



Christian action on homelessness
www.routestoroots.org Charity No. 1093689

Chair's Report for Routes to Roots AGM 2010

The last twelve months has been another busy and yet fruitful year for R2R. It's been a year in which we have continued to build and develop the things that we have been doing since we became a Charity in 2002. It has also been a year that has brought about significant change and challenge.

Evening Drop ins

Thanks to the continued hospitality of both Hill Street Baptist Church and Skinner Street URC who allow us to rent their church halls we have been able to continue to hold our twice weekly drop ins on Tuesday and Friday evening. Thanks also to our small army of willing volunteers we have been able to continue to reach out and welcome into our drop ins, those who might otherwise go hungry and feel socially excluded. We continue to recognize and value the opportunity the drop ins give us to build relationships and trust with some of the most vulnerable people in Poole. They also provide our Outreach workers with a safe place to engage with those who find themselves in Poole, hungry and without shelter.

Outreach and Support

One of the biggest changes for us in 2009/10 has come about through the way we now do Outreach. With change has also come opportunity. During 2009 we were offered the opportunity to work in partnership with BCHA in order to provide a newly commissioned Outreach Service for Poole called Poole Outreach and Support Team. The team is based at our office in Skinner Street URC and is made up of a worker from both BCHA and R2R. The service is managed by BCHA and we are very grateful to Sarah Ward who oversees the whole project and to Mark Horsford who is responsible for the day to day co-ordinating of the outreach service. To supplement the work of our paid outreach workers R2R has been able to recruit volunteers who go on early morning outreach sessions and we are very grateful to them for the valuable contribution they bring to this service.

The formation of this new team gave us the opportunity to recruit a new Outreach Worker. We advertised and were very please to appoint Liz Bailey. Liz was no stranger to R2R since both she and her husband had been volunteering at our Friday night drop in. Liz is a committed Christian and brings to the post many years of being in a leadership role at Christ Church Creekmore. Having a new Outreach Worker enabled us to offer promotion to Rob Fish who was ready to take on more responsibility within R2R. Rob is now R2R Support manager providing ongoing support to those who are having real difficulty in maintaining their tenancies and in some cases are in danger of once again being back on the streets. Rob has also taken on responsibility for being line manager of Liz and in that capacity is able to share the wealth of experience he as gained doing outreach in Poole over the last three years. Rob will also be supporting the Afternoon Projects and the Befriending Teams.

Assisting both Rob and myself with all the necessary administration tasks we have been very fortunate to have the much needed help and support of our very able administrator in Lynn Foster. We are grateful to have an administrator who is able to turn her hand to almost anything and is willing to give a helping hand wherever it is needed.

Prevention and Social Inclusion

The work Rob is now engaged in reflects the change that is happening within the whole of R2R. With the considerable success the new Outreach Team are having in securing accommodation for those who are sleeping rough, the emphasis

for our work is no longer solely to provide for those on the streets but more and more, the emphasis for us now is to do all we can to help keep them off the streets and to help integrate them back into society. One of the main problems we have identified amongst both those who are homeless and to some extent even those who have been housed, is lack of self esteem and motivation, resulting in boredom and social exclusion. To help counteract this for the last year we have introduced afternoon drop in sessions. At the moment we are working closely with Poole's Arts council to put on a 10 week project designed to provide opportunities to stimulate the minds and to inspire creativity in those who have become demotivated and dispirited. There will also be another 6 week project on Brownsea Is doing conservation work.

The Befriending Teams Pilot Project has continued throughout this year but will come to an end early next year. We are hopeful that a recent funding bid will be successful and will enable us to continue our Befriending in 2011. Doing the pilot has been a very valuable and enlightening experience for us and we will go into the next phase of this project with a far better understanding of its challenges. We are very grateful to Quaker Homeless Action for the very generous way they have funded this project. Thanks also to Kate Mellor for managing it for us and to all our 'Befrienders' for the cheerful way they have experienced both the ups and the downs of Befriending.

Fundraising and money matters.

Last year we were very pleased to introduce Bob Jacob to you as a new member of the executive committee. Throughout the year Bob has worked tirelessly writing funding bids and has been successful in obtaining 5000 from the Community Fund. This money is enabling us to run our Afternoon drop ins and will fund the creative project work taking place there and it will also cover the expenses of the Brownsea Is. Conservation Project. Recently Bob has been in conversation with ASDA Supermarket In Poole and they are wanting to make us one of the charities that they support and will be working closely with us on fund raising ideas.

Since our last AGM our existing treasurer Tim Piper moved to Australia and we had to appeal for someone new to look after our finances. Sarah Percy from St Luke's church in Parkstone responded very quickly and after a short trial period we were very pleased to offer her a permanent position of Hon Treasurer and even more please that she accepted. Sarah is a real asset to R2R producing regular financial reports and sound advice, based on faith as well as knowledge.

Throughout the year money has continued to flow to us (as well as chocolate, biscuits, food, socks, blankets, 3 piece suites, tellies, etc) from the generous giving and fundraising of so many loyal friends and supporters here in Poole. Thank you to you all of you who have put on concerts, sung carols, slept out in the High street, cleaned cars, made cakes - you name -you've done it and we are most grateful! Thank you not just for the money you've raised but for the encouragement you give us. Please keep it coming, we have so much more we want to do.

And special thanks for the donation we received after last years AGM to pay for the much needed storage for all our equipment. The donation enabled us to install extensive shelving in our Skinner Street Office and also covers the insurance costs on the storage space that has been so generously donated to us by the BIG YELLOW storage company.

During this past year we had also taken students from Bournemouth University who are doing a degree in Social Work on placement with us. This brings in valuable funds for us but more importantly it is a great opportunity for us to be able to give these students a real experience of working with the Homeless which will be invaluable to them.

Feasibility Study, Health Check and a Quiet Day

Although throughout this last year we have been very active in all the above projects however we are aware that we are restricted in what we can achieve because R2R is itself still homeless. We still have no place that we can call our own and which we can adapt to meet the need of those we want to help. Last year, we thought we had identified a building that might fit our purpose and we spent time looking into the feasibility of purchasing this building. I would like to record my

thanks to Dick Dyke who coordinated most of that work. Thanks also to Quaker Housing Trust who spent time with us giving us advice and later funded us to do a proper feasibility study of the building and our plans for it. As a result of that detailed study and as a result of a health check on R2R also funded by QHT we came to the conclusion that in purchasing that particular building we would be taking on more than we are capable of managing at this time. We decided it was time to stop and take stock of where we are, where we want to be and how we get there . We decided to spend the day together praying, reflecting and seeking God's guidance. We are very grateful to the Revd. Jean Alexander who facilitated that day for us and Christ Church Creekmoor in whose church we met.

As we spent that day together we recognized that one of the biggest challenges we face is lack of resources. We can still see unmet needs. For example we are still not able to provide the most basic facilities needed for the health, hygiene and wellbeing of our clients; showers, toilets and washing machines. We still have the passion and desire to meet those needs but we are still a relatively small charity. Although we hope and dream one day to have our own premises, what our day away showed us is that as an organization we are not ready for that yet. At the moment as Trustees we do the time or necessarily the relevant business and management skills that would be necessary to make a success of such a venture . In the coming year we will pray and appeal for more people who have the relevant skills to come along side and help us make our dream a reality. We will put more time and effort into raising our profile and to raising the profile of the hidden homeless in Poole and make their needs known. In the coming year we will put more time and energy into the projects we are currently committed to doing and try to do them better, with the valuable resources we do have.

Thank you

There are so many people we are grateful to for the contribution they make to help us further our work. It is not possible to name everyone but I would like to record my thanks to Poole Council Voluntary Services who have been there for us on several occasions during the year when we have needed support and advice. Thanks also to Skinner Street URC who do so much more than just allow us the use of their building but actively support us by doing all they can to meet our growing need for space. It's been good to get to know Kat our BCHA Outreach Worker who works alongside Liz and has become our much valued colleague and friend. We also continue to be thankful to all the churches in Poole who after 12 years are still providing much needed food and friendship on the streets in the Soup Runs.

Last but not least I would personally like to thank our wonderful executive committee who so generously and sacrificially give so much of their own time and energy to Routes to Roots. Every member has a specific role and I have yet to mention Paul, Jennifer and Gabi who have spent considerable time this year making sure that we are up to date with our policies and risk assessments. This is the less exciting side of our work but nevertheless essential.

For me this has been a very busy year but once again it has been a real joy and privilege to chair this committee and I am willing to be elected for a further year. However in the coming year It is my hope that someone will come forward who also has a real passion and desire to make a difference in the lives of the homeless herein Poole and will be willing to take on the Chair, bringing fresh ideas and energy to this role and enabling me to develop the role of Routes to Roots Chaplain, which I feel very much called to do.

As I write this on the eve of Pentecost my prayer is that in this coming year God will breathe his Spirit upon R2R, that we will continue to dream dreams , to have vision and become a living flame of His transforming love and power.

Please come to our AGM on Monday 5th July 2010

Yours in Christ

The Revd. Pat Southgate, Chair of R2R