

the Pavement

The *FREE* monthly for West Midlands' homeless

February 2011





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The Editor

Welcome back

Welcome to our first edition of the New Year. We will be catching up with some stories we touched on in 2010.

In November, we reported that to our knowledge there were no church-run winter shelters in the West Midlands: 19 in Greater London provide a crucial safety-net for those sleeping rough. In December, the Christian charity Housing Justice met representatives of local churches and charities, and several Birmingham-based churches expressed an interest in establishing shelters (see page 4).

We take a more in-depth look at the situation in Cannock, where a group has been trying to start a shelter since 2008 (see page 8).

We are also updating you on Crisis Skylight's programme of activities and on another charity that trains homeless people in film-making which also has its eye on the West Midlands (see page 8).

More depressingly, we might be seeing the first effects of the swing away from funding legal aid projects: the Birmingham Tribunal Unit has stopped accepting cases due to financial issues. We advise you on where else you can go to get support (page 10).

Finally this month, after see injuries every year, we are launching a national campaign (thus the cover) to raise awareness of the dangers of sleeping in bins. Please see page 5 for our new advert.

Ellie Jones

Editor

westmidlands@thepavement.org.uk

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We hope this sign draws attention to the necessary advert over the page – this is a campaign we've instigated to help prevent injury and death of those using bins and skips to sleep in.

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Charity urges local churches to assist homeless in cold weather

In December, the national Christian charity Housing Justice (HJ) launched 'Shelter in a Pack' to advise churches how to provide basic winter accommodation. The pack explains everything someone planning a shelter would need to think about; it is upfront about possible obstacles and provides practical solutions. It was put together with the help from organisers of established London winter night shelters, the majority of

which are run by at least seven churches in the same borough. Each night of the week, a different church provides accommodation, hot drinks, washing facilities, company and – at some shelters – a meal. Several have been in operation for over 10 years and provide a crucial safety net to those who would otherwise have to sleep rough.

The aim of the meeting at Carrs Lane, Birmingham, was to answer concerns and provide advice, guidance and the offer of ongoing support to anyone interested in establishing a church-based winter shelter.

The meeting was attended by representatives from Cannock Winter Shelter committee, West Bromwich

Community Church, Cotteridge Church URC, Moseley Wesleyan Holiness Church, the Reach Out Network, The Glebe Centre, SIFA Fireside, Birmingham City Mission and Homeless Link.

On the panel (pictured below) led by Sally Leigh (second from left), London and Shelters Co-ordinator at HJ, were members of the London Winter Shelter Forum who are also trustees of winter shelters.

Sally Leigh explained why shelters are important: "Rough sleeping is like being in a deep freeze – the instinct of having to survive takes over. Winter shelters mean that people can come in and thaw, and address where they're at again."

Rev Paul Reilly (second from right), from the Forest Churches Emergency Night Shelter,

Photography by Guy Cruis © 2010



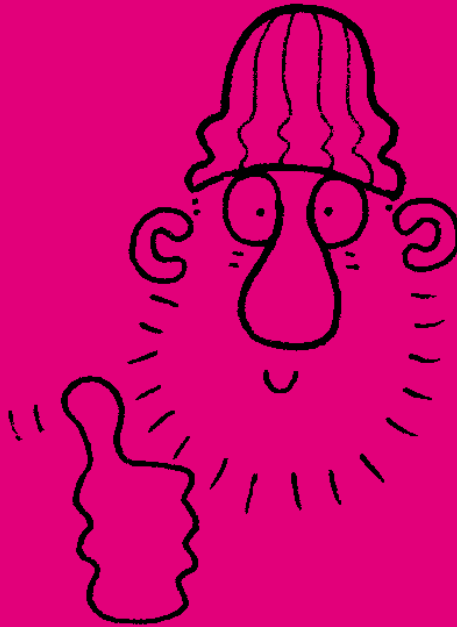
EVERY YEAR THERE ARE INJURIES AND EVEN DEATHS RESULTING FROM PEOPLE BEDDING DOWN IN RUBBISH BINS, SKIPS & CLOTHING BANKS. IT ISN'T SAFE! MANY BINS ARE EMPTIED IN THE QUIET HOURS, SOMETIMES BY A VEHICLE WITH A SINGLE DRIVER, DUMPING THEIR LOAD, WITH A LONG DROP, INTO A COMPACTOR - WHO WILL HEAR YOU OVER THE MACHINERY NOISE!

STAY OUT!

STAY SAFE!

the Pavement

**You can read the news,
keep informed & search
our directory of services
online @**



www.thepavement.org.uk

advised attendees to start small: "If you only have three people who want to set up a shelter, you need to draw in some more and get a range of different skills. But don't wait until you've got everything sorted, because by then it'll be the summer holidays!"

Sally Leigh added: "First, look into the situation in your local community. What are the public, private and voluntary organisations who are involved in helping the homeless already doing?"

A Cannock Winter Shelter committee member reported that some local churches had said their halls were being used for other purposes. Mark Brennan, of the Caris Islington Shelter, said that as most shelters use the halls only between 6pm and 8am, they could be incorporated around other church activities.

Cotteridge Church URC was worried about storing larger items such as beds, but the panel responded that accommodation could be basic and that some shelters used airbeds.

One member of the audience said the ministers she had spoken to were worried about people turning up intoxicated or being aggressive. HJ responded that the policies and procedures outlined in the pack would help lessen those fears. Most shelters used a referral process rather than an 'open door' system.

Asked about the cost of setting up a shelter, Sally Leigh replied: "Barnet Winter Shelter started with £5,000 from the Church Urban Fund and still has £2,000 left – a lot of their supplies are donated."

Cannock Winter Shelter thought they had a venue but were worried about planning permission. Revd Paul replied: "We didn't ask for planning permission – we just did it! And if you use church halls, you don't normally need it." Housing Justice offered to talk to local churches in Cannock and Neelam Sunder, from Homeless Link, offered to talk to the local authority. "They should have a cold weather protocol," she

said. "'Additional' and 'temporary' are the words to use. If the temperature drops below zero on three consecutive nights, any homeless person is entitled to accommodation. B&Bs are very expensive and councils have had their budgets cut, so local authorities should warm to the idea of winter shelters."

Paul Atkins, from the Reach Out Network, confirmed that several Birmingham ministers were interested in setting up their own Winter Shelter Forum and would be arranging a first meeting soon.

Ellie Jones

- You can get the 'Shelter in a Pack' from Housing Justice 020 7920 6600 www.housingjustice.org.uk

Open Cinema

In 2005, a new initiative combining homelessness and culture hit the streets of London after Christoph Warrack, a volunteer at a Soho homelessness shelter, questioned the lack of entertainment. Today, Open Cinema runs a network of film clubs and workshops for the homeless and socially excluded. With six film clubs in London, together with clubs in Exeter, Bradford and Newcastle, Open Cinema is now looking to expand to the West Midlands.

The non-profit Open Cinema has been invited to collaborate with 7 Inch Cinema, which runs film screenings and music events in Birmingham. It also produces the illustrious Flatpack Film Festival, which offers rising filmmakers a new platform to present their work. This ethos links directly with the Open Cinema belief in empowerment and nourishment through culture and – specifically – film. Open Cinema CEO Christoph Warrack stresses the importance of spreading this belief through the flexibility of the service: "I'm keen to find partners in the

Midlands to see how Open Cinema will develop in local contexts. The service has been designed to be adapted so that any audience can programme, produce and lead live presentations with the films and filmmakers, and develop their own ideas and aspirations. This can be transformative for people who have been experiencing homelessness or isolation, but it's exciting and empowering for almost anyone."

Not only does Open Cinema pull out all the stops to offer clients the full cinema experience, with screenings chosen by participants, but they also run film workshops allowing members to develop valuable creative skills by making films which convey their own experiences.

The film clubs' special guests have included Mike Leigh, Ken Loach and Stephen Frears. Guests introduce and give Q&A sessions on their feature or short film. This allows members to connect with the filmmakers who inspire them, and welcomes them back into a culture and community from which they have been excluded.

Open Cinema success stories have included clients being given permanent roles and others being accepted onto academic film courses. The response has been encouragingly positive. "You need a bit of laughter and comedy in your life," members comment. "People get down in the dumps and this cheers you up... Some people come here because they have nowhere to go."

Open Cinema would love to hear from anyone in the West Midlands who'd like to set up an Open Cinema for their community or for any disadvantaged group they work with. To find out more, please visit www.opencinema.net

Lizzie Green

Hopes for first West Midlands winter shelter

Plans for a winter night shelter for homeless people in Cannock are underway after December 2010 witnessed severe weather conditions, with snow and temperatures as low as -10°.

Pat Wolfe, Co-ordinator of the Cannock Chase Winter Night Shelter Committee, said: "Since 2008, we have been trying to set up a pilot scheme to offer a much-needed winter night shelter for people sleeping rough in Cannock. The main problem is premises. We asked Cannock Chase District Council for help; they offered us a grant of £500 through their Members Initiative Scheme and will support us if we can find premises for the shelter. Sadly, we have been unable to, and the grant has been withheld. We have until 31 March 2011 to spend the money or we will lose this funding."

Cannock Chase District Council undertook a homelessness review in 2009–2010. In a sample of 50 housing options enquiry sheets, where people are asked where they slept the previous evening, 11 people were sleeping rough, eight were sofa-surfing with friends, 13 were living with family members, two had caravans, two were in B&B accommodation and one was in police custody.

Mrs Wolfe added: "Cannock is the 16th most deprived area in the country. We asked 'Churches Together' to take responsibility and help us. There is nowhere else for us to go – they are our only hope. The eight ministers who look after 15 churches in Cannock will discuss this matter with their church committee groups to see how they can help and will reconvene on 26 January."

Mrs Wolfe began helping Cannock's homeless people after securing a grant from 'Community Championing Funding' to set

up a Portakabin in a car park in Cannock serving sandwiches and hot drinks four days a week. The Methodist Church offered lunch one day a week. This became a regular voluntary feature for service users, was taken over by the charity Cannock Lions Club People in Need and is still in operation.

Mrs Wolfe said: "We feel more optimistic since attending the Housing Justice's Shelter Pack meeting – it was a breath of fresh air. The shelter pack was comprehensive."

Retired social worker Dennis Spencer is a trustee of Cannock Chase Winter Night Shelter Committee and a member of Pye Green Christian Centre, which works closely with local homeless people. He said: "We use three houses in Cannock offering accommodation to homeless people and help to rehabilitate them. In the last 18 months we have seen 25 homeless people, we accommodated 20 of them. All were male and some were hard-drug users. Sixty-five per cent had a criminal record, but while we supported them, only 15 per cent of them re-offended. There is obviously a desperate need for a winter night shelter in Cannock, and it seems the worst affected are single men."

Jackie Lindoe

Crisis Skylight Spring Term

Crisis Skylight Birmingham's spring term programme began on 10 January. An array of workshops, arts sessions and key skill support projects for homeless and vulnerable adults will be held at venues around the city over a 10-week period. Many of the activities and workshops are accredited, and clients can earn OCR and NOCN qualifications if they success-

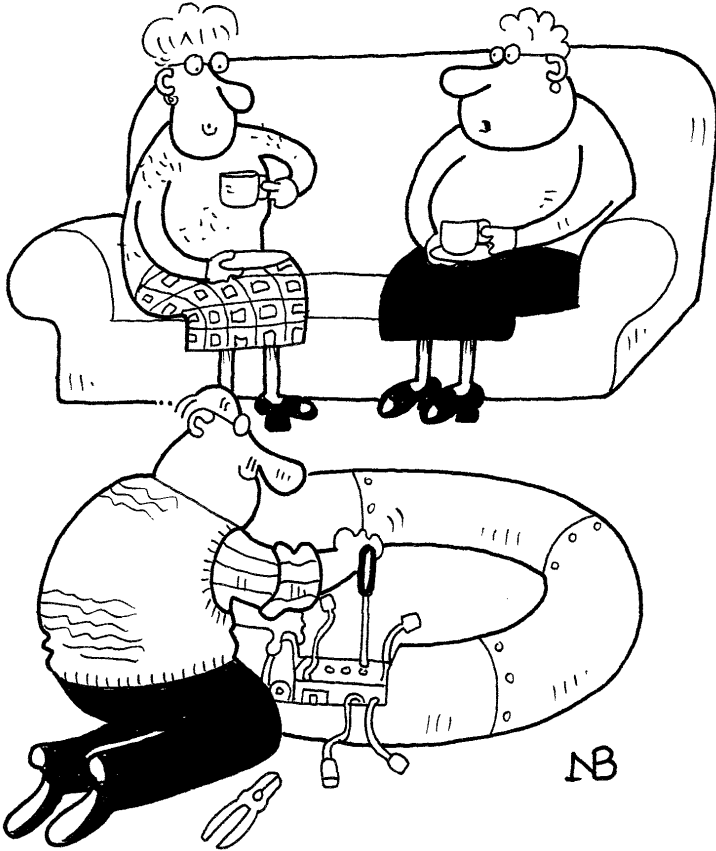
fully complete the programme.

Crisis Skylight was set up in Birmingham in the summer of 2010, and held its first programme of workshops and activities in the autumn. This culminated in a performance and awards ceremony at the Custard Factory Theatre in Digbeth, Birmingham, in December. Crisis clients and partner organisations attended, and clients who had completed courses were presented with their certificates. Impressive performances from people who had been involved in the arts projects included songs composed and professionally performed by clients, along with some profoundly moving spoken-word and poetry performances.

An extended drama performance by SIFA Fireside service users incorporated the variety of skills they had learned in the drama workshops hosted there. The three-part play, which the service users also helped to produce and write, was a great success despite some last-minute problems with casting and props. Rob, one of the service users who took part in the production, said: "Being involved in this has definitely improved my self-confidence and self-esteem... We had fun putting on a great show."

The spring term drama workshops are being held at SIFA Fireside and Anawim. The popular song-writing and performance sessions are also returning, as are the accredited basic skills lessons and the DJ skills project at South Birmingham College. New activities include a 'Start IT' course and a film club that will hold screenings once a week at St Anne's Hostel. The key skills English sessions have been revamped and return as the 'Discovery Club' at SIFA Fireside to offer tuition to people of varying abilities.

Crisis Skylight will be sure to build upon their good reputation and the success they achieved last year.



"Norman's building a small Hadron Collider"



Terrence Potts

Age at disappearance: 54

Terrence has been missing from Digbeth, West Midlands, since 10 November 1999.

There is considerable concern for Terrence's welfare as it has been so long since he was last heard from. His family just want to know that he is safe and well, and they urge him to get in touch. He can call the confidential service **Message Home on Freefone 0800 700 740** to get help and support. Terrence can also go into any police station and say he has been reported as a missing person.

Terrence, who is also known as Poto, is 5ft 4in tall, of slim build with grey hair and blue eyes. He has several tattoos including one on his chest as well as on both hands and arms.

If you've seen Terrence please call the 24-hour confidential charity **Missing People** on **Freefone 0500 700 700** Email: seensomeone@missingpeople.org.uk

**missing
people**

Registered Charity No. 1089117

For more information on Crisis Skylight and other Crisis projects around the country, visit www.crisis.org.uk

Liam Bradley

Benefits legal advice resource under threat from Government cuts

The Birmingham Tribunal Unit (BTU), an independent voluntary organisation established in 1986 to provide free welfare benefits legal advice, is under threat of closure.

Following Birmingham City Council's November 2010 decision that funding to voluntary sector advice agencies would be terminated from December, Kathleen Corrigan, the BRU's project manager, was faced with the prospect of the Unit having to cease accepting referrals (as has now happened) and the threat of closure.

Ms Corrigan told *The Pavement*: "Although an absolute decision to close the Unit has not yet been made (this is the responsibility of our trustees), we are informing our users that the funding we received from the Council has been terminated and, as a result, we may have to close at the end of March 2011. Whilst we generate some income from other sources such as charitable trusts, a legal help scheme and by delivering training, this is not enough to sustain the organisation without additional funding."

Although the Unit is now advising clients to contact other organisations such as Community Legal Advice and the EDAS Foundation to request legal representation, Kathleen believes that BTU's service is unique to the region: "As far as I am aware, we are the only organisation in Birmingham that consistently provides representation at benefit appeal hearings. There are a couple of community-based

advice agencies such as the CASA Project that do some representation, and Community Legal Advice provides specialist telephone advice and can prepare cases on behalf of claimants but does not represent. It is very difficult to know where homeless clients can go if they need representation. We currently have some 280 clients who had expected us to represent them, but there is a possibility we will not be around to conclude their cases. The situation is very worrying, and the uncertainty over the threat of closure makes things very difficult for staff on both a personal and professional level."

Fraser Tennant

- Community Legal Advice (formerly Community Legal Service Direct) provides help and advice on issues such as benefits, tax credits, debt, education, housing and employment. They can be contacted on 0845 345 4345
- The EDAS Foundation, a charity which provides advice and guidance for local people to achieve greater social mobility and living standards, can be contacted on 0121 507 9903
- The Community Advocacy Support and Advice (CASA) Project offers advice, advocacy and support for people from ethnic minorities living in the Balsall Heath, Small Heath, Moseley, Sparkhill and Sparkbrook areas of Birmingham. The Project can be contacted on 0121 440 5022

News in brief

The homeless news from across the UK and around the planet

Rise predicted for 2011

A worrying trend that has seen the number of rough sleepers increase in London over the last 12 months is set to continue – and worsen – this year, charities have warned.

St Mungo's said that cuts to services designed to help those most at risk of homelessness would see more people forced onto the streets.

Charles Fraser, the charity's chief executive, said: "Right now, the trend line shows that rough sleeping numbers are rising. Great work is being done in helping people off the streets, but we're deeply concerned that the picture will worsen in the year ahead."

The charity said that 1,549 people had been seen sleeping rough in London between July and September last year, with a further 919 contacted on the streets. This was a 19 per cent increase on the previous three months, and 108 more than at the same time last year.

"Central government has pledged to protect the most vulnerable and that cuts will be applied fairly," added Fraser, "but the reality is that some councils are planning cuts in funding to services for homeless people and those at real risk of sleeping rough." The government's own statistics showed a 14 per cent jump across the country since 2009. This was the first time that numbers had increased over two consecutive quarters since 2003, said the government.

With more than 70 per cent of rough sleepers suffering mental health problems, any cuts in the services they use could have a big impact on homelessness, warned

St Mungo's. The charity revealed that it would also be facing cuts in the months ahead, with its largest hostel in Lambeth at risk of closure. Its homeless prevention service in London prisons is another of 28 services facing loss of funding as London councils plan a potential £3.2 million in cuts, it said.

The organisation's concerns were mirrored by London charity The Simon Community. Allan Cole, a trustee, said: "We're definitely seeing more people on the streets and the situation is going to get worse before it starts to get better." The charity said that it was "making changes" to the way that it conducted its street counts of the capital's rough sleepers, so did not have up-to-date figures, but said that the situation was "definitely getting worse".

Garnet Roach

Red tape leaves half of London's homeless without shelter

A snapshot survey by the Simon Community in London found that half of rough sleepers had not been offered emergency cold weather shelter – even in sub-zero temperatures.

The Simon Community was carrying out its annual survey of 90 people who use its services when it found the worrying trend and decided to do a smaller, follow-up questionnaire. This second survey was carried out in the London Borough of Westminster between 8pm and 10pm on 3 December. The 32 people surveyed were asked 'Have you been offered

emergency shelter in the last three days?'. Nearly half replied 'no'.

That night, the temperature was -5C, with similarly sub-zero temperatures recorded on preceding nights. Under Severe Weather Emergency Protocols, local authorities are required to "take prompt action to ensure all rough sleepers have access to shelter if someone is at risk due to sleeping rough during the extreme cold weather". Extreme cold weather is classified as zero or sub-zero temperatures over three consecutive nights.

However, according to the Simon Community, the evidence from its survey suggests that action by local authorities is failing to reach people and putting lives at risk. Simon Community trustee Dave Clark said: "We've seen evidence of poor coordination, of unclear messages about who is entitled, and unnecessary bureaucracy. What we should be seeing, instead, is a major humanitarian effort to get people – no matter their background – in out of the cold."

The survey also found that of those who were offered a place, nearly 31 per cent chose to stay outside. "Many have felt that emergency shelters would be too busy or have problems with drink or drugs," explained the Simon Community press release, though it pointed out: "Those who have used the shelters report a broadly positive experience despite concerns about the numbers using them."

Carinya Sharples

- We're conducting our own 'street count' using numbers in London winter shelters on a set date – we're still making calls, but should have a rough figure for March.

The long run

A London-based, rough-sleeping blogger is running the Dublin marathon to raise money for a rural homeless charity.

Despite having no connection with Chippenham, where the Doorway Project is based, elusive social networker 'Tom', 35, decided to raise money for the charity after making contact with their "fierce" manager, Lisa Lewis, on the social networking site Twitter.

"About 14 months ago I ran a 10k, which went quite well, and I always intended to do a marathon," she told *The Pavement* via email. "I just decided that being homeless didn't have to prevent me from achieving this goal."

Tom fits in training on top of holding down a full-time agency job in the civil service. She has been on the streets since last May following an illegal eviction and has been Tweeting and blogging about her experiences ever since.

Juggling life on the streets, writing, work and training is no mean feat, though, and marathon preparation is slow; luckily, the event is not until 31 October. "I have the most the most useless training programme ever!" she confessed. "But I have deliberately chosen the Dublin Marathon because if all else fails, I can walk it!"

She's already paid for the running entry and travel by credit card, a luxury left over from a more settled life before she lost her second job, ran short of rent and was evicted. She is now provides insight into life on the streets and homeless services from an anti-begging standpoint.

Housing Minister Grant Shapps is among her 354 Twitter followers, as are many of the country's big homeless charities and trade journalists. Despite articles in the *Guardian*, *Inside Housing and Connect*, a magazine written by and for homelessness professionals, she

has maintained her anonymity.

"I can't be open about my identity because it will exist forever on the Internet linked to my name. I am intelligent enough and have enough forethought not to do that."

Although her insights fuel online debate about the way current policy is affecting homelessness, she is clear her writing is "absolutely not a political statement". It is more a diary incentivised by having an audience.

Katy Taylor

Free booze cure

A scheme in Canada to give free alcohol to rough sleepers has been "spectacularly successful", according to researchers. Under the scheme, a small amount of alcohol is given every few hours to people with alcohol problems. The idea is to get them to drink less by encouraging moderate drinking in a controlled environment.

A team in British Columbia recommended raising tax on most alcohol to discourage people from buying potentially harmful drinks. At the same time, they worried that some who could no longer afford those drinks would turn to products such as mouthwash and antifreeze, which are far more dangerous than normal alcoholic drinks.

Lead researcher Tim Stockwell said: "People think this is crazy, spending taxpayers money giving alcohol to this population, but we do it for methadone, for heroin addicts, why not for alcohol addicts?"

Stockwell added that alcohol should be viewed the same way as hard drugs, though many more people die from alcohol abuse than from drugs like heroin and crack cocaine.

Jeremy Swain, of homeless charity Thames Reach, said there needed to be more projects aimed at getting people to stop

drinking completely. He told *The Pavement*: "Broadly speaking, I go with the view that the majority of the homeless seem to have, which is that there now need to be more abstinence projects.

"The closest we have come at Thames Reach to buying alcohol for people is at one of our hostels where, for a small number of residents, we will go to the off-licence and buy them alcohol. We do this to regulate their intake. We buy them weaker lager than they would buy if they were going themselves – premium lagers rather than super-strength. The overall aim remains to move people, by stages, to complete abstinence, but the reality is that for some this cannot be done in one 'bound'."

John Ashmore

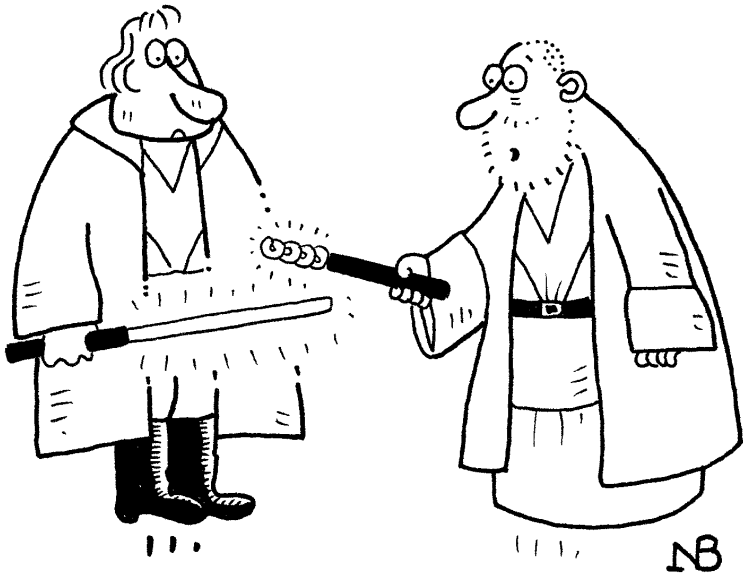
Golden voice of NBA

A former homeless man has become a TV star in the US, all thanks to his "golden voice". Ted Williams (pictured over the page) first came to the public's attention when a reporter from a newspaper in the city of Columbus, Ohio, posted a video of him on file-sharing site YouTube. In it, Ted makes a radio-style announcement in a deep, rich voice while holding a sign saying "God-given gift of voice". Ted, it transpired, had worked as DJ in New York and Columbus before losing his job due to drug and alcohol problems.

What happened next is a testament to the influence of social media. Ted became a 'YouTube phenomenon' when his video notched up an amazing 13 million views in the space of 48 hours. The mainstream media got wind of the online sensation and catapulted Ted to nationwide fame and a series of opportunities he might never have thought possible. Within two days of the clip being posted,



"Fortunately, 'the banker' as a species are still being headhunted"



"These energy-saving light sabres take ages to warm up"

Ted was offered a job by his local basketball team, the Cleveland Cavaliers, and there were rumours of TV work coming his way. With a new haircut and a new lease on life, Ted travelled to New York to appear on the *Today* show. He was also reunited with his mother, Julia, after 10 years apart. Conscious of his chequered past, she told him, "Don't disappoint me".

With his new fame came certain drawbacks. That tearful reunion with his long-lost mother was delayed due to TV networks arguing over which of them would get the chance to film – and cash in on – the meeting. Ted also admitted he thought he would have prob-

lems dealing with his new-found celebrity, and resolved to see a therapist to help him cope. That Ted has some serious problems to deal with in his personal life became clear when he was arrested for apparently fighting with his 29-year old daughter.

Ted also had to play out his personal traumas in public in front of a huge audience when he appeared on the popular *Dr Phil* programme. On the show he discussed his previous addiction problems with TV psychologist Phil McGraw. In front of a national audience, Ted was forced to admit to previous violent behaviour and stealing cars. A day after his first appearance on *Dr Phil*, Ted returned to announce he was going back

into rehab to kick his alcohol and drug habits for good. As we go to press, Ted is rumoured to have left rehab in Texas after two weeks in.

Let's hope he gets a chance to catch his breath soon.

John Ashmore

Sikh help

According to the Sikh Welfare Awareness Team (Swat), at least 200 people are living rough in Southall, reports the *Ealing Gazette*.

The volunteer group, which provides support for the homeless, including medicine, clean clothing, sleeping bags and drugs advice, reports that men and women from the Punjab and other parts of

India are sleeping in graveyards, alleyways and even rubbish bins.

Swat volunteer Suneeta Dohil said: "The problem is worse than a lot of people realise. Because they don't speak English or trust local authorities, a lot of these homeless people are scared to come forward, so they get forgotten about."

Ealing Council's cabinet member for housing, Hitesh Tailor, countered: "All our work in Southall has shown most of those outside at night do have a place that they could go to sleep, albeit not a permanent home. Outreach workers constantly visit areas where there are known problems, but one issue is that many of the people are fearful of being approached



by officers, possibly because of concerns they may have about their immigration status."

He added that the council would continue to work with the UK Border Agency and the police, as well as outreach charities such as St Mungo's and Thames Reach to tackle the problems of rough sleepers.

Tracey Kiddle

US libraries welcome rough sleepers

A number of American libraries are embracing the homeless by hosting social service agencies, providing IT tutors and even redesigning their facilities to make them friendlier to those on the streets.

In San Francisco, where the downtown library has a full-time social worker, city librarian Luis Herrera told *USA Today*: "Libraries are becoming our community living rooms".

Although libraries can enforce "reasonable rules", the federal court decided in 1992 that the First Amendment allowed everyone the right of access to information. And across the country there has been a growing trend in libraries doing more to welcome homeless users. The homeless "go to libraries because they don't have anywhere else to go, and that's a shame," Audra Caplan, president of the Public Library Association, told *USA Today*.

So instead of trying to put homeless users off using libraries, an increasing number of libraries have begun welcoming them, with the Central Library in Madison, Wisconsin, even rearranging its seating and moving bathrooms in a bid to make its facilities more comfortable for the homeless. The

move is part of a \$29.5 million (£18.4m) redesign which will see the needs of those users who live on the streets as key to the renovation.

Councils in London said that although the trend was interesting, there were no plans to replicate them in the capital. A spokesman for Westminster Council told *The Pavement*: "Rough sleepers are, of course, welcome to use our libraries, but they are clearly not equipped or suited to host social services.

"We also have no plans to turn them into 'community living rooms' for rough sleepers, many of whom have complex needs. We are, however, committed to helping people off the streets and have an extensive range of services to help long-term rough sleepers back towards independent living."

Garnet Roach

Three charged over Swansea murder

Two men have been charged with the murder of another homeless man in Swansea, and their case will begin in April. A further man was charged with assisting in the crime, having swapped a pair of his shoes for a bloodstained pair from one of the accused.

David Williams, known as 'Little Dai', was 26 years old when he was found in the centre of Swansea just before 4am on 7 January. He had received multiple injuries to his face. Darren Rigdon, 33, and Christopher Hart, 37, both of no fixed abode, have pleaded not guilty to his murder. Although they have different surnames, the two accused are brothers. Christopher Hughes, 31, was also charged in assisting, having changed shoes with Rigdon.

Williams was a regular at the Swansea Cyrenians drop-in centre. The centre manager, Christine Skelton told the South

Wales Evening Post: "He was a really nice, kind guy, and he had a great sense of humour. We can't believe what has happened."

Staff

Suspicious US bin death

An investigation has been launched in the US into the death of a homeless man in Chicago at the end of December. The man, believed to be in his mid-50s, was discovered near large rubbish bins in the city's so-called 'Magnificent Mile', one of the city's most exclusive areas.

Police originally believed the man had died after being crushed by the trash compacter that he frequently used to sleep in during cold weather – a hazard which annually claims the lives of several rough sleepers in the US and Britain. Temperatures in Chicago can frequently drop as low as -15 degrees Celsius in the winter, and the city's homeless population has frequently suffered from deaths and accidents from sheltering in bins and waste disposal units. Workers in an office building nearby had often seen the man camped out near the bins, which led to early reports that he had been crushed to death.

"He was always hanging out back here," said Mary Glick, a worker in the building. "Last week, when it was so cold, we saw him out here with no coat on. Our dock girl ended up finding him gloves and a coat. A few days later, he was back here, with no coat."

Another worker said that the man had been shooed away from the area many times, but always seemed to return. Area detectives have now launched an investigation into his death, after their initial reports revealed that crushing was not the cause.

James O'Reilly





"Whinge drinkers"

Fear in Stroud

Fear of violence is leading rough sleepers to avoid bedding down in Stroud town centre, according to the Marah Trust, a homeless charity, reports the *Gloucestershire Echo*.

The Marah Trust is a Christian charity that supports marginalised people in Stroud. It caters for 80 people at a time and offers, food, warmth, company and advice. Client care co-ordinator, David Guy, who volunteers for the Marah Trust, said: "They don't, as a rule, sleep out in Stroud town centre.

"They live in the woods, garden sheds, old caravans, and cars. The main problem is with people who have no understanding of what mental health issues and addiction mean. A couple of years ago, there was a guy in his 50s who was sleeping in his car. He wasn't in it at the time but it was set alight.

He added that it is not easy to quantify how many homeless people there are in Stroud, but it's higher than the council figures report. "The official figures the council works on is between one and six," he said. "It's a lot higher than that."

Of course, crime against readers is not a problem confined to rural Gloucestershire. According 'Living Places: Powers, Rights and Responsibilities', a report published by the homeless charity, Crisis, nearly four in five of rough sleepers have been victims of crime, compared to one in five young men, the group most at risk of crime in the general population.

Overall, rough sleepers are 15 times more likely to experience assault than the general population.

Tracey Kiddie

Aspire to work

Homeless people in London are being offered training to help them start their own businesses. The Aspire Foundation is working with a network of the capital's homeless charities in a bid to offer an "alternative way out of poverty". The organisation is offering six-week courses in various locations across the city to help teach people the skills they need to get started in business.

Since its launch in October, the Aspire Foundation says the project, which includes covers topics such as start-up ideas or finding your market, has been an "overnight success" with dozens of homeless people already signed up to attend. They are hopeful that many businesses will soon start up, ranging from window cleaning through to West Indian food outlets and advice services.

Trainer Paul Funnell, a self-made entrepreneur, said: "Running these courses, I have been really inspired by the untapped talent available.

"My passion is to see people fulfil their potential and ambitions. Many of the people we are working with are used to incredibly long days full of hard work and hardship. Whilst some may not suit a traditional 9-5, they have the dedication and determination they'll need to succeed as their own boss."

The charity says the project's success is due to its emphasis on practical and realistic business plans, and that people respond better to straightforward advice than complicated diagrams, business models and theoretical studies.

Felix Fry, from the homeless charity Connections at St Martins near London's Trafalgar Square, said: "I can see Aspire's work has got our clients seriously thinking about the possibilities of starting their own business. Their courses and experience make the proc-

esses and bureaucracy all seem less impersonal and forbidding."

Rebecca Evans

• For more information call 02079214446 or visit www.aspire-foundation.com

Houston has a problem

The Texan city of Houston has begun enforcing ordinance that restricts provision of food to those on the street by requiring anyone serving food for public consumption, whether it's given away or sold, to have a permit. The permit requires that the food is prepared in a certified kitchen with a certified food manager.

Kathy Barton, a spokeswoman for the city's health and human services department, told the *Houston Chronicle* that "poor people are the most vulnerable to foodborne illness and also are the least likely to have access to health care."

Some local organizations and councillors are opposing this action.

Staff

Arrests in Leeds

Police in Leeds are increasing their drive to move homeless people out of the city centre by prosecuting rough sleepers.

The controversial initiative, known as 'rough sleeper sweeps', sees officers patrol the city in the early hours of the morning to catch people asleep on the streets. Anyone found sleeping rough is given a caution under the Vagrancy Act and referred to the council's Street Outreach Team in a bid to help them find accommodation. But if they are found again, they are arrested and prosecuted.

Chief Inspector Vernon Francis said: "Rough sleepers are a serious issue in the city centre, not just because they cause antisocial behaviour but also because these people need help to turn their lives around.

"Moving them on is only a temporary solution, which is why we're committed to working with partners to help find them a home, particularly in the run-up to Christmas when temperatures regularly drop below freezing.

"By helping them find permanent accommodation, we're putting a stop to the antisocial behaviour problems and helping them get their lives back on track."

The tactic has provoked criticism from some homeless groups, however, with many believing it to be too heavy-handed and not properly addressing the issue. Simon Community trustee David Clark said: "In London, we have seen police tactics such as Operation Porcho, where rough sleepers were hosed down and moved on. This kind of policy is not addressing the root causes of why people are sleeping rough and simply displaces them elsewhere.

"Using the law to deal with rough sleepers is just one of the many, many tools available and it should not be the first."

The 'sweeps' first started in August but were intensified over the Christmas period, when temperatures in the Yorkshire city plummeted below zero. It is a joint operation with the City Neighbourhood Policing Team, Leeds City Council's Street Outreach Team and Safer Leeds. Officers and police community support officers visit known haunts of rough sleepers at 6am each weekday.

Police have hailed the policy a success, saying that when it was first launched in August, 50 people were found sleeping rough on the city's streets. But their daily patrols have been reduced to every other

day and officers say they now rarely find anyone sleeping rough.

From August to December, 28 people received warnings for sleeping rough; and of these, 13 were arrested after being found sleeping rough for a second time. Chief Inspector Francis added: "We've taken action after listening to the concerns of residents and businesses, and we're keen to hear if any rough sleepers return to the city.

"By reporting these people, we can find them as soon as possible, and help them off the streets."

Police have also released a video of them moving people on. Council-run shelter St George's Crypt, which looks after homeless people, said beds were available for homeless people in the city and that they had 21 a night after a recent refurbishment. And they said the city council's 'Severe Weather Protocol', which runs when temperatures drop, meant there would always be somewhere for homeless people to sleep during the night.

Rob McCartney, Leeds City Council's housing strategy and commissioning manager, also said there were emergency bed spaces in the city during extreme weather.

Rebecca Evans

Domestic violence ruling

On 26 January, the Supreme Court extended the meaning of domestic violence (DV) in homelessness cases to include psychological violence, and brought homelessness law into line with family law.

Housing officers for the London Borough of Hounslow had decided that a woman who fled her home with her two children was not homeless because her husband had not assaulted her, though she was afraid he would. It was not unreasonable for her, they thought, to remain in the family home.

The Supreme Court disagreed.

Much funding for DV advice came from the Supporting People pot, which was ring-fenced but is now being much reduced by local authorities; the performance indicator which required councils to pay lip-service to dealing with it was abolished in 2008, so Devon County Council, for instance, can legally cut its entire DV services, as it has announced it will.

Women are most likely to be DV victims, but it also affects men. Broken Rainbow, the country's specialist LGBT domestic violence group, is losing a tenth of its income.

DV is one of the major reasons given for becoming homeless and in 2008-09 accounted for 13 per cent of all priority-need homelessness assessments.

Under Section 177(1) of the Housing Act 1996, a person at risk of DV is automatically treated as unintentionally homeless. As we reported in December 2010 ('Cut for revenge?'), failure to provide emergency accommodation in some cases can lead to councils being found guilty of maladministration.

Staff



Ken Pyne

DESIGN A FEMALE SUPERHERO!

**STREET
SHIELD
COMPETITION
TIME!**

READ ON
TO FIND
OUT HOW TO
ENTER!

WELCOME!
AND TO START
THIS YEAR
I NEED
YOUR HELP!



I'VE HEARD RUMOUR
THAT SOME OF MY
ENEMIES ARE OPERATING
IN OTHER CITIES.



AND EVEN WITH THE
HELP OF THE CARDBOARD
SHIELD, GOLDEN BLANK
AND ROUGH DIAMOND
IT'LL BE A TOUGH FIGHT

AND YOU MIGHT'VE
NOTICED THAT ALL MY
FELLOW HEROES
ON THE STREET
ARE MEN!

SO I'M
LOOKING FOR
A FEMALE HERO
TO FIGHT
ALONGSIDE!

AND YOU CAN
HELP ME BY
DESIGNING
A FANTASTIC
SUPER-HEROINE!





PS
ING
D
ET
!



DRAW YOUR DESIGN ON BOARD, PAPER OR THE BACK OF AN ENVELOPE. USE PEN, PENCIL, CRAYONS, PAINTS OR EVEN A PC. ANYTHING YOU LIKE, REALLY!

AS LONG AS YOU CAN POST OR EMAIL IT TOO US!

AND GIVE US A BIT OF BACKGROUND - WHERE IS SHE FROM? WHAT'S HER BACK STORY? AND WHAT POWERS DOES SHE HAVE?

THE TOP TEN ENTRIES PICKED BY THE EDITORS AND TRUSTEES WILL BE DRAWN BY MY CREATOR, MIKE, AND PUT TO THE PUBLIC VOTE...

THE WINNER WILL RECEIVE THEIR CREATION ON A T-SHIRT AND SEE HER IN PRINT ACROSS THE UK!

GOOD LUCK EVERYONE!



The rules:
1. Entries from readers only, so you must be homeless, ex-homeless, in temporary accommodation or vulnerably housed.
2. Closing date for the competition is on Friday 25 March 2011.
3. The judges' decision is final.
4. Email entries or post them to:
PO BOX 60385, London, WC1A 9BH

NEXT MONTH
GOING HOME!

Health and wellbeing

The Pavement's health team – a podiatrist and a nurse – aim to help keep you well



Cracked heels

Old skin cells account for 90 per cent of the dust in buildings.

You may not know that you have dry skin around your heels, and it's often not a problem. But if you have diabetes, check your feet regularly – a vanity or inspection mirror lets you see those out-of-the-way places! A lack of feeling in your hands and feet is a common complication of high blood sugar levels, and you may be unaware your skin is damaged. Normally, the outer skin can cope with moderate shearing stresses (rubbing against another surface), but when it is damaged, callus (thickened skin) replaces the normal, soft skin.

Thickened skin can crack, which

exposes the lower layer of skin (the dermis), and often leads to bleeding and infection. Cracked heels are often blamed on going barefoot or walking in flip-flops, but the condition is frequently triggered by not wearing a closed-in shoe that supports your heels and by dehydrated skin. If you have severe cracking, see your doctor or podiatrist – the hard skin needs to be carefully removed.

Fortunately, you can improve dry skin with some simple steps. Rehydrating the cells encourages the old cells to separate from the new ones, leaving a more pliable surface which can cope with the external stresses around the surface of the foot.

However, hard skin always returns – a chemical enzyme in the blood

determines how quickly the skin reproduces itself.

- Wash your feet in warm water (hand hot, 46° C).

- Dissolve a handful of table salt in a basinful of water and bathe the feet for no longer than 10 minutes before patting them dry. (The saline solution is antiseptic and will clean out deeper fissures.) If your cracks are severe, repeat the footbaths every four hours.

- Use an antiseptic cream to cover the cracks. If these do not heal within a few days, then report them to your doctor. Skin cells quickly take up water from bathing, and old cells can be removed easily by rubbing gently across the skin with a pumice stone or clean, plastic (not metal!) pot

scourer. Regular foot baths and rubbing keeps mild to moderate heel callus at bay. Rubbing cream into the skin is also recommended – anything that is good for the hands and face is good for the feet! Barrier creams are recommended for moderate to severe heel cracks. They are greasier and form a temporary film that traps microscopic water on the skin's surface and helps it rehydrate. Cream containing urea can be very good for severe heel callus but can also irritate the skin, so should be used only under direction. The doctor can prescribe other medicated creams.

Toe Slayer

Registered podiatrist/shoe historian

TB – a disease worth banging on about

Before antibiotics, TB (tuberculosis) claimed many lives. By the 1970s, it seemed the end was nigh for this dreadful illness, thanks to effective treatment and public health campaigns. In other parts of the world, it poses a serious risk: the World Health Organisation estimates that a third of the world's population is infected by the TB bacteria. It is relatively uncommon in the UK; but sadly, homeless people are one of the groups at risk of contracting it.

TB is spread by inhaling droplets of saliva (or spit) from the coughs and sneezes of an infected person. Most people who come into contact with the bacteria that causes TB will not develop the illness – their immune system will kill it off before it does any harm. Some will have the infection in their system but not develop

the illness for months or years – this is known as 'latent TB'. Others will develop the illness. It usually spreads to the lungs, where it is known as 'pulmonary TB'. TB can travel to other parts of the body, but the lungs are the most common.

If you are worried about TB, there are a number of things you can do to protect yourself. First, know the most common symptoms: a persistent cough, coughing up blood, fevers, chest pain, night sweats and weight loss. Because TB is spread by droplets of saliva, being in close contact with someone who has the disease means you could be at risk. So if you've been living closely with someone who has TB or you think may have TB, see a doctor.

People from sub-Saharan Africa, Asia (particularly India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Bangladesh), Eastern

Europe, Russia and Central America do not necessarily have TB, but there is more of it going around, so they run at a higher risk of contracting it. People with HIV are at more risk of contracting TB because the virus weakens the immune system. If you are HIV-positive, you probably know this, but it's worth discussing it with your doctor or nurse. People who inject drugs are also at higher risk of contracting TB. Be aware of your risk factors and the symptoms, and if you suspect you have TB, get tested as soon as possible.

In Britain, most adults will have received the BCG vaccination – look for the scar on your upper arm. The vaccination protects 70–80 per cent of the people who have it, but don't depend on it to protect you – there are tests to check whether you are still immune. Children are no longer automatically given the BCG vaccination, so if you are worried your kids may be at risk, talk to your doctor or health visitor.

If you have symptoms, still see a doctor. TB is not the death sentence it once was, but if you don't treat it, your lungs will become so damaged that breathing becomes impossible.

The good news is that TB can be treated, and most people will make a full recovery.

Sorry if that wasn't my cheeriest column, but best you are aware so you can take care of yourself.


Good health,

Susie Rathie
The Pavement's nurse




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.

