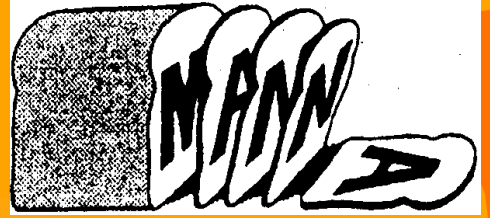


The Manna Society
Newsletter
Spring 2009



Working with those in need



Homelessness and the Credit Crunch

By
Margaret Shapland
Welfare & Advice Worker



"We are a part of humanity, so we should take care of humanity."

The Dalai Lama

Over the last few months, we have listened to and read much about how the credit crunch and the ensuing recession will impact on us all.

Over the last two months, we have seen a larger number of people making use of the Advice and Welfare service since we started to collate statistics and given the fact that a recent YouGov poll showed how close the recession was to each and every one of us. The bullet points below give a flavour

- The YouGov online poll of 2,015 adults showed of those questioned who expressed an opinion; about a third (32%) said they would lose their home within three months of losing their main income.
- It also found that 41% knew somebody who had lost their job due to the economic downturn.
- And 28% of people in lower income groups said they were worried they could lose their home due to the economic crisis.

These findings are from those sectors of the population who have been relatively stable and prosperous. If that is the feeling among this sector of the population, how much more so for those who were already made vulnerable through their homelessness - to quote Leslie Morphy, Chief Executive of Crisis

"The economic downturn is hitting the poorest the hardest – and the fear is that those already at the bottom of the pile are going to be further away from the help and support they need to put their lives back together."

Speaking from the experience of those we work with in the centre, many of whom, if they had been employed, were employed through agencies or in jobs where they could be "laid-

off" relatively quickly and with no real redundancy packages that would help them ride out a difficult time, this appears to be borne out.

As a centre, we are doing quite a lot of employment work with people both from the A10 nations and our own community who have recently lost their jobs. One couple who have been staying in the ROBES night shelter have been working with us to send their CVs to various employers, searching websites and traipsing around London to sign up at as many recruitment agencies as they can manage and will entertain them. They are an industrious, reliable and honourable pair of people whom I would have no trouble working alongside and yet they cannot get even a cleaning job. We are seeing more people who have been working in the construction industry in a labouring capacity coming to see us as building projects have dried up.

Those that have recently experienced this unemployment have to wait 6 months before any of the programmes that the DWP offer, are available to them. To help them, we have where possible linked them into employment programmes which are being run by the large homeless providers such as St. Mungo's and Thamesreach.

A recent policy response by Crisis to the Government's enquiry into Homelessness and the Credit Crunch, highlighted the issues that it believes the government needs to address (many of which were significant when the country was in good financial shape) and I just wanted to draw your attention to the point they make about access to good housing advice, which follows:

"All local authorities are supposed to provide "meaningful advice and assistance" to those homeless households who approach them. However, we know that too many homeless people are still being turned away from local authorities with nothing"

We know, from experience and from the significant number of telephone calls we receive from individuals made from the Homeless Persons Units of many London boroughs how true this is and given this is the case, the role of services such as ourselves becomes even more necessary as a lifeline for those people whom the

local authorities have decided that they cannot help and who do not have access to social housing. Again to quote from Crisis's policy response:

"There must be a better deal for those who fall between the social and owner-occupier sectors, many of whom are society's forgotten poor. This is a group which is in real need and is too often ignored. They are unlikely to ever be in a position to buy but at the same time they are not eligible for social housing"

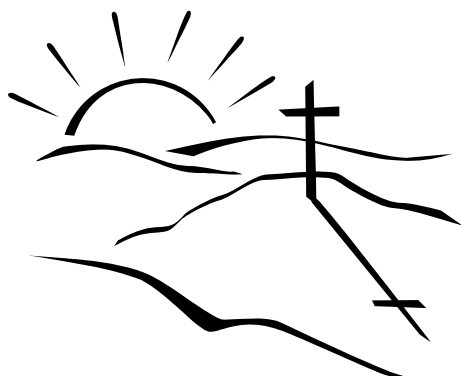
As such, our service is reacting by expanding the relationships with housing organizations and projects – within the last month, we have achieved referral rights with three housing organizations to expand the options we can offer to people. You will understand how vital this work is when you read the following quote from Crisis;

"Existing housing demand has not gone away. The population is growing and there are around 4 million people on the waiting list for social housing, as well as tens of thousands of hidden homeless households"

At times like these, I take comfort from the certain knowledge that the message of Easter is hope and the Dalai Lama's call to our collective conscience is I believe at the core of what we do here at the Manna centre and what we continue to do in your name.

May you have a joyful and peaceful Easter time and I leave you, reader, with a quote from the late Cardinal Hume:

"The great gift of Easter is hope - Christian hope which makes us have that confidence in God, in his ultimate triumph, and in his goodness and love, which nothing can shake." Basil C. Hume



Manna Centre users survey results
Sunday 16th November 2008

	Numbers	%
Male	184	96
Female	8	4
Sleeping Rough	117	61
Council/HA flat	38	20
Squat	17	9
Friends	13	7
Hostel	7	3
Other	0	0
Ethnic Origin		%
	Numbers	
A10	70	36
English	54	28
Irish	22	11
Black African	10	5
European	9	5
Black British	8	4
Scottish	6	3
Welsh	4	2
Asian	4	2
Other	4	2
Undeclared	1	1



Farewell & thanks to Danny Lewsley.

Danny has been one of our day centre workers since March 2002. He retires at the end of March.

On behalf of all the staff, volunteers and centre users, we would like to say a big "thank you" to Danny for all that he has contributed to our work for the last seven years and to wish him a very happy and blessed retirement.

No one left out

By

Bandi Mbubi

Campaigns Worker



'No one left out' is the title of the new government strategy launched in November 2008. It is the very first time that the British Government has gone out on a limb, as far as homelessness is concerned, to work towards eradicating rough sleeping for good by 2012, not just reducing it. I view it as political courage to envision such a bold move. However, our enthusiasm should not blind us to the harsh reality of life, especially in the context of the current economic downturn. As we welcome this strategy, we must remember that putting it in place is not the same thing as achieving its intended outcomes. Therefore, our role is, and must remain, to monitor its implementation, ensuring that it is not an exercise in number crunching, but a seriously genuine attempt to tackle the problem at its roots.

Even if we question the methodology used to count people sleeping rough, we do accept that the preceding plan, 'Coming in from the Cold', to reduce rough-sleeping by two thirds, ten years ago, from a figure of approximately 1850 rough-sleepers, has largely succeeded. We are now down to approx 483 people, according to official data collected between January 2007 and June 2008, out of which Westminster alone accounts for 111 people sleeping rough in its area.

The methodology used to count people sleeping rough on a given night is suspect, to say the least, because only people actually bedded down are counted. For instance when the count is carried out if a homeless person happens to be standing or is having a cigarette, or walking up and down to shake the cold away, or travelling on night buses to be in the warmth (which many people do), they are not counted. This has led us and many other homeless charities to usually dispute these official statistics, most notably Housing Justice and the Simon Community, who carry out their own counts. The Combined Homeless Action and Information Network (CHAIN), a database to record interactions between homeless services and rough-sleepers, indicates that over the course of a year, outreach

workers see approx 3,000 people sleeping rough in London alone.

And homeless charities are not alone in challenging the way official statistics are obtained, as even the National Audit acknowledged in 2005 that these "counts might not capture all those sleeping rough", but nevertheless felt that "it remains the most accurate measure of the relative scale of the problem..."

We call for improving the methodology employed to collect rough-sleeping statistics so that a more accurate picture of reality may be obtained. The new strategy seems to concede this point, but we need it to be spelt out more clearly.

To achieve this goal of ending rough-sleeping in the UK, the Government has put its money where its mouth is, by promising to spend £200 million, through grants to Local Authorities and Voluntary Organisations, with a cross-departmental focus. It has laid out a 15 point-action-plan.

I summarise it for you below:

1. To promote prevention of rough sleeping and to strengthen safety nets.
2. To support best practice in the commissioning of services
3. To extend positive activities that motivate and empower people
4. To promote and enable opportunities to break out of worklessness
5. To improve access to health and social care services
6. To tackle rough sleeping among new migrant populations, in particular through rollout of the new Local Immigration Teams
7. To use the web to promote knowledge of local services and resources
8. To develop a community training programme to build capacity and skills
9. To promote more personalised services
10. To drive forward user involvement in services and active citizenship
11. To launch a new approach to help monitor progress and track people

12. To bring together existing data in new ways to understand and monitor outcomes
13. To launch a new champions programme, bringing together experts across the UK
14. To work strategically and to develop new approaches in the capital
15. To drive, co-ordinate and monitor progress through specialist advisers and regional resource teams

The strategy as a whole makes interesting reading and I recommend it to all our supporters. It can be downloaded from the Government Department of Communities and Local Government website:
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/roughsleepingstrategy>



**Happy
Easter**

Can you help promote our work?



Do you know of any Churches, groups, schools or individuals who may like to support our work?

If so, we would be happy to send you as many of our leaflets as you would like. Please fill & return the tear off slip below. Many thanks.

✂ -----

**Please send me
leaflets**

Name:

Address:

Postcode

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Editor: Paddy Boyle

Simple thoughts & feelings

By

Milena Koczaska

A10 Advice Worker



In my opinion the UK is a very hospitable country. Or maybe the British government is astute in regard to migration...it does not matter. I look around and see many people who came to the UK and became homeless either because of unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances or were homeless from the moment they arrived here. They all get help and are treated exactly as British homeless people are. There is however a huge gap between them in terms of the housing options available.

Despite this Poles, Czechs, Romanians, Slovaks, Lithuanians etc, have their own A10 advisors, they eat, get help with clothing, respite in day centres and benefit from so many diverse courses for free. Staff at the Manna Centre are so helpful and friendly; they are even using some Polish words for fun (human relationships do not take nationalities into account, they build up and last despite of it). I am pretty sure that Polish homeless people would not have received such help and such a service in Poland. My country is a beautiful place, but for many reasons the care system is not as highly developed as it is in the UK. I see my countrymen coming to the Manna Day Centre and despite the fact that they face serious problems everyday; they are at least NOT alone here.

It is a huge challenge for Great Britain to cope with so many homeless people arriving from Eastern and Central Europe. The world is changing and it is a global tendency that people move around looking for a better life. No one can stop this process. That is why it is important to develop a support system for the poorest and weakest individuals. Yes, of course, sometimes I think that if someone's English is very poor and they are not a skilled worker maybe they should not have come to United Kingdom. But on the other hand I admire the fact that the desire for a better existence is so strong, they are willing to take a risk and start a new life with completely different people, language, culture and rules.

Some of them are very keen to find a job and to settle in London or elsewhere in the UK

(normally in the bigger cities). Others are attracted by the services provided by UK's day centers. Some Eastern & Central European homeless people are here because they know it is easier to get free meals, clothes, access to other free services and open a squat here than it would be in their home countries.

It is not my task to judge. I am here to give a hand to those who maybe did not, have a loving and supporting background; did not get the opportunity or were unable to benefit from a decent education; find employment or maybe were just too sensitive to answer to a demanding world. Anyone can become homeless - this is just probably a question of diverse circumstances. What do I do if I find some of my clients a bit lazy, devious and not respecting their lives? I gently suggest that they deserve decent accommodation and they are really good enough to obtain a job etc. Sometimes I become more assertive, although I am doing my best not to and I hope I do not moralize. God did not give me any right to do this...

Maybe for my next Newsletter article, I will deal with more factual matters, e.g. statistics, the number of people who avail of our A10 advice service, something more quantifiable... maybe. But now... it has always been my belief that feelings, simple words, positive attitude and warmth are the most important factors between people, especially when people find themselves in such vulnerable circumstances as homelessness brings.



Tell Them

*Breaking through the powers of darkness
bursting from the stifling tomb
he slipped into the graveyard garden
to smell the blossomed air.*

*Tell Them, Mary, Jesus said,
that I have journeyed far
into the darkest deeps I've been
in nights without a star.*

*Tell Them, Mary, Jesus said,
that fear will flee my light
that though the ground will tremble
and despair will stalk the earth
I hold them firmly by the hand
through terror to new birth.*

*Tell Them, Mary, Jesus said,
the globe and all that's made
is clasped to God's great bosom
they must not be afraid
for though they fall and die, he said,
and the black earth wrap them tight
they will know the warmth
of God's healing hands
in the early morning light.*

*Tell Them, Mary, Jesus said,
smelling the blossomed air,
tell my people to rise with me
to heal the Earth's despair.*

Edwina Gateley



In spite of being the fifth richest country in the world, government statistics reveal that 12.8 million people in the UK, that is 1 in 5 of us, still live in poverty today. Together we can help change public attitudes to UK poverty and contribute in making a real and lasting difference in people's quality of life through lobbying MPs of all major political parties to adopt policies to end poverty.

As part of the Get Fair Campaign, we are helping organise a constituency-based lobby of MPs on 26 and 27 June 2009 to make sure that ending poverty in the UK is on the agenda of all the major political parties.

We are holding briefing sessions lasting 2 hours each in April 2009, across the regions, to bring together potential constituency organisers. During these sessions participants will get more details on the campaign and the purpose of the lobby, learn about the logistics of organising a delegation and put across a case effectively.

The key need is to identify groups and individuals to take part in the lobby. In order to succeed in this campaign, we need people to act as local organisers in as many parliamentary constituencies as possible. You can help by providing a venue or, and, organising local publicity. A campaign pack for holding a briefing event and a speaker can be provided.

Briefing Diary Dates

- Sheffield - Central URC, 7-9pm, Wednesday 1 April
- Taunton - Belvedere Trading Estate, 3-5pm, Thursday 2 April
- Birmingham - Salvation Army Citadel, 7-9pm, Monday 6 April
- Manchester - Friends Meeting House, 11.30-1.30pm, Saturday 18 April
- Luton - Wigmore Methodist /URC church, 6-8pm, Monday 20 April
- **London - Shelter, Old Street, 6-8pm, Tuesday 21 April**
- Perth - North Church, 6.30-8.30pm, Wednesday 22 April
- Cardiff - City URC Church, 7-9pm, Friday 24 April
- **London - Church House, Westminster, 3-5pm, Wednesday 29 April**

To participate or find out more details, please call Bandi Mbubi on 020 7403 1931, or email bandi@mannasociety.org.uk

Sponsorship Form



London Marathon 2009

Marc Thurgood will be running this year's London Marathon on Sunday 26th April for the Manna Centre. The Manna Centre is a day centre for single homeless people and those in need. We offer free food, showers, clothing, housing & welfare advice and medical care to 150-200 people daily. We are open seven days a week.

Marc worked at the Manna Centre as a mental health nurse for several years before becoming a Committee Member. This will be his second fundraising marathon for the centre. Please support Marc & the work of the Manna Centre either via this form or online at www.justgiving.com/marcthurgood

Name	Address	Amount	If Gift-Aided Tick*

***GIFT-AID I am a UK taxpayer, and I want the Manna Society to reclaim tax on this gift. The Manna Society can claim back an extra 28p on every £1 you give. You must have paid as much tax, or more, in the current year as the Manna Society will reclaim on this donation.**