

Bristol Homeless Forum

10 March 2016

Julian Trust

Open

Present

Present: Paul Hazelden (CAB), Richard Drake (Julian Trust), Sue Hazelden (One25), Di Noon (Christ Church Breakfast Run), Val Moore (Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham & Redland; St John Ambulance), David Ingerslev (St Mungo's) and Val Thompson (CCM, Spring of Hope), Sue Hazelden (minutes).

Apologies for absence: Steve Jones (Bristol Soup Run Trust), Lindsay Jones (Caring in Bristol, Bristol Methodist Centre) and Gill Nowland (One25).

Previous Meeting

Apologies to Di for spelling her name wrong. Other than that, the notes were agreed.

Matters Arising

Survival Handbooks: these are now available.

Lent Conversations: the Lent Conversations ('Life in all its Fullness') organised by Churches Together in Clifton, Cotham and Redland are now finished for this year. There will be an attempt to engage better with Homelessness Awareness Week next year.

Legislation to prevent people sleeping rough: update from David. There has been increasing interest in people sleeping rough who don't want to engage. The Rough Sleepers Task Group and the Council both think this is not okay, considering the impact it has on health and quality of life. We ought to do all in our power to encourage people not to sleep rough, then to encourage them to accept help.

ASBO powers may be used because rough sleeping is a crime under vagrancy legislation; in some places, people are being moved on, but there is no appetite for doing this in Bristol. There may be some use of Community Protection Notices to move people on, especially if they are begging.

So there are no plans for new legislation, but we will make better use of existing legislation. One area of difficulty is the question of what to do about tents, especially when the person does not want to engage. Their level of engagement with support services might vary the threshold at which intervention takes place: there will be less tolerance for those who don't engage. Rough sleeping is not automatically Antisocial Behaviour, and the aim is to differentiate between them sensitively.

Notified Business

Sleep Out

Review of and lessons from 2016.

- We need to produce posters much early in the process.
- Asking groups to sign up on the web site worked pretty well, but the process could be tightened up. Richard would like the supporting groups to sign up via the project they are supporting.
- We probably need better support for internal registration for each group.
- We also need to review the documentation, with clearer information for participants on the website.
- Parking was much more of an issue than in previous years. Richard was strict and turned lots of people away. Next year, in the sign up process, if people need to bring a car they should give us the details, including registration number. Maybe one car per registered group?
- Tents are not really in the spirit of the event – we will make this clear to people next year, alongside the rule about ‘no fires’.

Paul has no record of a payment from Christ Church, but they confirmed that a payment was made: Paul will check where it went.

Two groups we don't recognise took part in the event: ‘Kids in Blankets’ and ‘R-Tak’. Paul will try to find out who they were and who they were supporting.

The current total estimated amount raised by all the groups taking part is standing at £39,950; but the Julian Trust and One25 figures are both too low. Paul will check them and revise the estimate.

The proposed date for next year is Friday 24 February. David will ask about how this would tie in with publication of the Rough Sleeper statistics; we also need to consider whether it clashes with half-term. So the date is still to be confirmed.

Homelessness Awareness Week

The main focus was on homelessness prevention; there is a wrap-up meeting planned for next week. The events were mainly successful, apart from being rained out on the Saturday, with good feedback on the artwork etc.

We did not have a huge attendance at the Open Doors event, but it was good quality – gained volunteers! We also had better quality press coverage than last year, including an excellent article in the Evening Post. It was good to raise awareness of what the options are, what you need to do if you are at risk of or become homeless. Thanks to Kirsty Stilwell for her work with the media.

There was some good national news which connected with what we were doing locally. Mungo's is trying to get some media interest in a piece on what it takes to get an empty building into use: apart from anything else, it takes engagement from the

owner (who must be willing to forgo income) and an initial investment of £2,000-£8,000 which gets paid back over maybe 8 months if no repairs are needed and no damage is caused.

There is some interest in trying to improve public awareness all year round, and building a strategy owned by those who are interested.

BHF is open to anyone involved in work with homelessness. There is some difficulty with the timing of our meetings – the evenings are best for most people in the voluntary sector, who generally have jobs or other commitments during the working day, but they are not so good for non-voluntary sector people. David has been mapping various groups with Nick Hooper and Adam Rees from Housing Solutions and Crime Reduction, looking at strategies and identifying which groups are involved in some way and what would help.

Caring in Bristol have not attended our forum meetings recently, neither have the Police, and the numbers are down significantly. Would a forum on the website work better than face to face meetings?

David wants to avoid duplication and things happening in parallel. BHF has a unique, independent role, gives a voice to groups who can't so easily speak, especially including the voice of clients who are often unable to speak and sometimes don't communicate in a calm and reasoned way. Could we include / inform / influence other groups not represented elsewhere? Possible examples include the St Mark's Road mosque / Moslems for Bristol who gave out food at Christmas then quickly realised they also needed to give advice; Keep Bristol Warm (Elisha) who produced the petition on using empty buildings, Positive Causes; Homes for Heroes who are shaking buckets and selling stuff in Broadmead and giving things away in the Bearpit.

It was agreed to make membership of this group the main focus for our next meeting. Richard will write a paragraph about this to encourage other people to come along; all to think about other groups who should be invited (and invite them, and tell Paul they have been invited!).

David has met Dominic Murphy, the Cities of Service officer for the local council, who is preparing a paper for the next homelessness board dealing with prevention, volunteer support and influencing / advising voluntary and other groups relating to Rough Sleeping. Paul asked David to suggest to Dominic that he should talk to Voscur about this.

One clear theme from the press coverage is that many people are put off seeking help because they expect to be fobbed off by local council. We also need to look at areas like debt.

David reported on the Homeless Hustings event. The aim was for the mayoral candidates to hear directly from the clients, hear their stories etc. It was organised by the Supported Housing Forum, invitation only, they invited the current mayor and five major parties. Paul had received an ear-bending from some clients who felt they should have been included, but the event was not organised on that basis. If Supported Housing places had effectively communicated with their clients why and how it was being organised, they could have collected more questions in that way and prevented

some of the hurt feelings.

Emergency Winter Accommodation

David reported that they have not had to implement the SWEP (Severe Emergency Weather Protocol) yet, but they have come close twice. The implementation decision is based on an assessment of whether people will die because of the weather.

There are currently three properties in guardianship, 13 people involved. Likely to remain at that for at least another month. Learning about internal processes for doing something brand new! They have a model they can expand, or roll out to others. Needs an up-front investment. Have started with properties owned by BCC. May expand the scheme to single people to whom they have a duty, who might otherwise go into hostels with a higher level of support than they need, and so allow those who need support to get it. They are not yet ready to take on other properties from the general public. Richard said that NightStop are getting many more refugees, which is straining the system; they are looking at different ways of accommodating them. Matt Dowse and Tyrrell (?) are worth talking to.

The Compass Centre Overnight Provision is now booking people in for shifts in April, continuing beyond the Winter months. They have up to 20 places per night, 67 people in all have used it, all nominated by Outreach. Those sleeping rough should be sent to Outreach to enable them to access these spaces. It is used by people who haven't been engaging, which allows them to be assessed or re-assessed, or by people on the move, waiting for bus / plane etc., or awaiting supported housing in hostels. It works as an assessment centre – not ideal, but better than nothing, with 36 positive move-ons! 10 people have been excluded. The 'Sanctuary' service is operating out of New Street over the weekends, but could be reconfigured if SWEP was needed. There are also 15 spaces at the Quakers, 115 beds available in total in an emergency.

We need this provision, but it is unclear who could fund it. Perhaps the Society of Merchant Venturers?

The pitch to the Quakers was that it was Winter provision, but the service is continuing for now. Vital messages include: it's working; others could do it; it is needed through the year. We need more volunteers: the service is only managing to stay open every night by using agency staff at times.

Please encourage potential volunteers to email bristolshelter@mungos.org. David will pass on some publicity for the scheme which could be circulated more widely.

Rough Sleepers

The official Rough Sleeper estimate in November 2015 was 97, on a night when Julian Trust was shut but Spring of Hope was open and full. More recently, the estimate on a comparable night was 40-60 people. The Outreach caseload figure is currently 180: this includes some people at very high risk of Rough Sleeping but currently not currently in that position and also people who are in and out of accommodation (/ Bristol / custody) but who ultimately don't have any secure housing.

The Outreach caseload figure has gone up: more people are becoming homeless but some of the cases where people have moved on may not yet have been closed off. We need to 'go upstream' and turn off the tap, reduce the number of people who become homeless, but we also need to get better at helping the people move on from the hostels.

The mayoral candidates are all committed to take action on homelessness, apart from the Conservative candidate who thinks market forces will take care of it.

Richard: people in the faith communities need to reflect significantly on the part they play in the market. Many people have more than they need and could share it; and when they decide to move, they could reflect more about the effect their decision will have on the market.

Information Share

St Mungo's

David has been invited to sit on the new Homes Board to which George Ferguson, if he is re-elected Mayor, intends to devolve responsibility for housing. The cabinet presently has responsibility for housing. He is currently on the Preventing Homelessness group, which has opened 45 beds for rough sleepers since Christmas.

There is scope for us all working together through the year, rather than just during the Homeless Awareness Week. We need to look at the membership of the Bristol Homeless Forum and its future: the annual Sleep-Out has grown into the Homeless Awareness Week; where do we go from here?

There is an appetite at the moment for finding a way for the statutory services to include, inform and work together with the other (sometimes less organised) people who are doing something about homelessness.

One25

The numbers seen on the van outreach remain low but the Police are seeing more women via CCTV than One25 is. Late night outreach hasn't been possible every Friday but they are aiming for every other week in April and May, monitoring numbers and will aim to keep it regular if there is a proven need. The Criminal Justice Caseworker received a Pride award from Police Commissioner last week. They are working towards hosting a PAUSE project if funding can be obtained: there is a meeting with Mayor George Ferguson tomorrow, and they are hoping for his support.

Breakfast Run

The numbers are going up; some of the new faces are very young.

Spring of Hope

Still opening 5 nights each week, nearly full most nights. Hoping to launch a 6th night at the end of June, on Fridays. Mungo's is happy to help train the volunteers. They are not using a 'Duty Manager' model: two people share responsibility for the session between them; if they need help, they can refer to the assessment centre, and if that does not suffice they then phone the on-call manager.

Close

Any Other Business

Forum meetings. Several people asked if we can go back to meeting at 6 pm? David noted he could not attend that early. Another possibility is to return to the previous 7.30-9.30 pm time. Paul will ask people on the email list and report back to the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The next forum meeting will be at Julian House on Thursday 12 May at 6.30 pm.

The following meeting is currently scheduled for Thursday 14 July.

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Last updated: 17:13 on 9 May 2016, revision: 17
Location: /home/paul/Dropbox/Group/BHF/forum/2016/BHF_Meeting_160310_Notes.odt