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The Editor

Good news/bad news

The U-turn on the proposed housing benefit cuts for people on long-term JSA is good news. However, the cuts affecting the charitable sector could still have an impact on individuals. Birmingham Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) has been forced to close all five of its 'drop-in' services (see page 7), which is particularly worrying when other advice services – such as those offering legal advice, as we reported in our last edition – are also under threat. We will be keeping an eye on this situation.

The Coventry Cyrenians have had their funding cut, which has forced them – like the CAB – to choose which services they offer. Meanwhile, local research has shown a worrying rise in the numbers of those presenting as homeless, and in 16- and 17-year-olds in particular. However, despite the cuts, the YMCA last month announced plans for a dedicated youth facility with self-contained flats (see page 4).

In January, SIFA Fireside, which – among other things – supports homeless people with alcohol dependencies, was prompted to hold a memorial service after an unprecedented rise in the number of the charity's service users who died during 2010 (page 7). We also report on the new drugs and alcohol service user-led forum and update you on attempts to establish a winter shelter in Cannock.

Ellie Jones

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The contest is still open to design our super heroine for the Street Shield comic strip - full details on our website:

www.thepavement.org.uk/cartoons.php

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Coventry Cyrenians forced to cut services

Cuts, cuts and more cuts is the current economic mantra, of course; sadly, Coventry Cyrenians is the latest in a long line of organisations to bear the brunt of them.

Since 1973, the homeless charity has provided a range of services for homeless, vulnerable and disadvantaged people in Coventry and Warwickshire, helping to improve their quality of their lives and providing support to help them live as independently as possible.

However, the organisation has had to make tough decisions and accept that its services could not continue as they were. The Cyrenians' open-house day centre, which provided subsidised food and other amenities, has been restructured so that staff now focus support on people with multiple needs.

"Those we identified as being in greatest need are being given priority," confirms Coventry Cyrenians' chief executive, Mike Fowler. "We have also done some structured work with existing clients to ensure that they are signposted to other services which are appropriate to their needs. Everyone at Cyrenians is disappointed to see the old service change, but we agreed that it was better to target the neediest rather than lose the entire service.

"Virtually every charity in this sector will need to review its services in the coming weeks and months. I doubt there will be one that isn't in the same boat as a result of the pressures on public sector spending. It's not a great place to be at the moment, but our sector has always been quite flexible and

innovative in its approach to service delivery, and I'm sure that we will find ways to deliver the best we can under the circumstances."

Fraser Tennant

Sleeping uneasy

Homelessness in Birmingham has risen by 140 per cent since January 2010, according to recent research from the YMCA.

The recession, a rise in family break-ups and a growing shortage of emergency accommodation are seen as having contributed to the startling increase.

Birmingham Christian Homeless Forum is keen to build on the YMCA's research by undertaking further fieldwork to get a clearer picture, and is hoping to carry out an unofficial "rough sleeper count". The last official count reported only nine rough sleepers, though anecdotal evidence from outreach teams suggests that number could now be as high as 20 or 30.

The extensive cutbacks nationwide have undoubtedly affected the services for the homeless in Birmingham. As government funding continues to dry up, organisations are struggling to accommodate the rising demand and need for services. Severe reductions in Supporting People (SP) funding have had the most substantial impact within Birmingham. Many schemes now support low-risk users only; others have been forced to close completely.

SIFA Fireside, a charity working with people who misuse alcohol, stopped running its six-bed wet hostel and its 21-bed dry hostel last year as a result of cuts in SP

funding. Closures such as these make it increasingly difficult for services to refer people on to emergency accommodation.

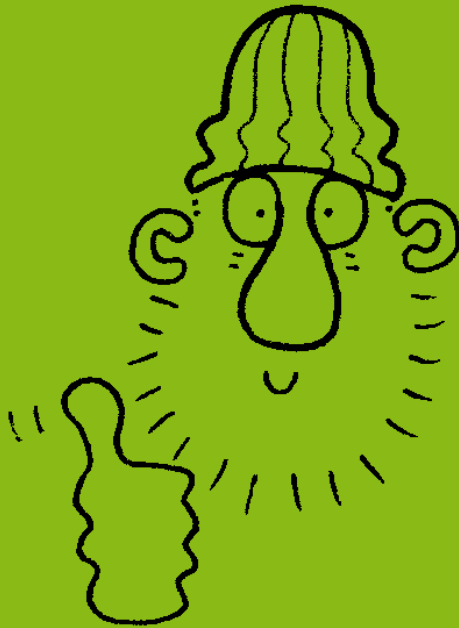
Homeless young adults are of particular concern, with recent figures revealing that more than one in 10 of the 723 homeless applications lodged in the city in July was by 16- and 17-year-olds. However, the YMCA hopes to help tackle this situation with a new multi-million pound development in Erdington, comprising 83 self-contained flats, a nursery, a community hall, youth centre and meeting rooms. Additionally, the YMCA is looking to expand some of its current sites in an attempt to meet the service need.

Alan Fraser, the chief executive of Birmingham YMCA, said: "In response to a desperate shortage of accommodation for single homeless people, especially the young and most vulnerable, Birmingham YMCA is now looking to increase capacity at one of our sites by a further 20 rooms. However, these spaces do not currently receive any Supporting People funding, and so the range of services that we can offer will be limited.

"Demand is higher than ever... The situation is now so severe that we're having to open up these rooms in order to meet unprecedented demand. However, without ongoing revenue funding, this is not a sustainable solution long-term."

With the funding landscape so uncertain, more reliance is put upon fundraising and sponsorship to finance not only the expansion but ultimately the continuation of such services. Last month, the YMCA hosted a sponsored "sleep out" fundraising event as part of Poverty and Homelessness

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



www.thepavement.org.uk



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

Action Week. People sheltering in cardboard boxes slept outside in car parks to raise awareness and funds for their local YMCA as part of the national 'Sleep Easy' campaign. In spite of freezing temperatures, over 80 people joined the sleep out which raised over £4,000.

Amber Woodfull

Changes to Birmingham Citizens Advice Bureau

Five of Birmingham's Citizen Advice Bureau offices were set to close on Friday 11 February after the council decided to end its funding of £600,000 per annum. However, as *The Pavement* went to press, Birmingham CAB confirmed that it remained hopeful and will be holding talks with councillors in the next few weeks to discuss a way forward.

Birmingham CAB has provided an outstanding service – free, independent, confidential and impartial advice – to local people since 1939, and 56,000 people have used the 'open door service' in the last year. A Birmingham City Council spokesperson acknowledged the benefits of legal entitlement advice services like CAB, but said that this funding was never intended to be indefinite. "We've always made it clear to agencies that funding was not guaranteed beyond any single year, up to a maximum of three years. It was never our intention for agencies to become dependent upon this source of funding, or that it form their sole source of income."

Despite the future of the service remaining uncertain, Yvonne Davies, Birmingham CAB's chief executive, explained that people can still make enquiries: "We are closing our 'information and advice' open-door service, but will still be

able to assist people with benefits, debt or housing issues, as we still receive other funding, which allows us to continue with these services. We will also have a telephone helpline 08444771010 from 10am till 4pm every day, and will assist people to find doors to help them with their issues and concerns."

Jasveer Kaur

SIFA Fireside holds memorial service

On Wednesday 26 January, the Birmingham-based charity SIFA Fireside held a service to remember 26 service users who died in 2010. Project worker Julie Ashford-Martin organised the ceremony at the Fireside building in Digbeth, and more than 30 staff and service users attended. It was run by Victoria Denning, a humanist celebrant, and was non-religious in order to



Photography by Matt Thorpe © 2011

respect the beliefs and spirituality of all those who died and of the friends who cared about them. The emotional occasion was a reminder of the importance and value of the lives of everyone, including those hidden from mainstream society. Music and poetry, some of it written by Fireside members, was used to remember the dead, and a symbolic candle was lit as the attendees took time to reflect on the lives of their friends.

The memorial service gave SIFA Fireside members an opportunity to come together and remember those who had died. Homeless people do not always have family funerals, and many service users are unable to attend them. The significant number of deaths meant that a group ceremony was an appropriate way for service users to pay their respects. The service also offered the chance for people to reflect on those people who died anonymously on the streets. As Julie Ashford-Martin pointed out: "Twenty-six is a lot of people and that's just from this one centre. These are only the people we know about – the actual figure may be much greater".

Bill West, a regular service user at SIFA Fireside, commented on the higher death rate: "It seems to have rocketed this year. It's not just drink and drugs – the cold probably had an influence on people's health, and the recession means that people are getting poorer. It's been a difficult year".

Liam Bradley

New service user led forum

Birmingham Drugs and Alcohol Action Team (BDAAT) has launched a new monthly Service User and Carer Forum. The team has recently been improving

involvement throughout Birmingham using research from the 36 services available to users.

The term 'service user' applies to all those who have been affected by their own or another person's drugs or alcohol misuse. Forum meetings are inclusive: they are for people who have experienced treatment, are midway through treatment or are considering seeking future support and therapy. The gatherings are also open to people who have been indirectly affected by drugs and alcohol misuse, through others.

The members act as a positive think tank and engine for the progression of the group. On a larger scale, they wish to develop and improve substance abuse services throughout Birmingham. The meetings, which revolve around issues of particular concern or interest to users, are emphatically member-led. Mark Spooner, the chair, commented the Forum aims to "inform, educate and empower service users in their personal recovery journey." It is a positive platform of motivation for its members.

The Forum plans to hold meetings that welcome the general public to experience their constructive work. They aim to provide facilities such as childcare during the gatherings and hope to establish partnerships with other service user groups throughout the West Midlands. This could have a powerful effect on the future improvement of services within Birmingham and the relationship between service users and providers.

BDAAT commission service providers across Birmingham to help with drug and alcohol treatments. Their helpline allows those in need to contact the team, which offers immediate professional advice and support and can refer them to an appropriate service or therapy. The system is designed to provide quick and efficient help and long-term support. Members choose the venue

for meetings, there is a free buffet and bus fares will be reimbursed. New members are always welcome.

Lizzie Green

- For more information please call **0800 073 0817**

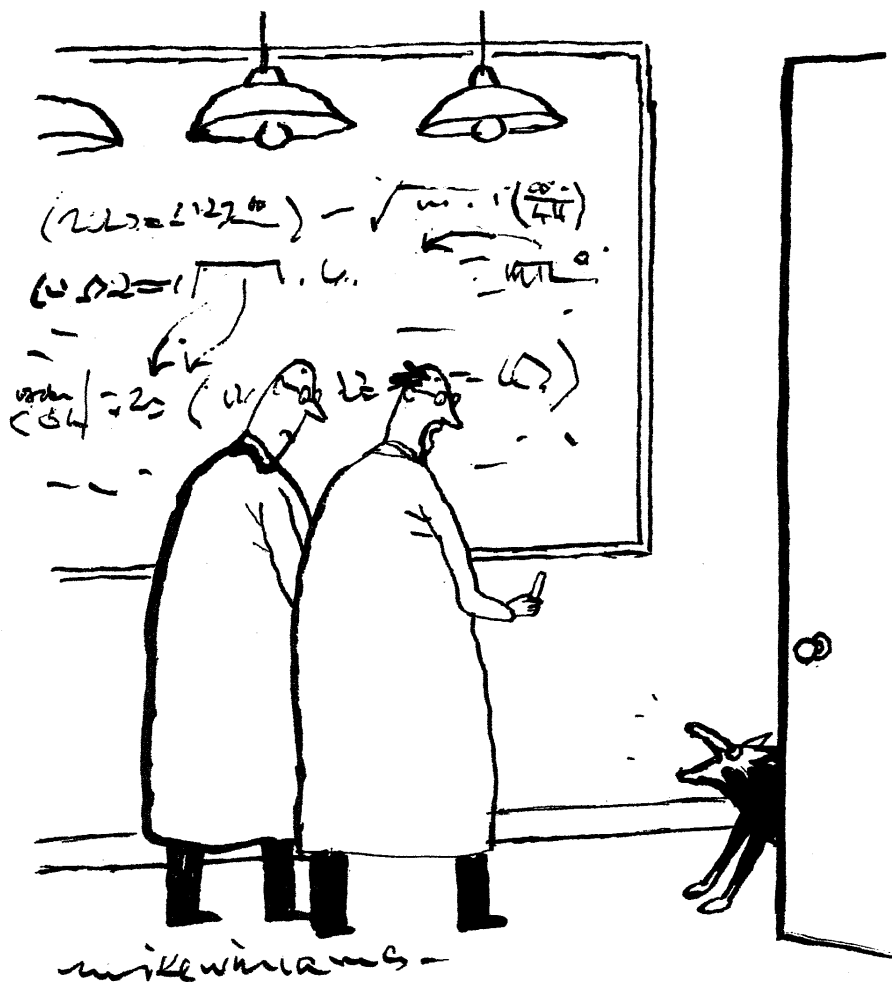
Diamonds in the Rough art exhibition

Art for beauty's sake is a good thing, but good art can be beautiful and thought-provoking at the same time. The Diamonds in the Rough exhibition that recently finished after a week-long run in a shop space in the Pavilions Shopping centre, Birmingham, showcased the work of SIFA Fireside service users. Photography, film and poetry provided a mix of fine work with a social conscience and a platform to share experiences.

The project came about after photographer Maria Reaney, of Silverleaf Photography, approached SIFA Fireside to work with them for her final project at university. She started running fortnightly photography workshops, took photos with service users, got involved with their artwork and poetry, and created a book from her portraits of people at SIFA Fireside. After this successful partnership, Maria was invited to engage service users in a 12-week programme of digital photography and video workshops, culminating in the exhibition.

"The exhibition has brought a pride and confidence to those who took part," said Maria. "Being part of a team and working together is very important for self-esteem and social skills".

After group discussions, Bill, Keith, Ian, Jason, Darren and Ken chose Birmingham Nature Centre, the Sea-Life Centre and the Botanical Gardens. The three venues gave free entry to the



"What? You mean by giving up its lone outer electron, a sodium atom achieves a desirable quantum mechanical configuration and is left with a positive charge? By accepting an extra electron, chlorine fills its outer shell with eight electrons and gains a negative charge. The charged ions are then held together to make molecules and crystals of common salt (NaCl) by electrostatic forces... Lassie, are you absolutely sure of this?"



Shafi Shaikh

Age at disappearance: 67

Shafi has been missing from Halesowen, West Midlands, since 8 November 2010. Shafi had recently arrived from Pakistan for a short visit.

There is concern for Shafi's safety and he is urged to call the confidential service **Message Home** on **Freefone 0800 700 740** to get help and support.

Shafi is of medium build, and wears glasses. When last seen, he was thought to be wearing pyjamas and slippers.

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



photographers, and provided them with varied and interesting subject matters and a chance to try out new camera techniques and ideas.

Maria curated the exhibition, which found a home in the Inhabit pop-up tearoom run by arts group Hybrid as part of the 'Art in Empty Spaces' programme.

Bill made a video documentary about life on the streets for the exhibition after expressing an interest in taking his camera and direction skills a bit further, a decision that was encouraged by Maria. Bill said he was interested in media as a hobby when he was younger, but became "very insular" after a bad run of luck in the mid-90s. He credits SIFA Fireside with helping him get back on his feet: "My interests came back, and my confidence came back," said Bill, who is now trying to break into scriptwriting.

Although the exhibition is now finished, it may well find another home in Birmingham soon, and prints of the artwork can be bought for a limited time from the Inhabit tearoom in The Pavilions Shopping Centre, floor 2.

Chris Swann

Cannock church shelter discussions

Discussions are still underway for plans to introduce a winter night shelter in Cannock. Reverend Stephen Jackson, of Bethany Baptist Church in Chadsmore, has written a report to the leaders of the churches in the district of Cannock Chase and surrounding areas. Rev Jackson is proposing that churches should offer a night shelter for during the winter period of November to March.

Pat Wolfe, a member of the Chase Winter Night Shelter Committee, met Rev Jackson at Bethany Baptist Church on 16

February so everyone could be updated with any progress.

Ms Wolfe said: "There are 15 churches in the district of Cannock Chase. They could share a rota and each provide shelter for one night of every fortnight during the winter months. We are very enthusiastic about supporting Churches Together. If they can provide a winter night shelter for the homeless, we can send volunteers to help set it up and make this a reality."

Chase Night Shelter Committee met Colin Sutton and John Grimley, of the Cannock Chase Rotary Club, who pledged their support to find premises for the shelter.

Ms Wolfe said: "Mr Sutton and Mr Grimley were very sincere and have arranged a further meeting with the head of Cannock Council and the Council Planning Department to discuss this matter."

Reverend Peter Smart, of St Luke's C of E Church in Cannock, was also present at the committee meeting, but could give no clear indication of further plans. Rev Smart said: "I cannot say if it is possible yet for Churches Together to accept whether they will go down that route to provide a winter night shelter. We do have a deadline of May or June this year to make a decision to see if it is practical or not to offer this for winter 2011."

Jackie Lindoe

- See more on the growth of winter shelters and success of the Shelter in a Pack, in news in brief, page 11.

News in brief

The homeless news from around the country and the World

Winter shelters follow the pack Funding nothing new

At least five new cold weather shelters opened up across the country this winter, following a drive by charity Housing Justice.

New church shelters were piloted in Chesterfield, Leicester, Birmingham, Ealing and Westminster, after the Christian charity launched its Shelter in a Pack guide in December last year.

Sally Leigh, London and shelters co-ordinator at the organisation, said that most church shelters in London had been full this winter. "We are anticipating an increasing demand for more shelters throughout the country as communities start experiencing the impact of cuts to benefits and increasing hardship among the most vulnerable in our society," she told *The Pavement*.

The pack, which can be downloaded from the Housing Justice website, offers advice on everything from the cost of setting up a winter shelter to dispelling fears about anti-social behaviour - and has been a real success, said the charity.

"Discussions are also taking place on how to establish new shelter projects next winter in Ipswich, Chiswick, Wimbledon, Halifax, Keighley and Enfield," added Leigh.

Garnet Roach

- Details on the shelters and the Shelter in a Pack guide can be found at the Housing Justice website www.housingjustice.org.uk

On 17 February Communities Minister Andrew Stunell announced £18.5 million will be allocated to tackling rough sleeping in England.

The announcement, made at the Broadway Day Centre, near London's Shepherd's Bush, highlighted funding given directly to charities - usually those carrying out contracts - rather than to local authorities. Stunell said "I'm delighted to be able to announce £18.5 million of funding this year alone directly for the voluntary sector; on top of the £81.5 million we give to councils."

However, although widely reported as new funding, the announcement seems intended to demonstrate that not all funding for homeless projects is being eroded. When asked if this was funding that already existed, David Carnell, a spokesman at the Department of Communities and Local Government, told *The Pavement*, "The funding is existing funding, but has been protected."

Staff

Ex-rough sleeper up for literary prize

The writer Tom Gamble has been placed on the shortlist for a major literary prize for a novel which was partly influenced by his experiences sleeping on the streets.

Gamble's novel, *Amazir*, is one of six books on the shortlist for the Romantic Novelist Association's 2011 Pure Passion Award. He maintains that the novel is about the hope and love which

can help carry people through periods of great difficulty.

"When you're down, even lower than you thought you'd sink to, your hope is rewarded in a small ways," Gamble explains. "A pleasant word from a stranger in the street, the sunshine warming you up, the sound of birds in a park where you slept overnight... this spurs you on to rise above your trials and get back on the road to self-confidence."

Gamble has previously spent several short periods sleeping rough: as a teenager unable to fully get over his parents break up, after moving to London, and then again at 38, following his own divorce.

"I wouldn't categorize myself as having been a homeless person," he says. "I just experienced a brief, tough time of being without fixed abode and think I saw and felt how it must be: the hunger, the loneliness, the worry, the pride that often prevents you asking for help, and also the of love for people who do actually look you in the eye. Some of that experience has come out in *Amazir*."

Gamble is keen for homeless people to read *Amazir* as he feels that they would be able to relate personally to the novel's message.

"I think it's a message for them that life can sometimes be a rollercoaster - one moment up and the next freefalling," he said. "But that if you have the determination to rise up above it all, keep faith, keep your belief in luck and have an objective in sight, you can get through the storm."

Nicholas Olczak

Reading police seek help in murder

Police in Reading, Berkshire, are seeking help from homeless people in the area in trying to solve the murder of a rough sleeper.

33 year old Damian Whyte's body was discovered by a dog walker in Caversham on the morning of 23 February. The post mortem revealed that Whyte, also known as Tottenham Paul or James Bond, had died of multiple stab wounds.

At a police press conference, the *Reading Chronicle* reported that Detective Chief Inspector Stan Gilmour said: "We need people who knew Damian to come forward and fill in some of the gaps about his movements over the last few days leading up to his death."

Staff

- Anyone with information should call police on **0845 8 505 505** or Crimestoppers anonymously on **0800 555 111**.

Tent city recognised in Seattle

As the US still reels from its worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, tent cities continue to spring up across the country - serving as a sobering reminder of the fragility of the 'American dream'. Regarded by many lawmakers as dangerous, disease-spreading ghettos, hundreds of camps have been shut down, including those in Sacramento and Fort Worth. Following closure, the million-plus inhabitants of these makeshift cities are simply moved on, while only the very lucky one are rehoused.

But the Washington city of Seattle is taking a different and more forward-thinking approach by

planning to run its own homeless camp on state-owned property.

Homelessness has risen sharply in America in recent years as a result of rising unemployment and home foreclosures. Almost half of the country's 3.5m homeless are unsheltered, with a large number congregating in tent cities for safety. In Seattle alone, there are around 8,000 homeless people and around 1,000 of these live in encampments.

One of these sites is dubbed Nickelsville, after former Seattle mayor Greg Nickels, who came under fire his harsh policies towards homelessness. It has around 100 residents and was set up at a former fire station around three years ago but has since then been forced to move 17 times. The city is now taking steps to establish a permanent home for Nickelsville in a vacant car park, and awaits the result of an environmental impact report due in February.

Seattle's Deputy Mayor, Darryl Smith, admits that a permanent tent city is not the ideal response to homelessness. But he thinks it's worth a try.

Mr Smith says: "No one seems to have come up with a perfect situation or a perfect location to do something like this. But we don't want excellent — what we're grasping for is something basic that can really help people." What's more, he says if the camp is effective, the city could make it a permanent fixture at an annual cost of less than \$1 million.

Nickelsville has a list of rules that are largely self-enforced. For instance, no drugs, alcohol or criminal activity is tolerated within the tent city and offenders risk immediate eviction.

Inside the camp, residents eat together and share in the running of the site, which camp organiser Peggy Hotes believes has helped people get back on their feet. She explains: "I've seen people come in

here with their heads down. Then they're elected to something. And they see that they can participate in making things better, to help solve the issue of homelessness."

The vision for Nickelsville is often compared to another homeless camp in Portland, Oregon, called Dignity Village, which has been around more than a decade.

Seattle has grappled with tent cities for decades. In 2002, a group was given permission to run a homeless encampment within city limits under certain conditions — including a maximum three months at any one site. Tent cities - reminiscent of the 'Hoovervilles' of the 1930s Great Depression - are basic, with no mains electricity, plumbing or drainage.

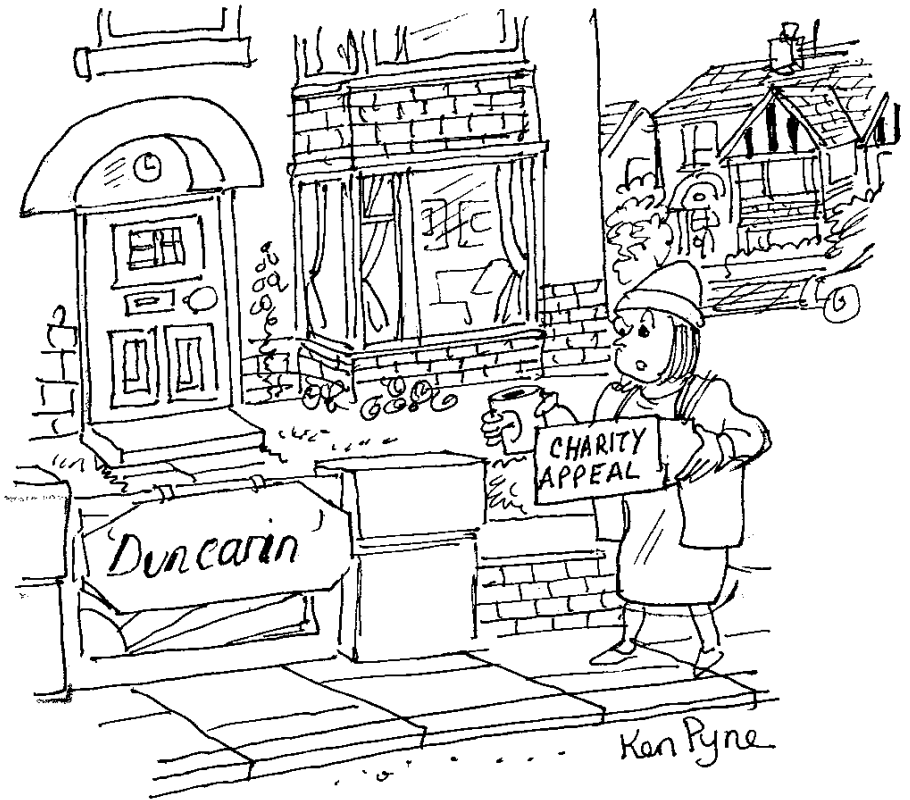
In Reno, Nevada, the state with the nation's highest repossessions rate, a tent city recently sprung up on the city's outskirts and quickly filled up with about 150 people. Most tent cities are in California, where more than 200 people can be found living in Sacramento's Tent City, which became infamous after appearing on the Oprah Winfrey Show. Although this site is currently under threat of closure, the rise in homelessness in the US means that others will no doubt spring up elsewhere.

Rebecca Evans

HRH at Arlington hostel

HRH The Prince of Wales visited a historic London hostel on 16 February (pictured over the page). However, the royal guest did not turn up only to visit the residents of Arlington's 95 housing units, but also to meet business leaders.

Formerly the troubled Arlington House run by Novas (see *The Pavement* passim), Arlington hostel was the backdrop to celebrations which marked 10 years of the Ready for Work programme. Prince Charles is





"Have you any idea what that was doing to the environment?"



Photography by Alastair Fyfe © 2011

the president of Business in the Community (BITC) which runs the back-to-work initiative.

Ready for Work focuses on securing job placements and training for homeless people, with 23 programmes currently running across the UK and Ireland.

Although celebrating past success, this visit was in part a call to arms to businesses to do more in future. In his speech, HRH said, "In the last six months the number of homeless people has begun to rise and I fear this trend will continue... It is estimated that there are some 20,000 people in this country who are either homeless, or who have experienced homelessness, who could be back at work but are not."

Staff

Zulu council in London

Designed to bring together all parts of the homelessness sector, a meeting of agencies took place at London's Bloomsbury Baptist Church on Saturday 12 February. The meeting, named Indaba after the zulu word meaning council, was organised by the Simon Community and Housing Justice and involved both professionals and volunteers, as well as people with direct experience of rough sleeping.

The Indaba was called to discuss the issue of street homelessness, in the wake of the Mayor of London's ambitious pledge to 'end rough sleeping' in London by the end of 2012. In the face of looming cuts and with the numbers of rough sleepers on the rise, the Simon Community feels that serious questions must be asked about whether the Mayor's target is

achievable, or even desirable.

Facilitated by Andy Benson, participants at the meeting were organised into groups and invited to discuss the question: "Ending street homelessness: What's the problem?" The topic generated much debate but those present agreed that the key causes of street homelessness include the shortage of emergency accommodation and the lack of uniform mental health assessment and provision.

During the second half of the meeting, groups discussed possible solutions to the problem of rough sleeping. The agencies agreed that, if the Mayor's 'zero target' is to be met, there needs to be better coordination between professional and voluntary organisations. What's more, as some rough sleepers find dealing with authority figures difficult and stressful, barriers need to be broken down between professionals and clients.

Those present also noted that, if the 2012 target is to be reached, it is essential to involve service users in decisions about how services are run. The Simon Community felt the Indaba was a success, but it was agreed that another meeting should be held to explore in more detail the differences in approaches towards the problem of rough sleeping.

Amy Hopkins

Squats for rent?

There have been reports of an individual loitering outside some London homeless shelters offering places in squats for money. A witness, who wished to remain anonymous, told *The Pavement* that they had seen a man waiting for people to be turned away from shelters before offering them places in houses in the Highgate area.

Posting on the online microblogging site Twitter, the witness said: "Man outside night shelter was recruiting those turned away for his squats. He opens squats as a business in Highgate. He has over 300 beds operating in houses at any one time (360 I think he said). Interesting little business. You see it all on the streets."

Myk Zeitlin, from the Advisory Service for Squatters, which offers legal help for squatters in London, said that, although it is legal for people to open squats for themselves in certain circumstances, it is illegal to charge money for rooms in squats, and the squatters' Advisory Service "certainly discourages" the practice.

He told *The Pavement*: "We do not know this person and we do not support charging money for squats.

"We also hear of people renting out properties under the pretence that they have a right to do so when they don't and this is illegal and we certainly discourage it.

"We give advice to people on

how to open squats for themselves. There are also weekly practical squatters' evenings, rotating between East and South London where people can get help opening places."

John Ashmore

Debut album with Royal backing

A former rough sleeper has released his debut album with a little help from HRH Prince William. Tresor Kiambu, 21, performed a song for HRH during a royal visit to the Centrepont hostel in Soho back in December 2009. Prince William had been serving breakfast at the hostel after spending the night sleeping under Blackfriars Bridge to highlight the difficulties of sleeping rough in London.

Talking about performing for HRH, the young musician said: "He definitely inspired me. When I went back to my room I had some new ideas."

Kiambu, who performs under the name Tres B, came to the UK as a child, having been orphaned during the civil war in the Congo. He moved from hostel to hostel but struggled with alcohol problems, before being put in touch with Centrepont. He describes the homeless charity as his "family."

Tres B, whose sound fuses African folk, hip-hop and soul, has performed at music festivals such as the Big Chill in Herefordshire and played alongside American blues band the Black Keys. The track Kiambu performed for Prince William is called Best Friend and can be downloaded from iTunes and Amazon.

John Ashmore

Heroin drought

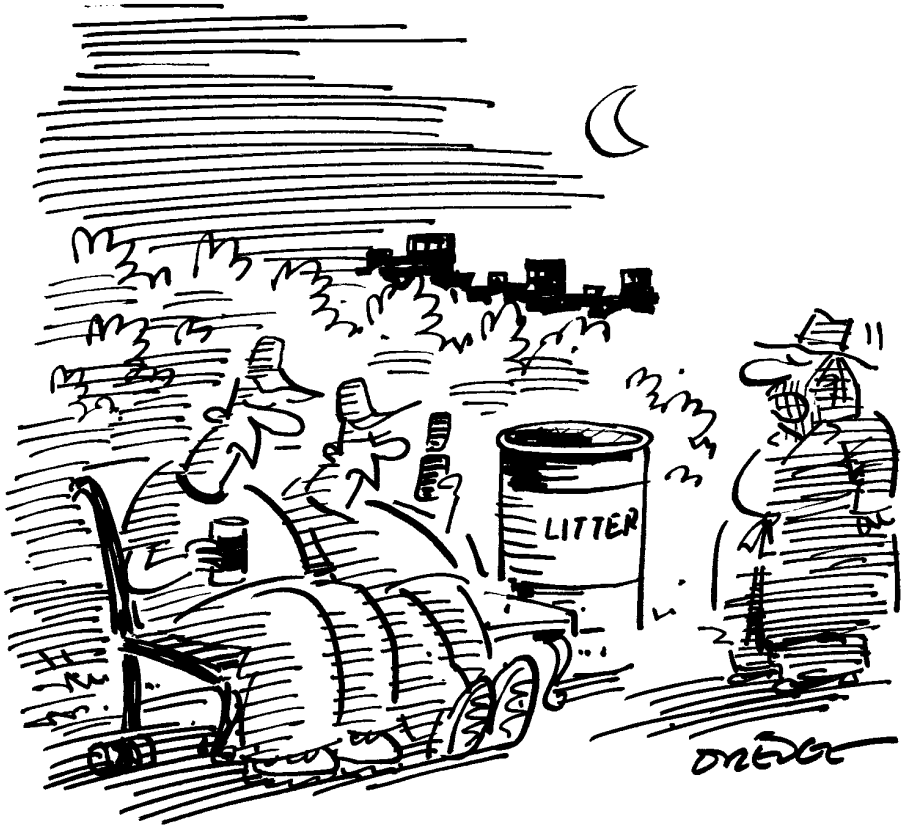
For several months now there has been an acute shortage of heroin in some parts of the UK, which has led to an increased risk of poisoning and overdose. Readers should be alert if they use or know someone who uses.

Since October 2010 the shortage of heroin has been caused by poppy blight in Afghanistan, floods in Pakistan as well as the efforts of international law enforcement agencies. The result of this 'drought' has caused concern amongst drug treatment, with the National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA) issuing warnings about the shortage: "The heroin may be difficult to get hold of, or it may be heavily 'cut,' making it weaker than normal; In some cases, the added cutting agents have been reported to be heavily sedative, and to cause memory blackouts.

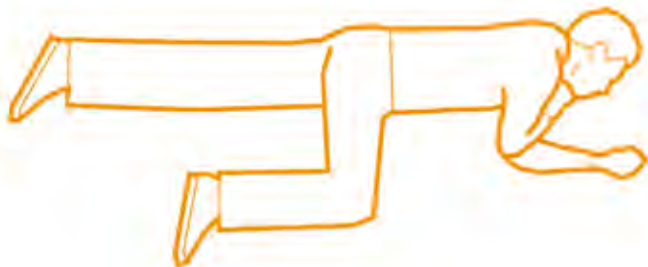
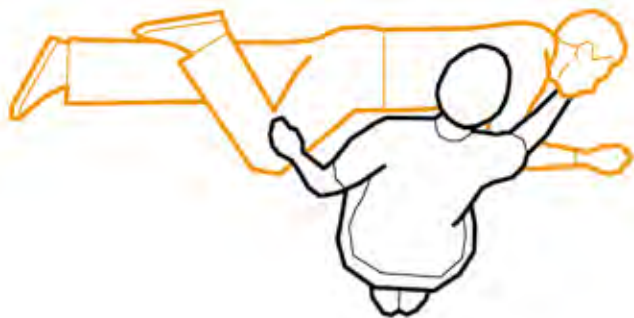
"Some people have ended up in intensive care; Your tolerance can fall within days of using weaker batches of heroin; If your next batch is stronger, you will be at real risk of 'going over' from a heroin overdose. This could kill you; Get into drug treatment. Drug treatment is the best way to avoid overdose death and help is available in your area."

Further to this the NTA also recommend users follow these guidelines to keep safe:

1. Stop using heroin if you can. If you do go back to using though, you will have lost your tolerance – so be very careful.
2. Look into drug treatment – this could be the right time for you to take this step. Heroin substitution treatment (methadone or buprenorphine) is available, as well as other forms of treatment and support
3. Test your heroin before using your usual amount. This is not a guarantee it will be safe, but it could warn you the heroin has become stronger again

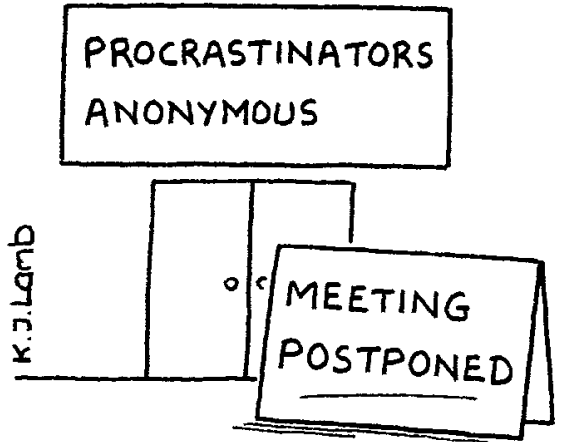


"Squatters!"



4. Avoid injecting if you can. Smoking heroin is less likely to lead to a fatal overdose. But remember, there is no totally safe way to use heroin
5. Avoid using other drugs (or alcohol) with heroin. This increases your risk of dying from an overdose. Remember you might have lost tolerance as well, which further increases overdose risk
6. Don't use alone. Agree with each other that you'll phone an ambulance if one of you does 'go over.'
7. Get overdose training to help yourself and your mates. Learning the recovery position (pictured opposite) is a good start.

Staff



Homeless to Harvard

Liz Murray's book, *Breaking Night*, tells the remarkable story of how she went from sleeping rough to graduating from one of America's top universities. Murray became homeless at 15 but went on to win a scholarship to Harvard University. She now works as a motivational speaker who has talked at events alongside Tony Blair and the Dalai Lama.

She grew up in New York with both parents addicted to cocaine and heroin and did not start high school until she was 17 - at a time when most other teenagers were graduating.

Murray became aware that her parents were taking drugs at just three years old, but when her mother was diagnosed as HIV positive in 1990, she also discovered they had been sharing needles. When her father couldn't pay the rent and moved into a homeless shelter, Murray ended up sleeping on park benches or New York's 24-hour subway trains.

But after her mother died in 1996, Murray took steps to change her life. She decided to go to high

school - despite still living rough - and was determined to get straight A's. She completed her high school education in just two years and her teachers encouraged her to apply to Harvard.

But with no money and still living rough, Murray knew she would need a scholarship.

She had kept her homelessness a secret from friends and teachers, but after Murray applied for a New York Times scholarship detailing the struggles she had overcome to achieve academic success, people rallied around. She says never slept rough again.

By the time Murray had graduated from Harvard, her father had also died from Aids. She cared for him until he passed away and says that she took comfort knowing he died clean.

"When someone gets sober it's like meeting them for the first time," she said.

And despite growing up around addiction, Murray says that she was grateful for her family life. "I remember a certain peace knowing we all went to bed under the same

roof at night," she told the BBC World Service programme *Outlook*.

After university Murray set up Manifest Living, offering workshops for people wanting to change their circumstances, and now works as a motivational speaker.

Murray's book *Breaking Night: A Memoir*, which tells the story of her life, became an American bestseller when it was published last year.

Garnet Roach

Benches ruined by vandals with a motive?

Two benches used by rough sleepers at Bognor Regis seafront shelter have been destroyed by vandals. As the homeless people have now been deterred from using the immediate area, the vengeful act has not been met with the cry of outrage usually associated with vandalism. The damage, which was discovered on 20 January, is unlikely to be repaired by Arun District Council in the near future.

Local residents have reported a decrease in anti-social behaviour since the shelter's benches were sawn up, which has been attributed to a reduction in the number of rough sleepers in the area. One resident told the *Chicester Observer* that the vandal has "done us a bit of a favour."

However, spokesperson for Arun District Council, Jo Furber, told *The Pavement* that the destruction of the benches fails to address the underlying problem of homelessness. "Although we have no immediate plans to replace the benches, we are in discussion with local residents as well as community development workers and other agencies about finding a solution that addresses all concerns," she explained. "The ruined benches haven't solved the issue, it's just moved it further down the road."

At present, the council is working with a range of voluntary agencies to ensure the number of rough sleepers is kept as low as possible. According to Furber, the majority of people sleeping rough in the area are Eastern European migrants or those who struggle with drug and alcohol problems. "It means a lot of people are unable to access services as they cannot speak English and have no identification documents," she added. Meanwhile, the Council provides housing options advice from its offices in Littlehampton and is establishing a regular weekly surgery in Bognor Regis, specifically to advise rough sleepers.

In terms of the attack, the police have identified no suspects and will not be pursuing the case.

Lizzie Cernik

Old word on rise

Language that negatively represents of trivialises homeless people is widespread in America, according to Sociological Images, a website

discussing sociology connected to the University of Minnesota.

An article on the website points to examples of young people repeatedly using negative labels to refer to homeless people. It also identifies television programs which contain insensitive representations of the homeless or encourage people to imitate them for fun.

The article describes how young people commenting on an online video of a man panhandling at an intersection make repeated use of the word "hobo" to refer to him.

"A lot of people would argue that references to "hobos" today aren't really about homelessness now," writes Gwen Sharpe, author of the article. "But the video of the kids' reactions certainly shows that they don't just see it as a term for people in the past; they clearly connect it to homeless people today."

One of girls attributes her use of the label to *iCarly*, an American sitcom popular among young people in America. The article also reveals how the website for this show features photographs of cast members dressed up like homeless people.

Sharpe's article goes on to report that an internet search for the topic brings up a number of entries where people are proposing dressing up like "hobos," including suggestions for "hobo parties."

Also criticized is a show where the host searches the streets for talented homeless people. The article points out that this TV program suggests that it is surprising to find a homeless person with skills or talents.

"Such a news story could humanize homeless individuals," writes Sharpe. "Instead, the news segment treats the two women as sources of entertainment whose value comes only from the possibility that they might surprise us."

Nicholas Olczak

Street heat – Our occasional look at homeless celebrity encounters

Two members of London's homeless population were thrust into the limelight at the beginning of February after being photographed with different A-List celebrities in the space of a week.

In the first encounter, celebrity gossip website *Holy Moly!* featured pictures of Mickey Rourke with a red-haired man outside the exclusive C Restaurant in Mayfair. Rourke was in town as part of research for a new film on openly gay Welsh rugby star Gareth Edwards, when he was snapped with a man the site described as 'Abraham McGingerhat'.

Two days later, *The Office* star Ricky Gervais was photographed outside the trendy Automat Club in Mayfair with an unknown man that *The Sun* newspaper described as a "grey-haired beggar." Gervais apparently gave the man a fifty-pound note after the photos were taken – pictures showed the pair grinning and swearing for the cameras.

Neither story reported the identities of the men in the photos, with *Holy Moly!* offering "a trip to the moon on Richard Branson's lap" if readers could identify the homeless man pictured with Rourke.

James O'Reilly

- Do you know, or were you one of the men in the pictured? If any readers have had a celebrity encounter, or been 'papped' alongside any big stars, let us know – we'd be keen to hear your stories. Contact on page 3.



"I flunked sandpit"

STREET SHIELD

HOME AGAIN.

STREET SHIELD
AND HIS FRIENDS
STEP OFF THE
COACH FROM
BIRMINGHAM...



SUDDENLY...

SOMEONE
'ROUND
HERE STINKS
OF PISS!
PROBABLY A
TRAMP!



WELL, IT'S NOT
ME I WASHED THIS
MORNING AT THE
BUS STATION...

AND IT'S NOT ME. I HAD
A D'HOBI AND PUT ON CLEAN
CLOTHES BEFORE BREAKFAST.



YOU AT
UP RUN
ER!

Y. CATCH
SOON, SS!



NOW - LET'S HAVE
A CHAT ABOUT MANNERS
AND THE DANGERS
OF STEREOTYPING!



NEXT MONTH

THE LINE UP!

Health and wellbeing

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

Athlete's foot – avoidance and treatment

You don't have to be an athlete to get athlete's foot – you just need to be exposed to the fungus that causes it. Athlete's foot is the common name for a fungal infection, usually from the *Trichophyton* family.

Feet provide a warm, dark, steamy environment where fungal infections can live happily, often between the toes (where they make the skin go white, cracked and soggy) and on the sole of the foot, usually around the arch (where they can appear like dry skin, but whiter and scallier on top, with redness underneath). Sometimes tiny blisters may appear around the infected area.

You'll know you've got athlete's foot when you start to feel the itching – fungal infections are notoriously itchy, and the more you scratch, the more you spread them. They can also feel hot, stinging or burning; sometimes this feeling gets worse when you have been in a warm environment such as bed or a bath, and you can often experience intense itching.

Avoidance is better than cure. Try to evade fungal infections by keeping to your own socks and shoes, and wear flip-flops or some other sort of footwear in shower, locker and changing rooms. The 'athlete' bit of its name comes from the idea that the fungus can spread well in communal and shared areas – as well as via wet towels, bedding and floors, and by direct contact. If you are reasonably sure that the itching between your toes or on the sole of your foot is a fungal

infection (it could be eczema, psoriasis, dermatitis or a drug reaction, so rule these out first), then start treatment – it will most likely spread and get worse if you don't.

Hygiene is, of course, important, but having a fungal infection doesn't mean you are dirty: you have been in contact with the fungus, it has invaded your skin and you have to kill it. Simple washing and hygiene won't do that on its own, especially if it has been there for a while. Fungal infection is notoriously difficult to treat, and the only way to get rid of it is to use an anti-fungal agent (usually a gel, cream or a spray), which you can get on prescription from a GP or buy over-the-counter. Check the ingredients if you decide to buy over-the-counter: a store's own brand cream may have the same ingredients as named brands but be a lot cheaper.

Unfortunately, 'curing' athlete's foot is a long, slow process: it usually takes a good few weeks to get it under control. Even if the fungus looks as if it has disappeared, keep applying the cream for a couple of weeks – it has a habit of pretending to disappear but hanging around, only to return with a vengeance.

Left untreated, fungal infections can spread over your feet and can also get into your nails, making them thick, crumbly and yellow. Fungal infections and the intense itching and scaling they create also make the skin on your feet vulnerable to other problems, such as open sores, cracks and the risk of secondary bacterial infection.

A final word of warning: untreated athlete's foot can sometimes spread to the groin... not pleasant and not pretty. So, think about getting a tube of something if you suspect you have it on your

feet and get it treated quickly.

Better still, avoid the fungal infection in the first place, and keep your feet sweet.

Evelyn Weir

Lecturer in podiatry
Queen Margaret University
Edinburgh.

A basic guide to needlestick injuries Part 1

Q: What is a needlestick injury?

A: A needlestick injury is when your skin is punctured by a needle that someone else has already used.

Never, ever re-use or share a needle. One that another person has used may carry a multitude of diseases, and putting a used needle into your body provides them with a super-fast way in. Your skin is a barrier to infection; puncturing it with an unclean needle is breaking your best protection and injecting a package of bacterial and viral nasties directly into your bloodstream.

Now I've probably scared the living daylights out of you, here's the lowdown on how to stay safe if you use needles or if you're likely to come across them...

Needles are designed to be used once and only on one person. In the UK, most needles come capped with a plastic sheath and sealed in a paper and plastic package. You should assume that any needle that is not sealed in its original packaging has been used. A needle may be capped, but if it's not sealed inside the paper and plastic sleeve, then it has probably been used. Do not use it!



do not touch them. There is no safe way to handle used needles unless you are wearing protective clothing. Avoid them, and contact your local council to get them safely removed.

If you come across needles often, it may be worth investing in a set of pincers, tongs or strong gardening gloves so you can check the area without having to use your bare hands.

The only safe way to dispose of used needles is in a bright yellow "sharps" box. If you regularly use needles and sharps, you should have one. You can get one from your GP or needle exchange on prescription – find out if and how sharps boxes are distributed in your area. Once your box is about three-quarters full, seal it and hand it in so it can be disposed of safely. Never put your hand in a sharps box, never try to get anything

Also remember, never try to recap a needle used by someone else – this is when you're most likely to get stuck.

Look out for used needles. Check the area where you bed down at night for needles. Carefully check discarded clothing, or any building or squat you might use. Needles can be hidden in debris, so be careful. If you come across used needles >>



out of a sharps box and keep it well away from children and pets.

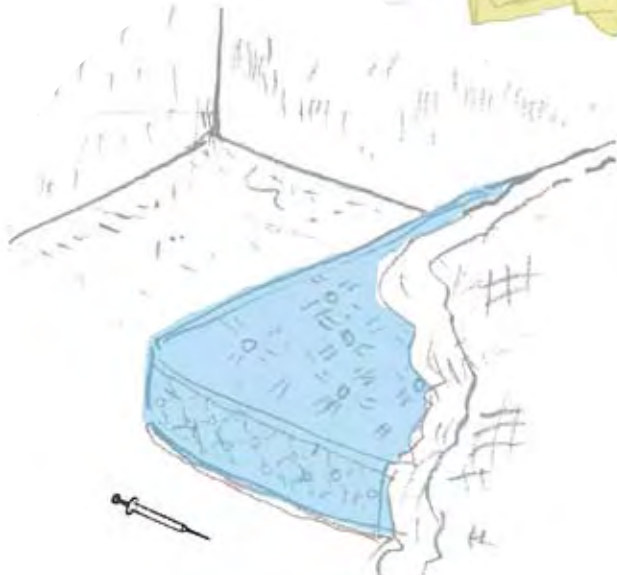
If you've got a used needle and don't have a sharps box, then don't leave it lying around.

As a nurse, I would never use a needle to inject someone unless

I had a sharps box with me, however this is not practical outside of healthcare. You need to think about the dangers the used needle may pose to others and find the best way of making sure no one else stumbles across it. Re-cap it and seal it inside a solid plastic or glass container, write what it is on the outside, keep it with you and take it to a pharmacy, hospital or health centre to be disposed of.

Next month, Part 2 - What to do if you get a needlestick injury? 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.

