

New Initiatives

Bristol Homeless Forum met on Thursday 30 March to meet and understand each other with a general aim of making better connections with new initiatives.

Bristol Homeless Forum currently has over 80 subscribers representing about 40 different organisations working with homeless people across Bristol.

At this event we had 31 attendees representing about 15 of these organisations and including several who are not yet members of the forum.

After a brief introduction to the evening and armed with copies of the survival handbook and a question sheet people were asked to circulate and have a series of small group conversations with others they don't know well around the following, *(with some sample responses):-*

What was it that drew me to get involved with helping homeless people?

"to help improve the world around me"

"teachings of Jesus"

"Sense of responsibility"

"It could have been me, my kids"

"I didn't know what to say or do when I met homeless people"

"Shock of the numbers"

Why am I still involved with helping homeless people?

"It's more complicated than it seems from the outside"

"Still see the need and lots just walk on by"

"It's rewarding to help others"

"Sense of vocation"

"You build relationships, friendships"

"more still to do"

What difference am I making to the lives of homeless people?

"Challenging stereotypes & changing opinions"

"Small differences, I can give a cup of soup and a friendly face"

"Getting veterans into housing and specialist help"

"My team helped 800 people leave the streets last year"

These were lively and fruitful conversations and we shared some of our answers which, although varied in expression, shared some common themes and were recognised by the group.

This was summed up on one completed question sheet with these responses

What have you found you have in common with others here?

"Most things"

What have you found that's different between you and others here?

"Nothing Much"

We rounded off the evening by sharing what we had learnt from each other and this is what we had time to record :

- We share common goals and want to help
- The Royal British Legion offers a one-stop service for the Armed Forces Community
- There's much more happening than we knew
- Our services are not all in the Survival Handbook
[& Ben Richardson from Caring in Bristol spoke to changes planned for an online handbook & details of how to get changes into the next edition]
- There are opportunities for us to help each other and pool resources
 - Network events (like this)/Social Media/Forum
 - Channelling donations
 - On line noticeboard
- There's a continuing need for more volunteers
 - Lots of people 'out there' who want to do something
 - We could work with employer contacts/Chamber of Commerce

All attendees were encouraged to use the forum by

- website feedback BristolHF.org.uk
- email BristolHF@gmail.com
- or twitter [@BristolHF](https://twitter.com/BristolHF)

To give any more ideas for working together or suggestions (& offers to help/host/organise) for future networking events.