

BCAN

Homeless Forum

St Nicholas of Tolentino

8 January 2009

Open

Introduction

Paul welcomed everyone to the meeting, and everybody introduced themselves.

Those Present

Present at the meeting were Paul Hazelden (Chair, Crisis Centre Ministries), Sister Bernadette (St Nicholas of Tolentino), Alison Capey (Christ Church, Clifton Breakfast Run), Alan Goddard (Crisis Centre Ministries), Tony Richmond (Alabaré), Betty Wear (St Nicholas of Tolentino), Ian Webb (Bristol Methodist Centre) and Graham Wheeler (Bristol Soup Run Trust).

Apologies Received

Apologies had been received from Ailsa McWilliam (Caring at Christmas) and Val Moore (Christ Church, Clifton CALME Committee and Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham and Redland).

Matters Arising From Previous Meeting

Paul apologised for the lateness of the previous meeting notes: there had been a problem with the email which prevented them from reaching him.

The Julian Trust report should be updated to read: "The Trust has recently bought a new dryer for over £1,000. Of the 15 overnight guests on Monday, 5 were Polish." In fact, there was also a visitor from Moldova, so over a third of the overnight guests were from Eastern Europe.

Information Share

Caring at Christmas

Val and the St John Ambulance team had treated 27 people at Caring at Christmas over the 2008 period. Several of these individuals were treated several times, and three guests were taken to hospital. Numbers at the shelter over Christmas were slightly down on last year. Ailsa will be doing a paper report, but she has only just come back after Christmas and not had time to do it yet.

Staffing remains a priority. Ailsa is part-time, currently seconded to Nightstop in Weston. Unfortunately, her replacement went off sick at the end of October, the person that replaced him left, then someone else came in and also went off sick! This made for a nightmarish situation. Ailsa's secondment will last two more months.

Bristol Soup Run Trust

BSRT are still trying to fill Sunday nights, which used to be done by Hanham Baptist but there have been no volunteers. Someone is trying to get Fishponds Baptist involved. Graham noted that the Julian Trust is closed on Sunday and Thursdays, so there is a real need for support those nights.

Some new couples, referred from Volunteering Bristol, will be coming out on the Soup Run with Graham on Saturday. He hopes that they may become a team in their own right.

The other teams are working well. Saturday night could typically draw in 35-40 at Pip'n'Jay, and 15 at Redcliffe Wharf.

The bi-monthly meetings are going well, with an increase of interest in those attending. The meetings bring everyone together into a coordinated whole. This is good, as some teams can be very independent and Graham doesn't hear from them. The last meeting had finished on a high note: a carol service has shared the retiring collection between BSRT and another group.

St Nicholas of Tolentino

Bernadette reported that they had been closed for a few days while Caring At Christmas had been operating. This had been an opportunity for cleaning the kitchen and defrosting the freezer, and to stock up for the coming year. They re-opened on 30 December from 10 am to 12 noon. The homeless had been relieved to hear that they were going to be open over the New Year period, but in the end there was not a great level of demand.

The congregation is very glad to be back in the church building, and does not feel so fragmented. It is good to have more space. The church is now accessible to the community. The new parish hall is used to help asylum seekers and refugees. Rooms in the hall are available for hire for local activities, and NA and AA (Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous) continue to meet there every night.

Alan commented that each AA meeting has its own distinct character and reputation, and the AA meeting at St Nicks was very highly regarded.

Alabaré

Tony reported that there were no major changes, just ongoing concerns such as the long term future of Supported People funding from Bristol City Council. There had been concerns that the departure of one or two staff would leave a big hole, but that has not been the case – the new starters have made a very encouraging beginning.

There are still some difficulties in filling all the bed spaces because of procedures, but things are not as bad as they had been. The Well is fully occupied.

Alan said that Alabaré's projects, The Well, Damascus and Andrew Houses provided some of the best support in the Bristol area. Tony agreed and said that there have been good reports. But even this is not straightforward: if you provide a good service, then the funders can cut back the money because you can afford to do less well and still hit the targets. But our aim is to give the best support that we can. The Well agreed to a reduction in their funding. They wanted to cut the statutory funding back to zero but that would have been a disaster. They now have funding agreed for

the next three years.

Alan commented that we need to be looking for quality as well as quantity. The Government statistics are only interested in numbers. He also commented that when Supporting People contribute to your funding, they have the final say in who you take. CCM have applied to be a referrer but are waiting to hear.

Tony talked about changes to Supporting People funding, which will go into a larger pot which the local authorities can slice up differently if they choose. Plans for personal budgets have been dropped by the government.

The Lord Mayor recently visited The Well and Lazarus House. He was very good with the residents, and his visit gave them and the staff a boost. His down-to-earth manner was very much appreciated.

Crisis Centre Ministries

Alan reported that the situation at CCM continues very much as usual. After Caring at Christmas closed (the morning of Tuesday 30 December) everything had been very quiet with only 50-60 meals served each day. They provided breakfast on New Year's Eve, and then on New Year's Day opened as normal and served 200.

Numbers are down a bit from 3 months ago, with 250 people per day being fed on average, with the numbers varying between 200 and 300. Clients continue to come off the street. CCM always take them to the appointments.

There has been almost no funding for alcoholics in Bristol for 2 or 3 years. The Salvation Army had just obtained funding for alcoholics, and the clients will get Housing Benefit paid if they are living in their own accommodation. On leaving they return to their old place, get help doing it up and receive floating support afterwards. But there are only 6 places for the whole of the year and you have to be over 55 to be eligible.

CCM is one of two referring agencies in Bristol for these places. If you know of anyone someone suitable, male or female, give CCM a ring. The scheme will probably start around the middle of February. If it works, the funder will do it again next year. Matt Albury at the Salvation Army is working very hard to get more funding for this.

CCM has received some money to send staff into secondary schools to talk to pupils about the consequences of taking drugs and alcohol. The aim is to give real examples and this works. Alan has made several school visits now. The talks are always followed by many questions from the pupils.

Andrew House is a support house in Clevedon for people recovering from drugs and alcohol, run by Alabaré. It has been established for 5 years and has one of the highest success rates in the sector. Alan works there two days a week.

CCM has some staffing difficulties. Trudie retired in the autumn. A new member of staff is needed in her place. Then Claire, the Office Manager, had also announced that she would be moving on – so two posts need to be filled. If anyone knows of an Office Manager looking for part-time work of 15 hours a week, please tell them about CCM. The hours are negotiable. There is also the possibility of a full-time job, with the the two roles being combined.

The work involves publicity and producing the newsletter as well as working with volunteers, helping with records, and making sure names and addresses are up to date and CRB checks are done. There are over 200 volunteers, and keeping track of all of these is hard work.

CCM is still looking for new premises. Two properties look possible, but one is a bit small and the other needs a lot of work. It might be possible to run the coffee shop at the back, and a charity shop at the front of the larger one.

There are no details yet on the application for planning permission on the existing CCM site.

Bristol Methodist Centre

Ian reported that the Methodist Centre has seen lower numbers of clients coming in over the last week and also before Christmas. From September to November they saw higher numbers. There were a lot of new faces. Some of the more troublesome people had disappeared, only to come back again the following week. They carry on providing meals and hospitality.

There were several staffing problems, including Debbie Green being off since the end of November as the result of a lung operation. Ian hopes she will be back soon. A smaller staff team and missing key volunteers really stretched them. Ian then does a lot more support work and less management, but management work is needed too. Because of the staffing problems, the centre closed early for Christmas, on 19 December, and did not open again until 5 January.

The Methodist Centre hopes to start receiving regular FareShare deliveries soon. The first delivery was received before Christmas.

The Methodist Centre is keen to renew the spiritual life of the Centre. It was set up to be a church in the late 1980s. There is worship once a month, on a Wednesday at 11 am. This generally attracts around 5 to 8 clients.

Christ Church, Clifton

Val Moore had reported that the Breakfast Run has enthusiastic new leaders. Alison explained that she and Amy Carter had taken over joint leadership of the Breakfast Run, and that it was going well.

Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham and Redland

The Saturday lunch runs in December were busy. 50 lunches were served each Saturday, which was above average. Items of clothing were also given out.

Notified Business

Sleep-out

PH distributed the registration form. Organisations taking part need to register and pay £15, which should cover the administration costs of the event. Organisations will then register each of their people sleeping out, using their own original sponsorship forms or adapting the template provided (available from Monday 12 January). Please register as soon as possible.

Groups that do not work to help homeless people will have to decide which homeless organisation they will be supporting. As yet, the only groups to register were from Christchurch, Clifton and CCM. Organisations were urged to fill in their registration forms and pass them back to Paul. Tony explained that a small working group was dealing with the practicalities. The risk assessment is in hand, and publicity will be considered next.

If anyone knows any high-profile people whom you could approach to take part or give words of support, that would be great. Contact has been made with the Anglican and Catholic bishops, and the Baptist District Supervisor. There has been no response from the Methodist District Chair. Tony will approach the Lord Mayor, with the hope of some media coverage. Graham will approach Chris at Bristol City FM Radio.

Alan confirmed that someone from the Evening Post did regularly come into the shop and work there. He had already taken lots of photos. The BBC would also be contacted. The police had been informed.

Participants would be asked to turn up between 10 pm and 10.30 pm on Friday evening. They would have something to eat and drink, then settle down for the night until 6 or 6:30 am. Participants should be asked not to bring any alcohol or anything that might disturb other people, such as radios.

Road Map

The draft Road Map is on the BCAN web site. Alan was impressed by it. The idea is to pull together all the information that people need to know about the various organisations and services, and also about the constraints are (e.g. certain services can only be accessed by those 18+). Tony will look at it and share with relevant people in Alabaré and then give feedback.

It is impossible to keep in your head all the detailed information about all the services, not least because these details keep changing! At the moment, a great deal of relevant information (such as ‘you must be there half an hour before their official opening time’) exists only in peoples’ heads, but the people move on and the information is lost.

It would be good to run through the Road Map with some clients – they have a lot of knowledge. They will sometimes know better than us what things should be put into the document.

Compass Centre

Graham asked how we feel about the way the Compass Centre works. He has been told that if you want someone to get help they should come to the Compass Centre at 10 am next morning, but this was wrong: access is by prior appointment only.

Ian reported that his members were happy with the Compass Centre. The Night Shelter have increased the numbers of beds from 20 to 35 because of the cold. Once the cold weather stops, the number of beds will be reduced to 20 again.

Dean is a volunteer at Novus and helps on the BSRT. He says he has housed 12 people himself. If you have a need you should first go to the Novus Day Centre in the morning and talk to Dean, and from there you will be given access to the people at the Compass Centre.

Any Other Business

FareShare

Graham said that FareShare want BSRT to pay £400 for their FareShare membership. Paul is on the FareShare board, and explained that it needs to be financially viable. Once an organisation has been set up, getting funding becomes more difficult. Alan said that they provide good quality food and there is a lot of choice in the food.

BCAN Coordinator

BCAN has for ages been trying to employ someone part-time, to do development work, encouraging churches to be involved in social action and to share good practice. They now have enough funding to employ a person for one day a week for a year.

The post has been advertised, and a number of people have expressed an interest. There is an increasing amount of social action not just with homeless people, but with wide range of projects. The Coordinator needs to be well-organized, have computer and administration skills and be good with people. They will need to be able to deal with church leaders, understand where the problems are, and seek ways of overcoming them. It is a difficult job.

BCAN would like to employ the worker for more than one day a week. The plan is that the Coordinator will apply for funding to continue the post for more than a year and extend the hours. If anyone knows anyone suitable, please let them know about the job.

Sunday Breakfast Run

Alison asked if anyone knew who does the Breakfast Run on Sunday mornings, as it would be nice to 'draw them into the fold', not least so that their run could be advertised in the Survival Handbook.

Graham said that this is run by Martin in Nailsea. 16 years previously, it had started up with two Methodist and two Anglican churches taking part. Graham and Alan both undertook to find a contact name so that Alison could make contact with them.

Foreign Nationals

Alison also raised the issue of international homeless and how to care for them. Alan said that there is a Polish prayer group and a Polish job centre on Gloucester Road, and Andrew Kellett of the Salvation Army may be able to help too.

Many Roma come from Romania, but it is a separate people-group. They are persecuted wherever they go. As a result, they have a nomadic lifestyle which makes it hard for the authorities to keep track of them. Because of the way the system clamps down, they tend to stay outside and link only with members of their own community.

Wet Centre

Alan talked about the need to establish the need for a wet centre so that funding can be applied for. The St Pauls Unlimited Community Safety Task Group recently agreed in principle to the setting up of a wet house in the area.

Alan lived in a wet house before his rehab. Paul explained that we are thinking about setting up day centre, not a hostel to house people overnight. As far as we know, the wet centre at Novus continues to operate each Wednesday morning, but the future of this provision is not clear.

Close

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.

Websites

It was agreed to include details of some of the key web sites in the meeting notes.

- www.alabare.co.uk
- www.bcan.org.uk
- www.bristolsoupruntrust.org.uk
- www.caringinbristol.org
- www.crisis-centre.org.uk
- www.juliantrust.org.uk

Future Meetings

Details of the next few meetings are as follows. All meetings will start at 7:30 pm and aim to finish by 9:30. Let Paul know if you would like to host one evening.

- 12 March 2009 at CCM, 12 City Road. Ring the bell for 'LITE'.
- 14 May 2009
- 9 July 2009
- 10 September 2009
- 12 November 2009