

***The Manna Society***

***Newsletter***

***Summer 2016***



# **Our local response to antisocial behaviour**

**By**

**Bandi Mbubi**

**Manna Centre Director**



We take seriously complaints from local residents about the behaviour of our clients. We investigate reported incidents to determine appropriate action. And where someone or a group of people have caused a nuisance, we either give them a warning or exclude them from our service for a period of time, depending on the severity of the incident. We use any influence we may have on them to effect the kind of change which would be desirable for us and our neighbours.

Complaints about some users of the Manna Centre from local residents and members of the general public about their antisocial behaviour, perceived or real, come and go. They usually increase as the weather warms up, when people are likely to want to stay outdoors. They range from the most trivial to the most serious. There are times when the only problem is that a homeless person is sitting on a park bench, in this instance failing to remember that it is meant for everyone, including homeless people. It could be about someone sleeping rough in the porch of a public building. The person may not really be disturbing anyone other than being perceived as such.

However, at other times, a person, or a group of people, may cause a real nuisance to local residents and the general public. It happens that some of our clients congregate in local hot spots, usually parks, openly drinking alcohol which can create an unpleasant atmosphere, especially if they are heavily intoxicated. Several times, we have been called out to see the damage some of them have caused; urinating; defecating or leaving rubbish behind.

People who complain about the behaviour of some of our clients do not of course have the same motivation. Many do it because they are genuinely concerned about our service-users or because their behaviour has adversely affected them.

But it occasionally happens that the Manna Centre is not able to effectively address the problem alone. So In consultation with the Police, the local outreach teams, both statutory and voluntary, we work out a plan to tackle the problem.

Working with the local authority can present us with an opportunity but also a challenge. Thankfully our experience with Southwark Council over the years has been largely positive. They have been very supportive of our work and have incorporated our views in a way which has benefited greatly our cause. For instance, their enforcement measures when dealing with homeless people have not been heavy-handed or over the top. They have worked collaboratively with us and other agencies, holding monthly meetings, to address deep-rooted issues local homeless people face.

The challenge for us would be if our local authority, Southwark, resorted to any measures which were demeaning or dehumanising to homeless people. Several years ago, Westminster attempted to ban the free distribution of food to homeless people as a way of discouraging them from entering or remaining in an area. In the City (of London) the local authority routinely woke people up and hosed down their sleeping sites with the intention of making life unbearable so as to pressurise people out of homelessness.

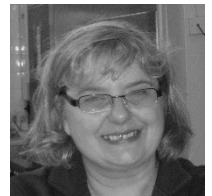
Homeless people are not above the law and like all of us should be held responsible for their behaviour, especially if they commit any criminal offence. But effectively turning anyone into a criminal because they have no home or demeaning them in any way and disregarding their basic human rights is totally unacceptable. To Southwark's credit, its measures have not been excessive. When they have targeted some homeless people, they have at the same time worked with local agencies with regard to their social needs. Let's hope they continue to do so in the future too!

# The Welsh Model – Stronger prevention and relief for homeless households

By

Margaret Shapland

Housing and Welfare Advice Worker



Sometime ago Crisis produced a report on a mystery shopping exercise detailing the treatment of clients with various vulnerabilities when they approached a Homelessness services in local authorities. They found in many cases that they were not given the appropriate response without making adequate enquiries into the circumstances of the applicant - a practice generally known as “gate keeping”

Local authorities are under a duty to make inquiries where they have “reason to believe” that a person “may be” homeless or threatened with homelessness and to provide interim accommodation where they have “reason to believe” that a person “may be” homeless, eligible for assistance and in priority need. In the Crisis report, in only 8 out of 87 visits was any mention made of the possibility of making a homeless application thus triggering a need to make proper investigations into a client’s circumstances and to establish whether they indeed met the criteria for priority need and thus were owed a duty by the local authority to find accommodation.

LAG’s Housing law review mentioned cases which has gone forwards to the courts highlighting the failure to apply the existing Housing legislation. They mention a number of cases and below I have used 2 of their examples to illustrate the ways in which local authorities had “got round” their duty

In one case involving Birmingham council it was found that the local authority’s practice and procedures meant that officers were failing to apply s.188 when considering whether to provide interim accommodation:

*“The approach of the Council to their obligations under Section 188 at the very least lacks legal coherence and a proper consideration of the relevant Section 188 criteria. So far as the Council are concerned that failure had and, insofar as that practice continues, continues to have, the effect of avoiding their obligations under Section 188 of the 1996 Act.”*

*In another brought against Westminster Council, a case concerning a homeless applicant who had been subjected to mental and physical torture in Iran who presented to the authority with a letter from his GP detailing, amongst other matters, that he suffered from depression, panic attacks and insomnia but who was issued with a negative s.184 decision on the same day, avoiding the duty to provide interim accommodation, HHJ Anthony Thornton QC stated that:*

*“Where, as in this case, it appears that the applicant is depressed, alone, unable readily to cope with day-to-day living tasks, unemployed and possibly unemployable, has no settled links with England or the English way of life and has minimal support mechanisms at his disposal, the inquiries would be expected to extend to a detailed inquiry into the applicant’s way of life prior to his homelessness.....it would have been impossible for any of these inquiries to be undertaken in this case during the initial screening interview.”*

Gate keeping is especially prevalent among London councils where the Crisis report found that in 29 visits, the mystery shoppers were either not assessed at all on the basis that they were either not in priority need or had not provided sufficient appropriate paperwork when they presented at the local authority.

## How does the newly introduced Welsh model change things

This model has been introduced in Wales - with most provisions coming into force on 27 April 2015.

It came about as a result of the Welsh Government commissioned an independent review which identified two fundamental weaknesses within the existing homelessness legislation.

- a) First, that a growing emphasis on preventative ‘housing options’ interventions were at odds with the existing statutory system and there were concerns about both unlawful ‘gate keeping’ and inconsistency in practice among housing authorities across Wales.
- b) Second, that very often effectively there was no ‘meaningful assistance’ made available to single homeless people.

### **What did the new legislation do?**

The most important change brought in by the Housing (Wales) Act (2014) was a stronger prevention and relief duty for eligible homeless households **regardless of priority need status**.

Under previous legislation, the councils had 28 days to make enquiries if a client was threatened with homelessness in that period – in Wales the timescale has been extended from 28 to 56 days, which means that local authorities have a more realistic timeframe within which to undertake proper prevention work.

In addition, the legislation clearly indicates the sorts of steps that local authorities should take, or at least explicitly consider, to demonstrate they have helped relieve or prevent someone’s homelessness; this means that there is a greater possibility for applicants to challenge a local authority that is not pro-active in working at prevention and relief with sufficient energy.

Welsh local authorities now have a duty to help to prevent homelessness for all eligible households threatened with homelessness within 56 days. Whilst it has to be acknowledged the prevention duty is subject to the availability of resources in the local area, **it applies irrespective of priority need, intentionality or local connection status** – key thresholds that had to be met under the previous legislation.

### **What if prevention is not an option?**

If the local authority is unable to successfully apply prevention measures because an applicant is already homeless, then they have a duty ‘to help to secure’ them accommodation, often referred to as the relief duty.

The local authority must conduct an assessment to find out: the circumstances under which someone has become homeless; their housing needs and the support needs of all members of the household. The relief duty comes to an end after 56 days. The relief duty also applies regardless of priority need status and intentionality, but local connection criteria are applied if the applicant is likely to be in priority need.

If an applicant’s homelessness has not been successfully relieved after 56 days and they are in priority need, have a local connection and are unintentionally homeless, then they can expect the local authority to confirm that they have a duty to find housing for the applicant.

The new Welsh legislation does state that applicants who “unreasonably fail to cooperate” with relief assistance may not progress to the main homelessness duty but also spells out examples of what may be provided or arranged to help to ensure that suitable accommodation is available, or continues to be available for occupation by an applicant. These include:

- Mediation;
- Payments by way of a grant or loan
- guarantees that payments will be made
- Support in managing debt, mortgage arrears or rent arrears;
- Security measures for applicants at risk of abuse; and
- Advocacy or other representation.

Under the new legislation local authorities in Wales are able to discharge their main homelessness duty via an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector with a fixed term tenancy of at least six months minimum duration. They can also make an offer of social housing.

The new legislation, which predated the Supreme Court's ruling on the definition of vulnerability under English homelessness law, has also enshrined the Pereira test into law.

The test commonly used to establish if someone is vulnerable and, therefore, in priority need has become known as the Pereira test. The Court of Appeal, in *Pereira v Camden Council*, held that a person is vulnerable if their circumstances are such that they would suffer more when homeless than 'the ordinary homeless person' and would suffer an

injury or other detriment that the ordinary homeless person would not. people therefore have to demonstrate that they would be less able to fend for themselves than an ordinary homeless street homeless in order to be assessed as in priority need.

The legislation in Wales has only been in place for one year, so its full impact is still not fully known.

That said, Welsh Government statistics provide some positive results that seem to confirm that the new model is working effectively to prevent homelessness and reduce the number of households who are in priority need and progress homelessness duty.

Since the introduction of the new legislation, from data covering the July to December 2015 period showed that only 405 households in both quarters were owed a duty, a decrease of 67 per cent.



In the same six months, it was found that

- 3,605 households were provided with prevention assistance, of which 2,335 (65%) had a successful outcome.
- At the relief stage, 3,695 households were eligible for a duty to secure accommodation and 2,530 (68%) had a successful outcome.
- The success rates at both the prevention and relief stage were lower for single households (57% and 40% respectively) which may be because it is more difficult for local authorities to support and find appropriate accommodation for single households.

### Could there be room for such a model in other parts of the UK?

There has been some argument that this type of model would not be feasible in other parts of the country. The Welsh model obliges councils to help people who find themselves in a housing crisis. Newham in London has come out for housing reform such as the Welsh model because of its increased focus on prevention and given the cost of homelessness, prevention makes much better sense.

And surely we should support a model that really provides clients approaching local authorities with proper help rather than a photo-copied list of estate agencies, hostels or other services and just letting people get on with it. That must be what a society with any sort of social conscience should aim for.

# **A malnourished alien in a strange land**

**By**

**Louisa Toland**

**Housing and Welfare Advice Worker**



In my role as an advice worker at Manna Society I am privileged to meet people from almost every corner of the earth. With different immigration status's requiring varying levels of assistance and support.

I am amazed and astonished by people's resilience, courage and determination in their fight for a better life. And depending on the person's circumstances, their desire for political freedom or for cultural expression or simply to improve their economic opportunities.

With the referendum (Brexit in-out question) being hotly debated in a typically hysterical way with a carelessness that lacks any real insight, it is difficult to take either side's arguments as being credible. If you take the over laboured topic of migration as an example, the theme that is missing from the debate is our basic innate ability to have humanity and compassion.

I count myself lucky to be in the position to not only meet people from the all over the globe but also to be able to offer direction and support on their continued journey to the life they desire.

Most people don't, most folk live in communities where the people they meet and get to know, look and dress and have the same cultural back ground as them. So perhaps the immigration argument seems more removed or less relevant to their lives.

I want to give some examples of the people I meet and the work the Manna Society does on a daily basis. This work can becomes mundane because it is done routinely and often without time to consider the impact we have on people's lives.

A young man from a politically unstable isolated and repressive African Country sits before me a year on from his first visit to us. Over the months I have got to know and understand some of the issues in his country, which were previously completely unknown to me. Had he remained in his home country he would have been forced into the military because national conscription exists. There he would have remained potentially up to 20 years with little pay acting essentially as forced labour in gold and copper mines.

He made the decision to leave, remaining meant his quality of life would have been so poor he chose to risk life and limb to have a chance at something better. So he took it. His journey from this small troubled country would send shivers through you, and the way he tells it, would in fact make a wonderful film.

But it is no make believe, it was and is his reality, and his very existence is now keenly identified with this aspect of himself that took so many risks. All along the way he came close to death, by man, nature and machine. He ducked and dived, hid, watched and waited for the perfect time and opportunity. He travelled through various troubled African states. He crossed the seas hidden in huge shipping containers. He starved and was physically malnourished from lack of food on some of these routes. Going without food for days at a time.

He finally made it to Calais, to the refugee camp known as "The jungle". He told me about the people who he met, who failed in their attempts to make it to the UK, resulting in deaths, serious injury or getting caught by the authorities, incarcerated before being returned.

His final journey from France to London is a story all of its own, with courage, risk taking, gumption, cat and mouse with lorry drivers and much suspense. He made it and here he sits. He came to us shortly after arriving feeling like a malnourished alien in a very strange land. We assisted with the initial signposting and direction in how to go about making an application for asylum. We tried every avenue to get him shelter from one of the few places that accept people with no recourse to public funds. This was not immediate so he spent some time on the streets of London, where he met new challenges.

We were able to assist through grant applications, travel passes for him to begin the legal processes required for making asylum. We worked with other organisations to help him access free legal services. This process helped him off the street and into NASS (*National Asylum Support Service*) accommodation. This is where he remained for about 7 months. When his claim was processed he returned to the Manna to access housing support.

We worked tenaciously and applied to various housing providers that might accept him, as is often the case there was not an immediate solution. We worked with street homeless teams, as again he was on the street for a length of

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As time passed  
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required for

providers, benefits issues. Finally about 1 month ago, he was placed in shared accommodation. It took about three and a half months, but in the grand scheme of things it was not that long. The accommodation he shares will allow him to find work and still it will be affordable for him. This is quite a rare housing provision in London and understandably heavily oversubscribed. For young people in London it is becoming increasingly difficult to help house them because of Housing Benefit regulations and changes in the benefits system.

This person worked hard, as we did to find the right solution for him, he was as tenacious as were we in applying and pursuing a solution to his problems. If I did not know his story I know I would have felt differently about his plight. Learning about people and their experiences helps us understand, to tap into our humanity and compassion. Even more than that I look at this person with admiration and I am humble to know them and hear them. There are so many stories like this with various differences, depending on where the people come from.

Next time I will tell you about our brothers and sisters from neighbouring EU countries. Also people who are demonised and vilified by political groups for political motivation and gain. I can also tell you about the people from the UK and London who experience marginalisation and disadvantage.

Some within our society are more concerned about protecting their wealth and privileged position (the fact that we happen to live within a wealthy country) than responding to the plight of those in need. It is this sense



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of entitlement that makes poverty and poor people the common enemy whether they are from home or abroad.

The stories I hear give me courage, and awareness that the human spirit is boundless in its ability to be resilient against the most powerful forces. I wonder how the decision makers in Parliament would cope; walking in the shoes of the people they are making decisions against. Would the lives they have lived up to now allow them the same spirit, courage and strength, in similar adversity? Would they survive the journey that our friend above made?

So through the people who come to Manna I thought it only apt to end with a quote that expressed his own fearlessness, from the beautiful, bold, courageous truth teller Mohammad Ali, who recently passed away.

*“Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world they’ve been given than to explore the power they have to change it. Impossible is not a fact. It’s an opinion. Impossible is not a declaration. It’s a dare. Impossible is potential. Impossible is temporary. Impossible is nothing”.*



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## Who used our services on Thursday 24th March 2016?

	Numbers using centre	%
<b>Male</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Female</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Sleeping Rough</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Council/HA flat</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Hostel</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Friends</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Squat</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Ethnic Origin</b>	<b>Numbers</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>A10 Countries</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>African</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Western European</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Irish</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Asian</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>South American</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Black Caribbean</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Scottish</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

<b>In receipt of benefits</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>No income</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Other income</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>

N.B: A further 13 people (11 male, 2 female) did not wish to participate in the survey and so are not included in the above stats.

## Please sponsor our runners in the British 10K London Run

On Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July six of our supporters will be running the British 10K London Run to raise funds for us. The run is through central London, starting at Piccadilly and finishing on Whitehall. Details of the runners can be found below. Please support them by giving via their JustGiving pages (see below) or by filling in the sponsorship form overleaf.

Our six runners are: Bob Turner, Revd. Jessie Daniels White, Maxine Stride, Karl Morgan, Martin Smith and David De Jong.



**Bob Turner** – *“I’ve supported Manna for many years and volunteered in the kitchen since retiring three years ago. What attracts me to Manna is the wide range of practical assistance given to people in need from the food, showers and clothes to the excellent advice and education services. There is a spirit of accepting people as they are and a really positive atmosphere about the whole organisation”* - [www.justgiving.com/Bob-Turner3](http://www.justgiving.com/Bob-Turner3)



**Revd. Jessie Daniels White** – *“Hi my names Jessie and I’m one of the priests at St Hugh, Crosby Row. The Manna Centre is in our parish. I’m doing the 10k Run for the Manna Centre because out of all the charities out there the Manna Centre does not get as much attention for all the wonderful things it does. For all the years the Manna Centre has been running there has never been a drop in people that need and use the service. It is an honour to be able to support this project”*. - [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Jessie-Daniels-White1](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/Jessie-Daniels-White1)

**Maxine Stride & Karl Morgan** are Dot Net Solutions employees. Dot Net Solutions are a technology company who have been supporting the work of the Manna Centre for the last 2 years.



**Maxine Stride** - *“I am the Communications Lead at Dot Net Solutions. Originally from Somerset, my interests include reading, gaming, technology and community radio. Whilst I enjoy exercise I can safely say that I have yet to get the hang of running, hopefully I will pick it up before July! We are proud to support them because they not only give the homeless support, they give them opportunities for a better future”*. [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MannaSociety](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MannaSociety)



**Karl Morgan** – *“32, originally from Dublin, now living in London and working as an Account Manager. I run and play football to stay active but I also play the drums, which can be quite physically demanding! The Manna Centre is my company’s local charity, and I’m a huge believer in the positive work the Manna Centre does for our community. Providing shelter for those who need it is fantastic, but to give them the tools to improve their situation is amazing, and I’m proud to raise money for this cause”*. [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MannaSociety](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/MannaSociety)



**Martin Smith** – *“I have never been a runner, nor had the slightest thought of running 10k ever crossed my mind, yet I have been inspired to put my name forwards to run the British 10k as I really wish to help raise funds for the fantastic work of the Manna Centre. The request in the last Manna Centre newsletter amazingly stirred me into action and after a few concerned queries from others I have now seriously taken up training three times a week, and have found the great facility of organised free local park runs. My fundraising efforts for the Manna Centre are just starting, and I am very gratefully being offered lots of encouragement and support from family, friends and my local parish St*

James Petts Wood. My run is also a thank you to the tremendous work and efforts of all those supporting the Manna Centre". [www.justgiving.com/fundraising/RunningManna](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/RunningManna)



**David De Jong** – is a regular contributor to our work who runs on average 6 miles per week.  
[www.justgiving.com/fundraising/David-de-Jong](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/David-de-Jong)

## Manna Centre Sponsorship Form British 10k London Run 2016



Six runners (details overleaf) will be running this year's British 10k London Run on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> July for the Manna Centre. The Manna Centre is a day centre for single homeless people and those in need. Based near London Bridge we offer free food, showers, clothing, housing & welfare advice and medical care to 150-200 people daily. We are open seven days a week.

**Please support our work by sponsoring our runners by filling in the form below  
or  
online via the runner's personal JustGiving page (details overleaf)**

Name	Address	Amount	Gift-Aided Y/N

**\*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 25p 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.

