the parcels and people often gave inappropriate presents. It is really important to educate people who want to give in this way, so that presents aren't wasted. Another problem was that some presents were wrapped for men but had women's presents inside. It would seem like a good idea to have a co-ordinated effort so that next Christmas things are better.

BHF Future Plans

Paul handed out the draft BHF Membership and Application pack. It is hoped that this will be launched in April 2005. Feedback is urgently required on the draft paperwork so that a final version can go out shortly.

There were also discussions about the name for the Forum. People raised the point that maybe it would be more "user friendly" if the group wasn't known as BCAN as this relates to Bristol Churches but wondered whether it should be known as the "Bristol Homeless Forum" without the reference to Church. Paul is going to speak to BCAN Steering Group about this. There were both strong views for and against the change.

Usual Documents

The usual documents were made available for people to look at and pick up. These are listed 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 the page at

http://www.bcan.org.uk/bhf/12_homeless_docs.html; they are also available from the *Crisis Centre Ministries* office at 12 City Road.

Future Meetings

The next meeting will be held on 10 March 2005 at the offices of Caring at Christmas and then the following one on 12 May 2005.