



"The government's got the Axe Factor"

the Pavement

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The Editor

Winter shelter

In this issue of *The Pavement West Midlands*, we have three stories focusing on accommodation. In our last edition, we reported on how the proposed changes to Housing Benefit might affect you if you had to top up your payments; we have since heard about a little-known government initiative called Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) which has to be applied for but could help people who can prove financial hardship (See page 7).

However, there is a real lack of available accommodation in the West Midlands for people who don't have recourse to benefits, and this is of great concern to *The Pavement*, especially as winter approaches. In keeping with Birmingham City Council's "one point of access" strategy, the Salvation Army recently changed how its emergency beds are allocated. Now, only the most vulnerable will be able to get a bed that way. In most of the central boroughs of London, local churches open up their church halls to provide very basic accommodation. To our knowledge, nothing of this nature exists in the West Midlands, but the desire to help does. Leaders of central Birmingham churches are meeting this month to discuss what might be achieved with limited funds. We will keep you posted on any developments.

Ellie Jones

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Street Shield is looking for a missing person. His adventure starts near Bull Street on page 22.

Artwork by Mike Donaldson

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In from the cold

We look at winter provision in the West Midlands

As the days begin to grow shorter and colder, single men and women who don't have access to council accommodation will rely on other forms of shelter to survive. But whilst organisations such as the Salvation Army and St Basil's can offer beds to rough sleepers who are receiving state benefits, many homeless Eastern Europeans and asylum seekers without refugee status will have no access to mainstream homeless provision such as hostels, women's refuges and night shelters.

One West Midlands project that can help destitute asylum seekers is Hope, a charity whose projects include the Hope Destitution Fund and Hope Housing. Geoff Wilkins, its development manager, said: "We take only people referred by the Council, the Red Cross and other local agencies that work with destitute asylum seekers. This enables us to liaise with experienced case-workers who have referred these people to us and provide the appropriate care."

Sam Bailey, a service manager for Wolverhampton homeless charity P3, emphasised the lack of services in the West Midlands for people in need of emergency accommodation because they can only turn to agencies that are not reliant on public funds.

"Many asylum seekers have no recourse to benefits, so they suffer more than most," she said. "In the last month, we have had 15–20 asylum seekers looking for accommodation, which is more than last year. Our bed spaces are always overbooked; and as soon as an emergency bed becomes available, it is taken... If anyone comes to our door this winter, freezing and looking for shelter, we

will endeavour to find them floor space, no matter who they are, but it is not an ideal situation."

This problem is not unique to the West Midlands. However, in London, churches in each borough organise a rota during the winter months to place camp beds on their church hall floors, thus offering very basic free accommodation to people who would otherwise have to sleep rough. There is nothing of a similar scale in Birmingham, though, according to Revd Neil Johnson, chair of the Birmingham Christian Homeless Forum, a group of city centre churches organised a winter project for rough sleepers a few years ago. He said: "We have a committed band of people and are doing all we can to address emergency accommodation for rough sleepers, which is a mounting problem in Birmingham. The Forum has no funding and together with other local organisations, it shares information and tries to pull in resources. There have been several conversations with city centre churches who haven't yet found an easy solution to this situation."

As the weather gets colder, this lack of emergency beds looks set to become a major issue, especially if this winter is as cold as the last.

Alastair Murray, deputy director of Housing Justice, said: "We have funding from the Urban Church Fund and are setting up a host shelter forum in the Birmingham area for local churches to come together and set up services to offer advice and assistance to service users. We support the idea of churches taking practical action on housing and homelessness."

While nothing is certain, Dr Graham Stubbs, from St Martin's in the Bullring, confirmed that "As

the weather gets colder, we will be meeting to try and organise something because ultimately, these shelters save lives."

Charlie Mole and Jackie Lindoe

*"As the weather gets colder,
we will be meeting to try
and organise something"*



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West Midlands news

All the region's homeless news

Ex-homeless Mr England

A former rough-sleeper has swapped the cold streets of Birmingham for the highlife of London after being crowned Mr England. Vaughan Bailey, originally from Erdington, now enjoys a glitzy life rubbing shoulders with the stars, a far cry from his previous penniless existence.

The 23-year-old, who worked in low-paid catering jobs before his big break, is now bombarded with offers from TV companies and model scouts from top companies such as Models 1 and Select. But despite his meteoric success, Mr Bailey has vowed to stay true to his roots by helping those less fortunate in society.

He said: "I'm determined to stay focused and keep my feet on the ground. This is a notoriously fickle business, and I'm determined to build a long-lasting career... Helping others is really important to me; I know what it is like to struggle."

Bailey says his life began to deteriorate after his parents split up when he was just 16 and he found himself living on his own. After spending time on friends' sofas and sleeping on the streets, he found solace through playing basketball.

A talent scout spotted him and offered him nine scholarships from top American Universities; he finally settling on a three-year course at Lindenwood University in St Charles, Missouri, in 2006. "At the time, basketball was very good for me. I just dedicated myself to it," he said in an interview with the BBC.

When he returned to the UK, the wannabe basketball star injured

his knee and was forced to look elsewhere for a career. One of his friends suggested modelling, and after several successful bookings, he was talked into entering the Mr Birmingham competition, which he won. He went on to win the national crown and has since hardly had time to breathe. He is due to jet out to Taiwan in November for the finals of the 'Manhunt' contest and to China in February for the prestigious Mr World contest.

Mr Bailey is extremely proud of his success but still gets star-struck at celebrity parties: "I'm not the kind of person to show off because I'm still very aware of my background. I recently found myself in the VIP area of a club chatting to Katie Price, and I was a bit overwhelmed."

However, he added: "I've had a great journey. Seeing all the things I have and all that I have been through has allowed me to really appreciate this life".

Charlie Mole

Housing benefit help

With the changes to Housing Benefits, many people face harder times trying to maintain the roof over their heads, and their tenancies will be at greater risk. However, according to the FLATS agency, which advises frontline housing and homelessness sector workers, a poorly-publicised government fund can help those experiencing severe financial hardship to gain further support.

If you are currently receiving housing or council tax benefit and still need help to pay your rent, you may be entitled to a Discretion-

ary Housing Payment (DHP). It has to be applied for and there is no automatic right to appeal.

You should fill in a DHP form, which you can get by phoning or visiting your local council office. It requires evidence of expenditure, so you will need to provide copies of your bank statements to show genuine need. You should mention any other circumstances that have had an impact on your finances (eg, a period of illness or child maintenance costs). A letter from your support worker may help. A council panel will then decide whether you will be given the payment.

Discretionary Housing Payments can help towards paying off arrears, but not if you were receiving enough Housing Benefit to pay your rent when you built up the arrears. You will not receive this payment if your Housing Benefit has been reduced to recover an overpayment, and rent charges that include utility bills or meals will not be covered.

Whilst this initiative aims to prevent homelessness by helping people who are struggling to pay their rent, the number of people it will benefit is not clear. There is a limit on how much DHP can be paid out, and it will only be a short-term measure to a possible lifelong struggle.

Jasveer Kaur

Council strategy restricts emergency beds

There has been concern recently about the emergency beds for Birmingham's homeless usually provided by the Salvation Army's William Booth Centre.

Dr Graham Stubbs, who coordinates the support services helpdesk at St Martin's in the Bull Ring, said: "The Salvation Army emergency beds have been a direct link for homeless people. The service is a bottom-line safety net for anyone sleeping rough in Birmingham and was simple to access."

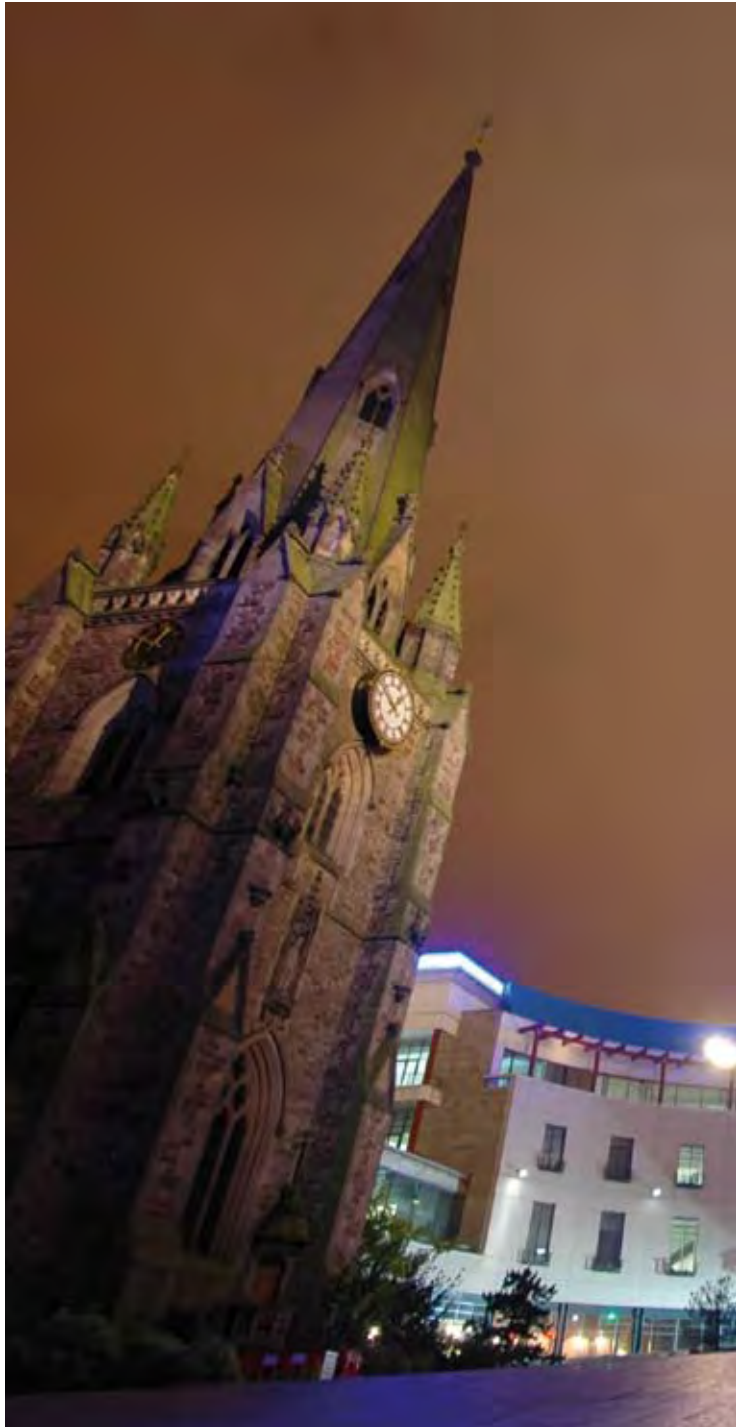
Homeless people now have to queue at neighbourhood offices and go through a demanding process. They may have to wait for three or four hours for referrals. The system is more complex and very impersonal for the service user. Unless individuals are assessed as extremely vulnerable, they will struggle to get an emergency bed.

These changes bring this service in line with Birmingham City Council's new "single point of access" strategy. Some beds have been allocated to the council for referrals from neighbourhood offices.

Garry Murphy, manager of the William Booth Centre, said: "The Salvation Army is working with the local authority to eradicate street homelessness in Birmingham. We still manage emergency beds for service users. Three emergency beds have been allocated to the Temporary Neighbourhood Team and one emergency bed has been allocated to the Rough Sleeper's Team at the Homeless Services Centre run by Midland Heart." If the Homeless Services Centre has not referred anyone by 10pm, the bed is then available to anyone else.

However, Dr Stubbs has expressed concern; "This system will not suit everyone. Unless you are a homeless person with severe mental health issues, are physically disabled or with young children, then you will not be accommodated. The chance of a homeless person being allocated an emergency bed after 10pm when there is only one bed available at the Homeless Service Centre, is low."

Jackie Lindoe







Hiralal Chauhan

Age at disappearance: 58

Hiralal has been missing from Coventry since 8 June 2009.

There is great concern for him as his disappearance is out of character. He is urged to call the confidential service **Message Home** on **Freefone 0800 700 740** for advice and support..

Hiralal is 5ft 10in tall, of stocky build with grey hair.

If you've seen Hiralal please call the 24-hour confidential charity **Missing People** on Freefone **0500700700**
Email: seensomeone@missingpeople.org.uk



A brush with the law

News in brief

The homeless news from across the UK and the World

Over 1,800 convicted under Vagrancy Act

In July's edition of *The Pavement*, we focussed on the Vagrancy Act, which came into law in 1824 and is still used to prosecute rough sleepers.

Offences listed under the act include begging and sleeping outside. It has clearly long outlived its usefulness and relevance to the modern world, especially given that it still lists "pretending to tell fortunes" and "wandering abroad" as criminal offences.

Using a Freedom of Information request, we found that 1,220 arrests were made in the capital in 2009, with 745 arrests for begging, the most frequent offence.

Since then, *The Pavement* has made another Freedom of Information request, this time to the Ministry of Justice, to find out the extent of its use around the country, and this time looking at the number of convictions. In 2008, the latest year for which the ministry has records, over 1,800 people were found guilty of breaking this arguably archaic law.

We also asked the ministry to provide us with a geographical breakdown of where the act was being used. Unsurprisingly, convictions were a great deal higher in large urban areas, with London and Manchester alone accounting for more than 700 of the 1,884 offences. Other areas that saw a notable spike in convictions were Merseyside and the West Midlands.

It is worth noting that convictions are not necessarily proportional to population. In Avon and Somerset, which includes Bristol

and Bath, there were 42 convictions. In Merseyside, an area with a similar population, there were 190 convictions. This kind of discrepancy could be explained both by less strict police enforcement, or simply by certain areas having higher numbers of rough sleepers than others. Surrey, for instance, had just four convictions, and Dyfed-Powys in Wales has only one.

John Ashmore

Estimates of ex-service homelessness exaggerated, claims charity

The number of ex-military people sleeping rough is a lot smaller than government estimates, according to specialist charity Veterans Aid.

The London-based service, which has been running for nearly 80 years, receives around 2,000 calls for help and provides over 20,000 nights of accommodation to ex-service men and women every year.

But it disputes government statistics that put the number of rough sleepers with a military connection at four per cent of the total number.

"Many [who claim to have been in the military], on further investigation, prove to be lying," said Hugh Milroy, chief executive of Veterans Aid. "This is not surprising given that there are around 3,000 ex-service support bodies operating in the UK, offering help that is not available to those who are not veterans. This number seems to be growing, with new programmes and niche 'help' organisations appearing daily."

Veterans Aid media officer Glyn Strong added: "Very few 'soldiers' are on the streets; they are actually under represented in the homeless and prison communities. If you are in crisis, it is a positive advantage to be a veteran as there are around 3,000 bespoke help agencies."

Tracey Kiddle

Gone, but not forgotten

For most people 11 November means Remembrance Day, but amongst London's homeless people, it is not only those who died in World War I that are remembered. Every year, during the week of Remembrance Sunday, St Martin's-in-the-Fields holds a Service of Commemoration for homeless people who have died in the past year.

The event is organised by St Martin's, The Connection and Housing Justice, with the help and input of many others, from homeless (and formerly homeless) people to other homeless agencies.

In what has become a tradition of the service, the names of those who have passed away are read aloud. As well as acting as a central record for relatives looking for missed loved ones, it's also a way of publicly commemorating those who lost their lives, says Alastair Murray, deputy director of Housing Justice: "Many who died are much remembered by others, but won't have had much of a remembrance. This is a way of honouring them, and a celebration of their lives and struggles."

Mr Murray is currently responsible for compiling the list and receives name suggestions from homeless agencies, hostels and

homeless people and by other avenues. "They're not necessarily people who died on the street," he says, "Formerly homeless people stay in touch with those that helped them, and we're sometimes sent names of volunteers or staff too." Last year, some 200 names were read aloud, and already some 30 - 40 names have been submitted for this year's service, which, fittingly, has as its theme the scripture 'I will never forget my people'.

The reading of the names is interspersed with poetry, readings, songs and music from a variety of individuals and groups, such as the Streetwise Opera, The Passage and The Salvation Army. And although poignant, the memorial is not "quasi-political" says The Connection pilgrimage manager Roger Shaljean, who helps organise the service alongside Mr Murray, Revd Richard Carter from the ministry team at St Martin's, and the verger. "We've had sermons," he adds, "but not used them to bash the authorities. We don't need to: people who attend often ask questions."

The first Service of Commemoration took place about 20 years ago, remembers Mr Shaljean: "The idea came from a verger of St Martin's who saw all manner of upmarket funerals going on and said the people who come to church most are the homeless, but they don't get the same ceremony".

Although initially a St Martin's event, the service soon widened its scope, with Mr Shaljean inviting homeless organisations to take part, and then Pat Logan and the rest of Housing Justice quickly coming onboard.

At first the services took place in the summer, but it didn't seem quite right, says Mr Shaljean: "We didn't want to come into conflict with the usual Remembrance service, but this was when there was availability". Considering a number of homeless people are ex-service personnel, perhaps the timing is appropriate after all.

This year's Service of Commemoration takes place at St Martin's-in-the-Fields on 11 November at 11.30am. All are welcome.

If you know someone from the London homeless community who has died in the past year, contact Alastair Murray of Housing Justice at a.murray@housingjustice.org.uk at least a week before 11 November. For more information and to download a poster, visit: www.housingjustice.org.uk/events/events.htm.

Carinya Sharples

A thousand cuts

The national news is full of stories about government funding cuts, but it is not just large news outlets that are monitoring the big slashes. Chaminda Jayanetti is a journalist and the author of *A Thousand Cuts*, a blog that aims to investigate, publicise and campaign against unfair government cuts. *The Pavement* caught up with Mr Jayanetti to get his views on the proposals and find out how they might affect our readers.

"Many homeless people are no doubt used to being ignored by politicians, and may feel that there is nothing that can be done to stop this latest round of attacks. But there is a crucial difference this time: large sections of the British public are increasingly feeling anger at being forced to pay the bill for the bankers' mess," he said.

Mr Jayanetti feels passionate about the unfairness of the current situation. He added: "The reckless super-rich of the banking sector brought Britain's economy to its knees with an economic crisis that has already forced millions of people into unemployment. As the banks prepare to dole out more multi-million pound bonuses, the government

is cutting vital frontline services that will hit the poor hardest.

Housing is an issue that A Thousand Cuts monitors closely. Mr Jayanetti believes housing policy has gone from bad to worse. "Under Labour, it was a shambles and it will go down as their most wretched failure. However, what little progress they did make is being unravelled by the coalition government," he said.

"The government has made it a priority to target benefits claimants and to demonise them as work-shy scroungers. Housing benefit claimants are the first in the firing line, and the various attacks on Local Housing Allowance are widely expected to increase homelessness," he added.

It is not just housing that is a target for cutbacks. Mr Jayanetti said: "I'm currently monitoring NHS job cuts and there are thousands of them. Some of these have the potential to disproportionately impact homeless people; a noticeable trend is high level cuts to NHS mental health trusts, and drug and alcohol addiction services. Without wishing to stereotype all homeless people, it is not unreasonable to speculate that these services do cater to a section of the homeless population."

The government has, however, formed a ministerial committee aimed at tackling homelessness. Mr Jayanetti said: "I doubt many homeless people will be trembling with excitement at this news. However, the bitter irony is that if ministers' cuts are implemented, this ministerial committee will likely have its hands full with the fallout."

So what advice would Mr Jayanetti give our readers who might want to try and do something about it?

"Look out for leaflets or posters in your local area advertising anti-cuts campaigns, or try your local trade union council. There are also unemployed workers unions that fight against local



"Charles Darwin discovers the origin of the faeces"





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@HomelessGirl1 says:

As the online community around me got bigger, as I blogged and tweeted my very innermost secrets, I began to realize that I was not unique in my situation, people were asking me for advice and sharing their stories about living on the outskirts of society, the shame and helplessness they had experienced like me. This changed my perception and understanding about the epidemic of homelessness and it gave me the purpose that I had been looking for.

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cuts and campaign for better rights for local unemployed people, be they seeking work or claiming long-term benefits.

"The game has changed. Trust in the government and big business has collapsed and given the scale of the cuts being planned, there will be people whose very lives depend on them being stopped. It cannot be utopia for the bankers and 'realism' for the rest. Enough is enough."

Chaminda Jayanetti's
blog can be found at:
athousandcuts.wordpress.com

Liza Edwards

Boris slammed by homelessness charity

A leading homelessness charity has criticised Boris Johnson, mayor of London, for giving money to a man begging in Leicester Square last month.

Since 2003, charity Thames Reach has been warning the public that giving change to beggars often helps to fuel drug or alcohol addiction. Its chief executive, Jeremy Swain, warns that "money contributed by caring members of the public to people begging is, invariably, spent on heroin and crack cocaine, causing ill health, misery and sometimes death." Responding to the mayor's well-meaning gesture, Mr Swain sarcastically blogged that Boris might as well "give money straight to his local drug dealer and cut out the middle wo/man."

While Thames Reach has applauded the mayor's commitment to end rough sleeping in the capital by 2012, the charity remains adamant about its begging policy. The message is clear: give to homelessness charities rather than to people begging on the streets.

Amy Hopkins

Big Society event

An event has been held in London to discuss the Government's new plan for a "Big Society".

Brent Homeless User Group (B.Hug) organised the meeting to discuss whether the new initiative can be inclusive and can support local communities.

More than 80 people, including homeless people and representatives from the voluntary sector, attended the workshop at The

Salvation Army Headquarters in central London in September.

The charity's chief executive Atara Fridler said: "The key question was how to create something that we can all participate in. How do we create a Big Society that includes people who have been marginalised, that allows and encourages all of us to contribute as well as get the help we need?"

The coalition government describes their idea of a Big Society as one where "families, networks, neighbourhoods and communities that form the fabric of so much of our everyday lives" play a "bigger and stronger" part than ever before. This, ultimately, means decentralisation and the use of more volunteers instead of help from the state. Ms Fridler added: "At B.Hug, we have been working for many years with vulnerable people who have experienced homelessness, addiction and mental health problems.

"We know from experience that while these people are often the most excluded members of our society, they each have different knowledge, experience and insight that they can share with their local communities.

"It would, therefore, be a huge missed opportunity if the government's plans to create a Big Society did not make provision for these individuals and ensure that they are included along with other members of our communities."

The event consisted of policy workshops, and a manifesto was produced using the contributions of those attending. Speakers included director of housing at Brent, Martin Cheeseman; New Economics Foundation head of social policy Anna Coote; and B.Hug researcher and volunteer David Wright, who used to be homeless.

The manifesto can be found at: www.involvementandempowerment.org.uk.

Rebecca Evans

Sleep outs spark debate

Homeless charities and organisations arranging sponsored sleep-outs have come under fire from the chief executive of a leading homelessness charity.

Sponsored sleep-outs, where members of the public volunteer to sleep rough for a night in aid of homeless projects, have become an increasingly popular fund-raising practice, attracting high profile participants such as Prince William, who slept-out for charity Centrepoint last December.

Jeremy Swain, chief executive of Thames Reach, has used online forums and public networking sites to rally against the practice, tweeting recently that "people will never understand homelessness if every campaign is based on rough sleeping image." He insists that by focusing only on the rough-sleeping aspect of homelessness, sleep-outs undermine both the complex needs of homeless people (which encompass issues such as addiction and mental health) and the wide range of services and projects that are available to meet them. He warns that public displays of rough sleeping could lead the public and policy makers alike to perceive the role of homelessness organisations as merely providing soup and shelter.

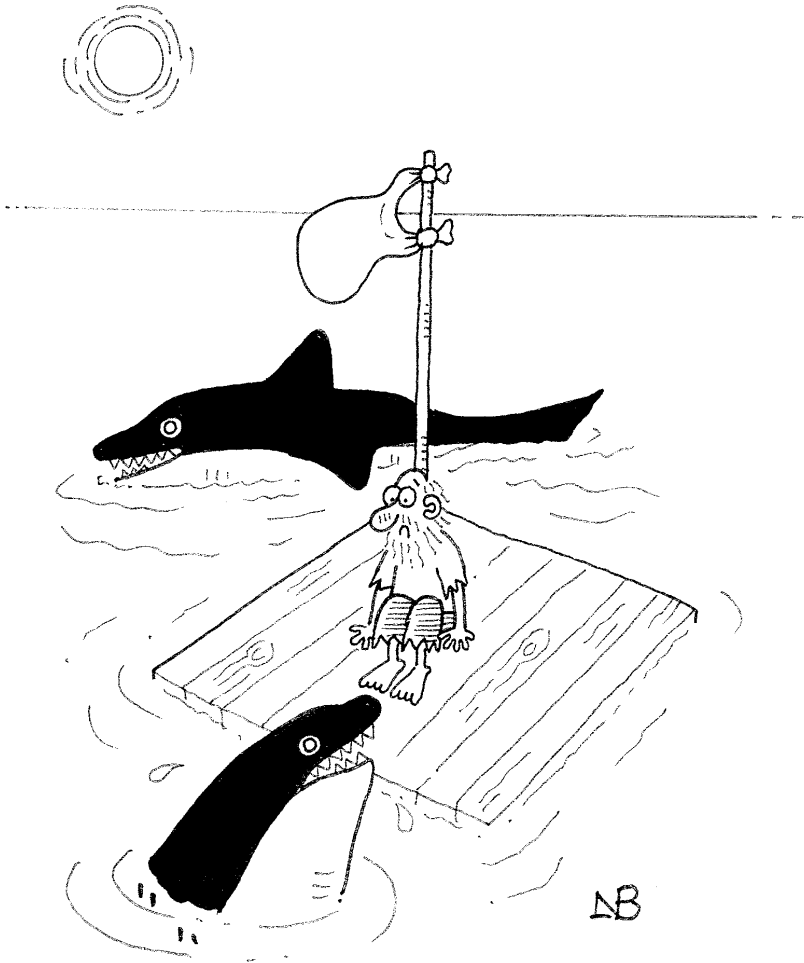
Speaking to *The Pavement*, Mr Swain expressed disappointment that charities with significant fund-raising potential failed to be more creative with their methods. He dismissed sleep-outs as a "lazy approach to fund-raising", and instead advocated fund-raising that "avoids stereotypes of homeless people – no bodies in doorways". He is critical of activities that promote this kind of image of homeless people and argues that stereotyping them as helpless rough sleepers creates misconceptions about their ability to change their lives and overcome homelessness.

He told *The Pavement*: "The message is then that homeless people are passive victims, vulnerable, inadequate and needy. I have 103 colleagues here at Thames Reach who were once homeless and they are none of the above."

When asked to suggest alternatives to sleep-outs, Mr Swain was quick to propose a range of activities that involved positive and hands-on collaboration between homeless people and sponsors, such as a sponsored cooking competition or park clean-up. Thames Reach has organised many activities of this kind, and Mr Swain insists that when the public are given the opportunity to spend a day with homeless people, "lo and behold! [Members of the public] find out that [the homeless] are intelligent and interesting people who have had a hard time, not addicts and wasters!"

Objecting to Mr Swain's criticism, Lisa Lewis, project manager of Doorway, a charity drop-in centre in Chippenham, applauds sleeping-out as "a very effective means of gaining both media and public attention to highlight the fact that homelessness exists at all in rural areas." Ms Lewis told *The Pavement* that by sleeping-out for a night, "we can raise awareness and then go on to educate the public in the issues surrounding homelessness on all levels. We use rough sleeping as a starting point."

Sleep-outs are part of a growing trend that has seen members of the public volunteer to temporarily experience the plight of the homeless. In a recent BBC show, *Filthy Rich and Homeless*, based on a real-life course in the USA, wealthy Britons swapped their cars and home for 10 days to live alongside homeless people. Mr Swain and Ms Lewis's comments form part of the ongoing debate within the homelessness sector about whether sleep-outs and other public participation activities should be welcomed as helpful methods of raising money,



"We're killing you for scientific research"



*Wat Tyler's request for greater social
mobility was turned down*

or denounced as misleading displays of homelessness tourism.

Amy Hopkins

Homeless charities gear up for cuts

Homeless charities have been bracing themselves for budget cuts ahead of the government's Comprehensive Spending Review on 20 October.

Charities including St Mungo's, Novas Scarman and Connection at St Martin's all voiced concerns about possible funding cuts but could not say which services might be hit.

Speaking to *The Pavement* before the government announced its spending plans, a spokeswoman from St Mungo's said: "Most of our central and local government funders are asking for significant reductions in the grants that they give us. We have been addressing these requests by reviewing the services that we deliver and the way we deliver them to clients."

However, she added that the organisation would know more after details of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) were released on 20 October. "Following this, both central government departments and local authorities will have more certainty about how much they are able to spend on services, and the picture is set to become much clearer," she said.

St Mungo's total income last year was £47.4m, with around £4m from fundraising and the rest coming from local and central government, rents and interest income.

The CSR, which was announced on Wednesday 20 October, set out the government's plans for public spending over the next four years.

Maff Potts, chief executive at charity Novas Scarman, said: "Like everyone in our country,

we are aware that cuts are currently on the political agenda.

"Our organisation already has the principles of the Big Society embedded within its values, particularly through our Community Development work.

"We appreciate that cuts will make life difficult for a huge number of people, but Novas Scarman and the services it provides intends to be more visible than ever," he added.

Speaking at a Conservative Party conference fringe session on the Big Society, Stephen Bubb, from the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations, warned that it could come down to a choice between street cleaning services and a grant to a local charity. "Councils are going to have to make some very hard choices after October 20," he said.

"I hope local authorities will start also to think about how they deliver things differently. Disruptive change like cuts is often a time for innovation."

Confidence in the financial situation of charities is also at a three-year low, according to a new study from the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, with 63 per cent of charity leaders predicting that their organisation's financial situation would worsen over the coming year.

But despite the potential cuts, St Mungo's said that more needed to be done, and called for a renewed effort to help long-term rough sleepers off the streets of London. "We need to forge ahead with real urgency to deliver the best services possible in partnership with local authorities and other agencies, especially as cuts start to impact," concluded Charles Fraser, chief executive of St Mungo's.

Garnet Roach

Children held for fire attack on homeless man in Jamaica

Over recent issues, *The Pavement* has charted the worrying and sickening rise in attacks on homeless people, particularly in the US. From the eight in 10 rough sleepers in America who have been victims of crime (you can search our website for these archive stories), to Ralph Millward, who was killed by three teenagers on our own streets, it seems homeless people across the world are increasingly becoming targets of violence. In the US, laws are even being passed to classify such attacks as hate crimes.

But, inevitably, such incidents are not confined to the US or UK. In Jamaica, three children were recently remanded in custody following the death of a homeless man who was set on fire.

According to reports in the *Jamaica Observer*, Lionel Maitland, 54, was asleep on the pavement outside a supermarket in Montego Bay, Jamaica, on 11 September when the horrific attack took place.

One of the three children, aged 13, was charged with murder, while the remaining two – plus two others who were charged but instead held at a children's home – were charged as "uncontrollable juveniles". Their ages range between eight and 12.

All but one of their parents were also remanded after being charged with child neglect. Both the children and adults were scheduled to reappear at the Montego Bay Family Court on 6 October.

Following the attack, Mr Maitland – who is reported to have had mental health issues – was taken to the Cornwall Regional Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. A post mortem later revealed that he died from severe burns.

As with similar incidents in the UK, the attack doesn't appear to be a one off. Earlier this year, for

example, the *Jamaica Observer* received reports of a gang of 10–16 young people beating up homeless and mentally-ill people at night in Kingston, and sometimes setting fire to them or their cardboard boxes.

However, the incident has provoked at least one call for more to be done to help the homeless in Jamaica with Joy Crooks, the administrator for the Committee for the Upliftment of the Mentally Ill (CUMI) in Montego Bay, reportedly blasting the government's provision of mental health care for the homeless.

Carinya Sharples

Housing associations treble surpluses

Housing associations have seen their annual surpluses treble in the last year, ahead of widely anticipated spending cuts.

A study of 24 of the country's largest associations found they have a surplus of almost £280m, an increase of £180m from the £96.7m combined amount for last year.

Housing associations are not-for-profit organisations, so any surplus they make after tax is used to maintain existing homes and help build new ones. The money is also used to run shared ownership schemes to help people who cannot afford to buy their homes outright. The stockpiling of cash may, however, be a sign that associations are preparing for government spending cuts.

Affinity Sutton, who with 55,000 homes is one of the country's largest associations, reported a surplus of £44m – more than double the £20m in 2008/2009. Finance director Mark Washer warned that associations need a "stronger financial base" to cope with forthcoming spending cuts and avoid the need for future bailouts.

Catalyst, which manages 16,000 homes across the South-East, also saw its net surplus double from £7.1m to £16.7m. In its annual statement, the company said it wanted to increase this amount further, saying a surplus was "essential to be able to access the private finance required to fund that part of the cost of new homes not met by social housing grants."

The report added: "Our aim is to generate an annual net surplus of £20 m by March 2013. We will be exacting about financial performance and added value across our range of activities and will use a lean approach to drive out waste." The group also stressed that all profits are reinvested in providing "homes, services and community regeneration."

Another association, Bromford Group, which owns 26,000 homes across central England, saw its surplus almost treble from £5.5m in 2008/09 to £14.1m in 2009/10 – a record for the group.

There are around 1,400 non-profit housing associations across England, which manage around 1.8m homes. Their role is to provide low-cost social housing, and they are the country's biggest provider of rental homes and shared-ownership schemes. Many have specialist projects for people with mental health or learning disabilities or substance misuse problems; and for homeless people, young people, ex-offenders and women fleeing domestic violence.

Rebecca Evans

Homeless hate crime passed in Florida

Back in June, we reported that local governments in Florida and California were introducing laws to bring crimes against homeless people under the banner of hate crime.

On 1 October this year, the law officially passed in the state of Florida in the USA.

"It is already against Florida law to attack someone because of their race or religion. Now, you can add being homeless to the list of criteria for hate crimes," reports *baynews9.com*.

"The new law, which takes effect from October 1st, will lead to steeper penalties for those convicted of hurting people because they are homeless. It was prompted by a rash of vicious attacks on the homeless across the state."

According to the *Huffington Post*, the new law will see maximum penalties go up one degree from what had been. To put this into context, the Miami Herald reports that "a felony of the first degree is now reclassified to a life felony."

Florida is the third state to pass the law, says the *Huffington Post*: "Maryland last year was the first to label such attacks as hate crimes and was followed this year by Rhode Island and then Florida."

Tracey Kiddle

Homeless tours of London

Homeless people are offering tourists an alternative view of London with guided tours around Old Street and London Bridge.

The trained guides, all of whom are homeless, offer a "historical but also unexplored perspective of the city", said the Sock Mob, which inspired the tours.

As well as showing a different side to the capital, guides from

Unseen Tours also give groups a lesson in the history of homelessness, weaving in their own experiences of life on the streets.

The tours cost either £5 or £8, with guides reinvesting some of the cash into the scheme and keeping the rest.

Starting as a pilot scheme with just four tour guides, the social enterprise is now training three new guides, with upcoming tours of Brick Lane and Covent Garden to be added to the bill.

Sock Mob said that it welcomed interest from homeless people across London who would like to get involved.

Garnet Roach

Punks party for the homeless

A punk music project is helping to raise money for street children in Latin America with a series of gigs around the UK.

Punk 4 the Homeless started in Boston, Lancashire, but has expanded across the country, with the first London gig set for 6 November and shows scheduled for Sheffield, Bolton and Manchester.

The London gig will feature bands including SKURVI, Freedom Faction, OIZ II MEN and Loudmouth Eddi.

Gary Eagling, who set up the project at his local church, said: "I went to church one Sunday morning and they were singing the hymn Lord of Sea and Sky, and this triggered the thought that I had heard it before on a Vandals album."

This inspired him to start Punk 4 the Homeless, in a bid to "raise money for homeless charities and introduce youngsters to the scene".

"We have a free download compilation due out through Stoneage Records," he added. "It has punks, skinheads, people of

various sexualities, Christians and Muslims on it, giving us a united approach to the problem at hand."

All money raised will go to Casa Alianza UK, which works with street children in Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Mexico.

Although the project doesn't make a huge amount of money, it does help to raise awareness, with more than 18,000 visitors in under a year, said Eagling.

The first London gig will be held at Urban Bar in Whitechapel Road with tickets priced at £3 all night.

Visit www.myspace.com/punk4thehomeless for more information or to get involved.

Garnet Roach



STREET SHIELD

CHAPTER 18

A
MYSTERY
TO
SOLVE

DOWN A DARK ALLEY OFF BULL STREET

...IT'S JUST HE'S NEVER LATE, AND NOW HE'S GONE. I'VE ASKED AROUND AND NO-ONE'S SEEN HIM IN DAYS.

OKAY JIM, WE'LL LOOK INTO IT, AND LET YOU KNOW.

SO, YOU KNOW THIS MAN WHO'S GONE MISSING?

LET ME HELP, USING MY POWERS TO SCOUR THE CITY FOR HIM!

OKAY, THAT MIGHT HELP. I'LL MEET YOU BACK HERE IN AN HOUR!





YES, I'VE KNOWN NICK FOR YEARS, AND HE'S A WELL KNOWN FACE. YOU CAN'T FORGET THAT BEARD OR HIS LAUGH.

...FIND YOU NICK?

...HERE WILL WE...



I'VE LOOKED EVERYWHERE - THERE'S NO SIGN OF HIM!

IT'S OKAY, I MADE SOME CALLS, AND THINK I'VE FOUND HIM VIA A PC I KNOW!

NEXT MONTH
ANSWERS!

NICK

Health and wellbeing

The Pavement's health team – a nurse and a podiatrist – address the effects of the cold



Footcare: How to avoid frostbite

In very cold temperatures, the body loses heat. A critical decrease in body temperature causes hypothermia, and exposure to extreme cold will cause frostbite (pictured above) – the skin freezes.

Extremities such as the nose, cheeks, ears, fingers and toes are most commonly affected. No one is exempt, but you are more likely to be affected when you are exhausted, dehydrated, living in the open or under the influence of alcohol. The elderly and very young

are most vulnerable and need to take shelter in the colder months.

The brain tries to deal with extreme cold by conserving heat to keep the vital organs functioning. Slowing down the flow of blood through the extremities and skin keeps internal body temperature at a constant, but at the cost of colder extremities. At times like these, the blood vessels carrying blood to the hands and feet will dilate (widen) for short periods to allow oxygen to the tissues, but once the body temperature drops to a critical level (hypothermia), the superficial blood vessels are permanently constricted (narrowed),

causing frostbite. Smoking and drinking both cause small vessels to contract, which only complicates matters in cold weather.

Prolonged exposure to the cold damages the lining of the blood vessels and causes holes to appear, with leaking of blood into the tissues. Superficial frostbite may cause burning, numbness, tingling, itching or cold sensations. When deep frostbite is present, you lose all sensations. Areas affected will be swollen, often with blood-filled blisters over white or yellowish skin that looks waxy and turns a purplish blue when re-warmed. The area is hard, with no resistance when you pushed down on it.

Blood returning to frostbitten areas can be extremely painful. It may appear sensible to thaw out at a fire, but cycles of thawing and refreezing cause more damage. If you suspect you have frostbite, it is important to quickly get to a medical centre for proper rewarming and careful medical evaluation. Avoid walking on frostbitten feet, as this will lead to further damage. The affected body part should be raised to reduce swelling. Dry, sterile bandages can be used to separate affected fingers and toes and prevent them from rubbing. All wet and or tight clothing must be replaced.

To rehydrate, sip warm, non-alcoholic, non-caffeinated fluids. Thankfully, frostbite is comparatively rare; in the cold weather, people are more likely to suffer milder forms of exposure including frostnip, chilblains, and trench foot.

Frostnip is the tingling sensation (paresthesias) in the hands and feet exposed to cold. This discomfort disappears after rewarming without any tissue damage. Chilblains arise

from an abnormal response of the extremities to cold and damp; small blood vessels are damaged, causing localised tissue inflammation that makes the skin appear swollen and reddish or purple. Chilblains may itch or be tender and painful, but will usually disappear in warmer weather. Trench foot is more severe and results from repeated exposure to cold and dampness. The feet become reddened, swollen, painful or numb, and may be covered with bleeding blisters. Eventually the arches of the feet collapse, making walking impossible.

In the colder months, wear layers of clothing to stay warm. To protect the hands and feet, wearing two pairs of gloves and socks is a good idea. Air trapped between the layers heats up to body temperature and keeps the skin insulated from extreme cold. Staying dry is essential to staying warm, and a good diet over the colder months is vital. Eating slow-metabolising foods such as oats (porridge), wheat and starches help the body stay warm.

Stay warm, stay dry and stay safe.

Footnote: So important are clean, warm, dry socks that several groups had out free socks to those on the street, and the UK and US. Have a look at these groups: www.meetup.com/thesockmob & comfortsocks.blogspot.com

Toe Slayer

Registered podiatrist and shoe historian

Flo on... hypothermia

You won't need me to remind you last winter was a cracker. Winter is almost upon us again and it's time to think about how to keep warm when the weather gets bad. If you slept outdoors last winter, this article may tell you nothing new; but this one is

predicted to be much colder. If you're experienced at getting through the winter outdoors, share your knowledge and look out for those who are vulnerable.

Nurse Flo is a big fan of forward-planning. Start thinking now about where you're going to be when it gets seriously cold outside. If you can get a place in a hostel or a seasonal shelter, now is the time to get indoors. If you've got no other option (or if you choose to spend the winter outdoors), then start gathering the extra kit you'll need now.

Layer your clothes. Layers work because warm air gets trapped between them and slows down heat loss. Certain manmade fibres, usually found in brands for hill walkers or climbers, are designed to wick moisture away from the skin, preventing heat loss. Wool and synthetics such as polyester and polypropylene provide better insulation than cotton. Keep your head covered, as heat is lost quickly through the head. As well as lots of layers, try to get a waterproof coat or jacket. Staying dry is an important part of staying warm. Keep your feet warm and dry: cold, wet feet and cold weather cause a nasty condition called trench foot.

Extreme cold brings with it the risk of hypothermia, a serious, life-threatening condition when your body temperature drops too low for you to stay alive. Being with someone else means you can look out for the early signs of hypothermia in each other. And don't waste time wondering what the difference between cold and hypothermia is: the minute you suspect it – get help. If you are with someone who is hypothermic, get urgent medical help. While you are waiting for help, you can add layers to their clothes, give them a warm, sweetened drink, share your body heat with theirs, and encourage them to keep moving and talking.

Shivering is an obvious early sign, but look out for the "umbles" (stumbles, fumbles, mumbles and grumbles): hypothermia slows you down and the first symptoms may just be lack of co-ordination, flatness, don't care attitude or drowsiness. It is very difficult to identify hypothermia in yourself as the condition slows down your ability to reason.

If your mate starts talking rubbish, don't just assume it's alcohol-related – one of the cruel things about hypothermia is that its symptoms can mimic drunkenness. Alcohol use increases your risk of becoming hypothermic, so avoid drinking outdoors when you know temperatures are going to drop very low. If you have to, make sure you are with people who can get you help. Hypothermic people often try to remove their clothes; this is a sign they need medical help.

Dehydration increases your chances of becoming hypothermic. Try to drink at least a litre of tap water every day. Being really cold uses extra calories, so eat as much as you can and as many calories as you can. It's not often I advise you to eat loads of rubbish, but the more calories you have on board, the better your chances when it's freezing outside.


Another seasonal hazard is the flu. There are many strains of the flu, and if you are a vulnerable individual, you need to take extra precautionary measures to limit the possible effect it could have on you. This year's flu jab is now available at your GP's surgery. If you want the flu jab, get along to see your doctor or nurse and ask. Good health,


Flo

- To put a question to our nurse, email: flo@thepavement.org.uk or write to the address on page 3


HOMELESS CITY GUIDE


 squat


 empty building

 dangerous neighbourhood


 danger


 guard dogs

 an attack happened here


 good place to drink / smoke


 unfriendly place


 friendly place

 soup run (with rating)

 strong police presence


 potential for work

 good food thrown away here

 safe for sleeping

 message board x mins that way

 security guard

 you'll get moved on here

step 1



step 2



MAKE YOUR MARK AND HELP OTHERS TO READ THE CITY

Make non permanent marks to keep the system up to date and stay within the law.

