

Bristol Homeless Forum

Meeting Notes

5 November 2015

Caring in Bristol, Little Bishop Street

Open

Present

Paul Hazelden (BHF), Lindsey Jones (Caring in Bristol, Strangers' Friend Society), Val Thompson (Spring of Hope, Crisis Centre Ministries), Judith Gardner (Spring of Hope), Steve Jones (Bristol Soup Run Trust), Val Moore (St John Ambulance, Churches Together CCR, Christ Church Clifton).

Apologies were received from Jonnie Angel (Wild Goose Drop-In, Crisis Centre Ministries), Jonathan Lee (Crisis Centre Ministries).

Previous Meeting

Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Legal measures to prevent people sleeping rough: Newport council have recently altered their bylaws to make it an offence for people to sleep rough and it is feared other councils may follow suit. Avon & Somerset Police previously informed the Forum that groups of rough sleepers may be prevented from congregating together in Bristol though we have received no further information since.

Information Share

Up to date news shared by forum members and interested parties can be found on the BHF website

http://www.bcan.org.uk/bhf/meet/BHF_Meeting_151105_News.htm

Emmaus is holding a "Keep Bristol Warm" event at 3.00pm on 6th December 2015 in the Bearpit, where filled rucksacks will be handed out free of charge.

Lindsey confirmed that Caring Christmas will open on 23rd December 2015 and close again on 2nd January 2016 - i.e. it is open on the night of 1st January for the first time this year.

Notified Business

Sleep-Out and Homelessness Awareness Week (HAW)

- Sleep-Out - 26th February 2016
The venue is confirmed as Pip 'n' Jay church. CCM will provide breakfast. Participating organisations are requested to register with an indication of numbers by 14th January 2016. Maximum 250 sleepers - spare slots will be allocated to the larger groups if available after 14th January. Earliest entry to the venue will be 9.45pm to allow the organisers time to set up without interruption. Paul will supply bank details so that registration payments can be made by bank transfer as well as by cheque. The registration fee for 2016 will be £20 - a £5 increase on previous years to cover increased catering costs. Posters will be available immediately after Christmas. Selected organisations will receive personal invitations e.g. Emmaus and the Sisters of the Church.
- HAW planned activities
The Forum expressed its disappointment that there is no plan for a Galleries event this year. This is a result of feedback from last year's organisers that there was insufficient footfall/interest, though this was not the experience of the Forum members who took part, who reported an increase in volunteers and evidence of changed perceptions following the event. It is hoped that this decision will be revisited, perhaps by holding it in a different venue such as the Bearpit, or holding smaller events in different venues on different days. The organisers have suggested an "open doors" type event or an Arts trail but the Forum was doubtful that these would attract anyone who hadn't already expressed an interest in homelessness. The Forum agreed that the most important thing is to engage new people rather than people who are already involved in the sector - otherwise how are we changing anyone's perceptions? To that end the Forum felt an event in a public place with spontaneous footfall is crucial and we will continue to make this point to the organisers.

Housing Provision

It has been suggested that the Forum should approach BCC for the Old Post Office building behind Temple Meads station to be used as shelter for homeless people over the winter period. BCC have recently purchased the building but have no plans to use it before demolishing it next year. Paul has revised a letter for the Forum members to review with their organisations and sign if they are interested in supporting the project. There is a precedent in Manchester. The amount of practical work and funding required to bring the building up to minimum safety standards must not be underestimated and adequate support from the public and interested organisations is vital. Appropriate media engagement will be

required. St Mungos are recruiting volunteers for additional overnight accommodation this winter, aiming to avoid drawing on volunteers already working with the Julian Trust and Spring of Hope.

Forum members were asked to obtain a view from their organisations in time for the letter to be sent to BCC by 18th November 2015; Paul will circulate the draft letter to those organisations not represented at tonight's meeting and invite them to participate if they wish.

Access to Mental Health Services

St Mungos have offered to send a speaker to the next Forum meeting on 14th January 2016 to talk to us about how to help people access the mental health services they require; the Forum asked Paul to accept this offer. The local NHS ACE team is also providing training in and around Bristol with the aim of banishing myths around mental health and helping ordinary people to support others who need assistance, particularly those who find it difficult to access services through a GP. Judith pointed out that ASIST provide periodic training on suicide intervention; Lindsey will ascertain when the next local training is available and organise a session for any Forum members who are interested.

Ongoing issues

No update was available on the issue of toilet facilities for homeless people.

We still await the next issue of the Survival Handbook which is overdue. People are starting to run out of this year's supplies. Lindsey to follow up with Caring in Bristol.

Involving the workers

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Close

Future meetings

Thursday 14th January 2016 at 6.30 pm.

Thursday 10th March 2016 at 6.30 pm.

LJ 25.11.15