

Spurgeon's College
MTh in Applied Theology

Student's name:
Paul Hazelden

College number:
910006

Module name:
Ministry in Contemporary Society

Staff member to whom submitted:
Rev. Dr. Peter K. Stevenson

Essay title:
Evaluation of a Community Project

I confirm that this work is the result of my own independent work/investigation and that it has not been submitted towards any other academic award at Spurgeon's College or at any other institution.

Signed

Date

Spurgeon's College
MTh in Applied Theology

Ministry in Contemporary Society

Evaluation of a Community Project

By
Paul Hazelden

Contents

1. Project Description	4
1.1. Overview	4
1.2. Origins.....	4
1.3. Development	5
1.4. Recent Developments.....	5
2. Objectives	5
2.1. The Theological Reasons	6
2.2. The Social Reasons	6
2.3. The Official Objectives	7
3. Project Evaluation.....	8
3.1. Client Perspective.....	8
3.2. Volunteer Perspective	9
3.3. Staff Perspective.....	10
3.4. Trustee Perspective	10
4. Conclusions	11
4.1. Measurement	11
4.2. Goals	11
4.3. Administration.....	11
4.4. Accessibility	11
4.5. Networking.....	12
4.6. Possible Developments	12
Bibliography	14
Resources	14
Appendices	15

Evaluation of a Community Project

- Describe a community project which is run by your church.
- Explain the theological and social reasons which have led the church to embark on this project.
- Provide a thorough evaluation of the project, assessing to what extent the aims for the project are being fulfilled. This evaluation should take into account both the views of those helped by the project and those of the people working in it.
- In the light of this process, present your ideas as to the ways in which this project might develop during the next 3 years.

1. Project Description

1.1. Overview

I have chosen to evaluate Crisis Centre Ministries ('CCM'), which is a transdenominational project reaching homeless people in the St Pauls area of Bristol. This slightly stretches the scope of the assignment, in that CCM (the project) runs Bridgehead (the church) and not the other way round.

Constitutionally, the project is both a registered charity and a registered company limited by guarantee.

I need at the outset to clarify one aspect of the terminology used in this assignment: CCM is the project being evaluated, but CCM itself has run and continues to run a number of (sub-)projects. The context should make it clear whether the term 'project' is being used of CCM as a whole, or of some smaller piece of work.

1.2. Origins

CCM was started in 1984 by Derek Groves, which was around the time of the riots in St Pauls. This timing was largely coincidental, but it may have helped in the establishment and early profile of the charity.

Derek had worked in the Probation Service for some years, and had then run a drug rehabilitation centre for several more years. His initial plan was to establish a project that would provide the young people of Bristol with an alternative to getting into trouble with alcohol, drugs and minor criminal behaviour.

CCM started as a Coffee Bar for young people, operating from the crypt of *City Road Baptist Church*. Shortly afterwards, Derek purchased the current property a few buildings down the road, and converted it into a coffee shop.

The location in St Pauls is very convenient for many of our customers: St Pauls is known nationally as the 'drug supermarket of the South-West' and people travel large distances into the area. More specifically, we are just around the corner from

two prominent brothels, and the *Black and White Café*, where the St Pauls riots started, and which has continued to be a popular centre for drug dealing.

Derek and most of the early workers were members of BCF (Bristol Christian Fellowship), a part of the Pioneer Network, but Derek trained as an Anglican minister, and the project has always had strong links with various churches across a number of denominations and traditions.

1.3. Development

In the years that followed, a large number of projects were started. Derek was an inspirational character, constantly coming up with new ideas. Many never materialised; many started and ran for a while, and some were picked up by the national and international organisations he had links with. A brief selection of the range of projects that were undertaken is provided in appendix 3.

1.4. Recent Developments

Derek suffered from Parkinson's Disease for some years. His condition deteriorated during 2000, and the trustees undertook a review of the organisation to help them understand what should happen next.

The review identified three key projects within the ministry: the Coffee Shop, the LITE Course, and Bridgehead Church. On considering the report, the trustees decided that other projects (such as the Workshop and the Pink House) would have to be closed in order to concentrate on these three areas.

Derek was given a sabbatical, in the hope that he would regain enough strength to return to work part time. This was not to be, and at the end of the sabbatical I was asked to come in on a short-term contract to 'hold the reins' while the trustees appointed a permanent replacement. After a couple of years, I was appointed to run the project on a permanent basis. Derek himself unexpectedly died of a heart attack last year.

Alongside the three key projects identified by the trustees, I have one other functional priority, which is local networking. Derek had been involved in a number of national and international initiatives; he had strong links with people running various national agencies in the fields of youth work and drugs; but as a result of this activity, the local networking had been neglected for some time.

2. Objectives

The second task I have to do is:

- Explain the theological and social reasons which have led the church to embark on this project.

This has proved to be the most difficult part of this assignment, in two distinct ways. It has involved the greatest amount of field work and research, and has caused the greatest difficulty in determining what to write.

Derek left behind a vast amount of written material: letters, articles, papers, submissions, guidelines, training materials, policies, strategies, and more. Almost all he wrote described in some way the theological and social reasons which led him to embark on this project. When I talked with people who were involved in the early days, they were always very helpful and encouraging, but what they told me would rarely simplify or clarify matters.

2.1. The Theological Reasons

Given the amount of material available, it is hard to identify any theological strand that has not been used by Derek to describe and explain his reasons for establishing the project. All this written material post-dates the project, so I cannot compare the reasons given in advance against the later material.

In my personal contact with Derek, I was always surprised at how closely his theological understanding corresponded with my own, and when he read material I produced, the response was always affirming of the basic position I took. I am confident that the two assignments I have already produced for this course are as good a summary of the theological reasons for establishing the project as can be determined.

My personal conclusion is that Derek's own vision for the project could be summarised very simply: *to be an authentic church*. All the remaining goals and objectives only serve to clarify what he understood by this. For example, another core principle, *to hold together evangelism and social action*, is only what God requires of His Church in every place and every age, we believe.

In talking with other people from CCM's past, it is clear that Derek had a level of theological understanding and precision that set him apart. He both inspired the people around him and articulated his beliefs in a way they could identify with. The theological basis from which the other people were working is probably best described as warm-hearted but woolly-headed: in conversation, the following elements could all be mentioned as being equivalent.

- Praying a prayer of commitment
- Being saved
- Joining a church
- Being filled with the Spirit

2.2. The Social Reasons

The social reasons for establishing the project are slightly clearer than the theological ones, but perhaps no easier to articulate.

- **The Objective Reasons**

It is clear that Derek was drawing on his experience with prisoners and drug addicts, and on many occasions he articulated the problems facing people with a number of dysfunctional backgrounds, or those who had slid into a life of crime,

alcoholism and drug taking. He was always concerned for the poor, the disadvantaged, the weak, the vulnerable and the oppressed.

One key document he wrote was entitled “Our Youth in Crisis” and described the various challenges facing many young people growing up in our cities: the lack of hope, no prospect of a career or a fulfilling life, little experience of a ‘normal’ home background, academic failure, early addiction to tobacco, a ready supply of drugs, the lack of a positive role model, a sense of abandonment by society as a whole, and being part of a community in which living on benefits, fraud, petty crime and violence are the norms – to mention some of the key issues.

In this context, the significant point to note about Derek is not his analysis of the problems (most of which was well reasoned but familiar material to sociologists and social commentators), but his identification of practical steps that could begin to address the problems. Each project was only a partial response to some aspects of the social need, which is why he was always generating new projects.

- **The Subjective Reasons**

Derek and the others involved at the outset believed deeply that the Church is called to make a difference to the practical needs and problems facing the people around us; and they had a pragmatic view of guidance. For example, they would say that the question is not whether I should be involved in addressing the needs I see around me, but whether I have clear and undeniable guidance from God to justify my non-involvement.

Derek was capable of analysing the problems and formulating a strategy for addressing them. For the most part, the other people around him were moved by the problems and pain they could see, and simply wanted to make a difference.

2.3. The Official Objectives

As a charity, the project’s objectives has to be identified in its constitution. This can be found in section 1.1 of appendix 1. It is deliberately non-specific, to ensure that CCM does not act illegally, so it cannot function as a statement of objectives to direct or focus our activities.

The remaining part of appendix 1 traces the development of the mission statements I have been able to find: there may well be others, buried in the files. Certainly, others could be extracted from various documents, which contain statements such as “our primary goal is...” – but I have restricted myself to mission statements that were presented as such.

It would be an interesting exercise, but outside the scope of this assignment, to reflect on the changing mission statements, and see perhaps what can be learned from the changing priorities and perspectives over the years. In any case, the purpose of the mission statement was essentially unchanged over the years: to allow Derek to do whatever he wanted to do at the time.

This may seem like a biased or judgemental statement, but it is based on the consistent testimony of everyone I have talked with on the subject. Derek was deeply respected and regarded as a great man, but he was very much in the tradition

of the pioneer leader. He decided to stride out into the great unknown, and it was up to you whether you wanted to go with him. Things like rules, policies and mission statements were there because other people needed them to be present, but they never limited what Derek would do.

Since taking over, I have retained the existing vision for the project, but changed the implementation in three significant ways.

- Firstly, I work within the rules and structures. I accept the same restrictions as everyone else, and, where they are not relevant or workable, I use the system to change them.
- Secondly, I expect all the staff and volunteers to function as part of a team – to recognise that we are all part of the same body, and to act accordingly.
- Thirdly, I have introduced networking as an explicit part of our strategy to achieve our goals. We now support and encourage other organisations to develop and deliver key services to our clients, rather than trying to do everything ourselves.

The present mission statement (section 1.6 in appendix 1) was agreed by the trustees some three years ago. In the light of the foregoing discussion, it seems to me that this is the only viable statement of purpose against which to judge the success of the project today.

3. Project Evaluation

3.1. Client Perspective

Our client group is notoriously difficult to engage with in many ways, and CCM suffers from all the usual problems in obtaining valid feedback from the people who use the project. We put a fair amount of time and energy into obtaining this feedback, but very little of it can be relied upon to be either relevant or helpful.

Examples of the feedback I have collected are provided in appendix 2, section 2.1. In section 2.2 are details of the main difficulties we have in using feedback from the clients.

While we work hard to listen to our clients and, whenever possible, we put their ideas into practice, we cannot rely on feedback from our clients to be accurate. With these qualifications, the client feedback we have received on our goals can be summarised as follows.

- **Goal 1**

They feel supported by us, and recognise that we offer opportunities for development. In general, we manage to encourage them to take up those opportunities without pressuring them to do so. They do not see the possibility of their lives being ‘transformed’ (that is part of the core problem many of them face), but they recognise that we are helping because we want to see their lives improve.

- Goal 2

Most of the clients see us as providing non-threatening contact. A few are slightly put off by our Christian faith and the way we communicate it (some say they do not use our services because we are Christians and they don't want to be evangelised, but they do use some of our services nevertheless). Possibly a slightly larger number (but it is very hard to tell) are put off because we are seen as a White organisation, and using us would be an act of treachery to the Black community.

- Goal 3

This is one of the things they really appreciate about us: we don't chop life up into little boxes and say we will help you with this but not with that. We are willing to talk about what matters to you right now, whether it is a court case, depression, hassle with the social worker, a theological question, or the lack of a bedside table; and if we can help, we will.

- Goals 4 & 5

They do not see much of the partnership working we undertake, and sometimes assume we have much less contact than is in fact the case. There seems to be an in-built assumption that the different organisations are in competition or conflict, when we are in fact cooperating quite well. And they certainly do not understand our goal of 'radical discipleship'.

3.2. Volunteer Perspective

We provide the volunteers with a number of opportunities to communicate with the project, to suggest ideas and offer feedback: these are listed in section 2.3 of appendix 2.

- Goals 1, 2 & 3

This is largely why people choose to volunteer with us. They can start off by doing whatever they are comfortable with – cooking, serving, cleaning, talking, or just 'being there' for people in a relatively safe environment – and then go on to develop experience and skills in a variety of useful areas.

A few keen evangelists struggle with our 'non-threatening' approach, and would like us to be more aggressive in raising spiritual issues, but the majority are very comfortable with the way it is done.

- Goals 4 & 5

Partnership is very important to some of the volunteers, and completely unimportant to others, depending on whether or not they are seeking to help the clients in ways that involve other organisations. Those to whom it is important consider it to be mostly adequate, but improving.

We play an important role in BCAN, and we established and run the BCAN Homeless Forum, which is the only group in Bristol serving many of the Christian

and voluntary groups working with homeless people. The links and resources provided through BCAN have proved to be very significant to many volunteers.

Whether 'radical discipleship' is seen as important, and whether we are seen as achieving it, depends largely on the background, theology and church tradition of the volunteer. For some people, talking with an addict is 'cutting edge'; others will not be satisfied until we are casting out the demons of addiction from every client.

- **Goals 6 - 10**

The 'ethos' part of the mission statement is generally regarded by the volunteers as self-evidently true for CCM.

3.3. Staff Perspective

While recognising that we continue to struggle in many areas, the staff generally feel that we are doing what we say we should do in goals 1 to 4. The key issue for the staff is not whether we are doing it, but whether what we do is bearing the fruit we should expect.

In many secular jobs, your performance can be measured by your productivity. In most church work, your performance can be measured by indicators such as membership, meeting attendance, and giving to the church and missions.

We have rejected indicators such as numbers referred to other agencies, number of counselling sessions provided, and so on. We count the numbers of meals provided, but the food is a means to an end, so does not count as success. So we struggle to measure our own success, and are simultaneously encouraged by the changes we detect in individuals, and discouraged by the distance they still have to travel.

The staff and the Duty Managers generally feel that goal 5 is an honest expression of our desire, but might be expressed in too idealistic a way. And they are comfortable with the ethos (goals 6 to 10) as expressing our position as an organisation.

3.4. Trustee Perspective

The trustees' responsibilities are straightforward. Concerning the public, they have to ensure that the charity's resources are expended solely in pursuit of the charity's objects (section 1.1 of appendix 1). Concerning the beneficiaries, they have to ensure that the resources are expended efficiently in pursuit of these objects.

While the trustees want to know that we (the staff and volunteers) are implementing the agreed strategy, their primary concern, once the legal obligations are met, is to ensure that the books balance and the charity can meet its financial obligations. Our lack of financial security leads them to be concerned about issues such as prayer, publicity and fundraising.

Publicity is an ethical minefield. We could tell some really impressive stories in our publicity, and presumably this would improve our income. But most of these stories, while completely true, would be very misleading to members of the general

public. We are also very concerned about the effects on the individual of being portrayed in print as a 'success story', and believe it is often a damaging experience for them.

We aim, in all our publicity, to be informative, honest, encouraging and pastorally responsible. But these principles generally pull in different directions, and what we end up with is a compromise. It is a compromise our supporters frequently say they are comfortable with, but this is not easy for the staff and volunteers involved.

4. Conclusions

4.1. Measurement

It has become clear, as a result of this exercise, that that our mission statement is not formulated in a way to enable us to measure or track our progress against the fulfilling of the aims.

A question the trustees will need to address is whether they are content for this to remain the case, or whether it would be helpful to reformulate our aims.

4.2. Goals

Similarly, it became clear that our mission statement does not include the most important thing we do (and what we consistently tell people is the most important thing) – we build relationships with people on the streets. Everything else we do follows on from this, either as a means or a consequence. We should update the mission statement to reflect this reality.

4.3. Administration

While it seems that nobody can tell us what we ought to be doing, there is a wealth of material to help us do what we do as efficiently as possible. After taking advice from a number of sources, we have purchased a copy of PQASSO, and have started to structure our documentation and procedures according to the categories and measures it specifies.

This is a reasonably long-term project, but it should result in CCM being able to demonstrate good practice in our internal systems and how we seek to pursue our goals, and being able to measure our progress in this direction.

4.4. Accessibility

One obvious question we need to ask is: do we effectively reach out to all the people in our client group? Do any people or sub-groups feel excluded? Interestingly, this is not explicitly part of our aims: we do not say we seek to reach everyone, or representatives of every sub-group.

I suspect this lack of a statement about trying to help everyone is partly pragmatic: with our limited resources there is no way we could attempt to help

everybody in our target group in Bristol. This is in line with our ethos: we do not attempt to do everything for everyone, just to do something meaningful for some people.

It is also in line with our theological position of being only a part of the Body of Christ in the city, and only one of many Christian responses to the needs we address. There needs to be a variety of responses, in a variety of styles, to address the wide variety of people and needs.

There is also a real benefit in us not meeting the needs of all our clients. Duplication of provision (whilst a bad idea in official eyes) is strategically a good and helpful feature: we can ban people, when necessary, and this will not result in them starving. Duplication of provision makes meaningful discipline possible.

The question remains, however, whether we are wrongly excluding people from our service; and the trustees need to consider how we should set about answering that question.

4.5. Networking

Given the limited timescale, it was not possible to undertake a proper survey of the organisations we work alongside, to determine how they see our role and whether they think we are meeting our objectives. I have established a good working relationship with a number of these organisations, and could have established their answers fairly easily, but this would have biased the sample and made the results unreliable. A future piece of work along these lines should focus more on our external relationships and their perceptions and evaluation of our work.

Whether or not we can undertake this further research, consideration needs to be given to the developing role of BCAN and the BCAN Homeless Forum in enabling CCM and other related groups to work effectively together. In particular, we need to consider whether this is work CCM should be subsidising, or whether BCAN ought to be raising its own funds – and, if so, whether this should be primarily from members or external sources.

4.6. Possible Developments

We should consider targeting some of the Black-led churches to try and raise our profile and more volunteers from that sector of the Christian community. If successful, this may enable us to extend our service further into the Afro-Caribbean community.

Recruiting more volunteers would also enable us to open for more hours each week. However, the most significant gap in provision is on Sundays, and at some point we need to talk with some church leaders about releasing some of their members from their obligation to attend the occasional service. We cannot believe that Jesus wants homeless people to go hungry because His people are too busy attending church services.

One constant limitation (repeatedly identified by the clients and volunteers alike) is the lack of space in our present coffee shop. We are currently negotiating for the

use of a larger site just down the road, but anticipate considerable difficulty in persuading the local community of the benefits of this.

A long-term dream has been to establish another base outside St Pauls. The present location is excellent in attracting street people, but bringing them into the area when they have started to get their lives sorted out is not such a good idea, and some of our longer-term clients become reluctant to attend the training we provide because of the location. Establishing another base could be linked with the other long-term dream of providing accommodation.

Bibliography

- Booker, M & Ireland, M, *Evangelism – Which Way Now?* (London: Church House Publishing, 2003)
- Carpenter, J, *Together Locally* (London: GE Publications, 1998)
- Forster, RT, *Spiritual Warfare in Social Action* (London: Ichthus Media Services, 1997)
- Gibbs, E & Coffey, I, *ChurchNext* (Leicester: IVP, 2001)
- Green, L, *The Impact of the Global* (Sheffield: Urban Theology Unit, 2001)
- Hinton, J, *Changing Churches* (London: Church House Publishing, 2002)
- Johnstone, P, *The Church is BIGGER than you think* (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1998)
- Sider, R, *Evangelism and Social Action* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1993)
- Stott, J, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1984 and 1990)
- Wallis, J, *The Call to Conversion* (San Francisco, California: Harper, 1992)

Resources

Many unpublished reviews of the work of CCM or some aspect of it were consulted. Some of these were purely internal, some were undertaken by interested friends, and some by trained professionals (the last two of these being The Shaftesbury Society, and Progress).

BCAN has a web site describing many of its activities, including the Homeless Forum: <http://www.bcan.org.uk> (last accessed 29 January 2004)

CCM also has a web site, which includes the list of mission statements used in appendix 1: <http://www.crisis-centre.org.uk> (last accessed 29 January 2004)

Charities Evaluation Services produce a great deal of relevant and helpful material, including PQASSO (the Practical Quality Assurance System for Small Organisations), available from 4 Coldbath Square, London, EC1R 5HL.

Progress used to provide training and support to social economy groups in the Bristol area, but went out of business in the Autumn of 2003.

The Shaftesbury Society offer a great deal of help to projects such as CCM, including guidelines such as *The Social Action Journey*, (used by CCM to help us reflect on potential new projects), available from 16 Kingston Road, London, SW19 1JZ.

Appendices

1. Mission Statements

This appendix lists the constitutional objectives, plus five other mission statements CCM has published over the years.

1.1 In the Beginning

This is what the Memorandum of Association says.

The objects for which the Association is established are: the advancement of the Christian religion and the relief of poverty and sickness particularly by

- the relief of the mental and physical distress of all persons who are in any manner affected by drink, drugs and similar narcotic substances and emotional or psychological stress;
- the provision of a drop-in centre for the provision of a counselling service;
- the provision of a temporary basis of accommodation for people in need.

1.2 Community Impact

This Mission Statement dates from 1993.

Our aim is to impact the community with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to bring people to wholeness and help them rebuild their lives and, at the same time, offer training for churches, individuals and other organisations in Avon and elsewhere. In particular, through our Drop-In Centre, Training for Work Course, Bus Stop Project, Overcoming Addictions group and Community Development Work, we offer friendly, practical support and counsel to people 17 years and above, whose lives have been severely disrupted by their problems.

1.3 An Army of Ordinary People

This Mission Statement dates from 1995.

Crisis Centre Ministries (CCM) is an army which has clear, defined aims, as follows:

- To proclaim the Gospel message of the risen Christ.
- To speak the name of Jesus into people's lives, so that they may be set free from their life-controlling problems, healed, restored, forgiven.
- To build bridges of communication into the inner city areas of Bristol.
- To build trusting relationships with people so that they may learn how to apply God's word in their lives.

- To teach them so that they, too, can go out in the name of Jesus, making disciples of all nations.
- To help people in the name of Jesus live a complete and fulfilled life to the glory of God.
- To be a faithful witness of the word of God, open and unashamed but sensitive in relation to this word and people's lives.

1.4 Making Disciples

This Mission Statement dates from 2000.

The aims of Crisis Centre Ministries are -

- by proclaiming the Gospel message of the risen Christ, to impact our community.
- to speak the name of Jesus into people's lives and build trusting relationships with them so that they may learn how to apply God's word in their lives.
- to help people rebuild their lives so that they can live a complete and fulfilled life to the glory of God and themselves 'go out in the name of Jesus', impacting their community and making disciples.
- to offer training for churches, individuals and other organisations in Bristol and elsewhere.

1.5 Church on the Street

The work was summarised on our web site as follows.

Crisis Centre Ministries came into being in September 1984. We aim to be an expression of 'church on the street', with a three-fold vision:-

- to have a non-threatening point of contact at street level for people with 'life-controlling problems';
- to provide life skill initial training for long term unemployed which prepares them for further training or employment; and
- to provide supportive accommodation with a training programme.

Over the years we have developed a skilled and professional approach in all aspects of our work. It has been said 'The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken'. We are in the business of breaking chains of habit.

1.6 Current Statement

I have added the paragraph numbers to enable these points to be referenced in the main body of the assignment.

Vision

Our vision is “transformed lives” - bringing God’s grace and healing love to people with life-disrupting problems.

What Do We Do?

1. We support people, and provide them with opportunities for development, with the aim of seeing their lives transformed.
2. We provide non-threatening contact on street level.
3. We hold together evangelism and practical care, helping people on the physical, spiritual and emotional levels.
4. We work to develop partnerships with other local churches, other Christian groups, other community groups and agencies.
5. We seek to do this as an expression of radical discipleship, constantly exploring new ways to become more effective, while remaining on the cutting edge of service to our local community.

Ethos

6. We aim to work with people who have life-disrupting problems to take them step by step along the ‘ladder of progress’. These people can also be described as ‘disenfranchised’, ‘marginalized’, or (in Biblical terms) simply as ‘the poor’.
7. We aim to share our vision and experience with other Christians in the local churches, and to do our work in a way that blesses the staff and volunteers, building the Body of Christ in Bristol.
8. We aim to be a clear Christian voice, in St. Pauls and beyond.
9. We aim to be ‘church on the street’, understanding ‘church’ to be the whole Body of Christ in a network of relationships, and not as an hierarchical organisation. We aim both to be church and to share leaders and members with other local churches.
10. We aim to be an open door for people in our client group, available when people choose to walk through and make use of the services we offer.

2. Some Responses

This section contains some of the notes I have put together while gathering the data for this assignment.

2.1 Client Response

This section was mainly written down from direct quotes or requests by the clients, together with an occasional comment in square brackets by me. The groupings are my own, to make this section a bit more readable.

Staff needs:

- We need to buy Jayne [the Catering Coordinator, who doesn't drive] a company car (has to be an Automatic!)

Meals Issues:

- Two people said all the meals we serve were good and they did not see any fault in the service we provide. Making a comparison with some of the other agencies they felt our service was a higher quality.
- We needed to make sure that the new meal times posters were placed in all the hostels etc.
- Some suggested some of the meals could be bigger. [Many of our clients ask for bigger portions and then leave uneaten food on their plates, so portion size is a difficult issue]
- Would it be possible to open on a Saturday some times? This seems to be the day most needed as other facilities don't open at weekends either. [This is true – but when we were open on Saturdays, very few clients used the service: it is the best day for begging]
- Meal vouchers on a Monday were a problem as the Elim office is not open people needed to have vouchers from the week before for lunch on Monday.
- Other suggestions were for more variety in puddings: two requests were for cheesecake and plain sponge with custard.
- Serving food between 12 – 14.00 seemed to be accepted but there was some comment on Mondays being difficult because they can't get vouchers from Elim [a nearby local church].

LITE [the pre-employment training programme]:

- The session planned that afternoon was discussed. Two of the men had already done a basic computer course and felt they did not need to repeat it.

Games:

- The games in the afternoon had been appreciated. One person had particularly liked playing Taboo last week.

Collection box:

- It was suggested that we put a collection box on the counter somewhere so small change could be donated. We could then announce how much had been collected and use it for a particular thing every six months or so.

Outing:

- A day out was suggested, something that was signed up for and paid for in advance. A couple of pounds every week to go somewhere like Alton Towers. [This is a brilliant suggestion from people who claim they don't have 5p for a cup of coffee]

Other suggestions:

- Could we install a washing machine for clients to use?
- A pool table.

Seating and space:

- We need more seating. We explored the need for more space. The need for a bigger shop area was voiced.
- The major discussion was around the lack of seating in the shop and how it was awkward to pass people sitting at the tables near the kitchen.
- Questions were asked about using the basement for extra seating. We discussed the fire regulations, so then a suggestion was made about converting the basement area to a kitchen so we had more seating upstairs.
- We talked about looking for bigger premises.
- The cheapest and most feasible discussion was about building breakfast bar type tables along the long wall that could be narrower than the current tables. We could use stools to sit here and so enable 6/8 customers to eat at the same time.
- A suggestion to keep the cost of installation down would be to find some of our current customers who had appropriate skills to do the work for us. This would help with a feeling of ownership in the shop. The suggestion was to provide them with free meals while they did the work.
- We talked about proposed plans for the basement area.
- Nick would like to see us using the basement more with clients but this will need more volunteers.

Use of Basement:

- We spoke about the possibility of a computer downstairs that would be useful particularly to have internet access.
- We are also looking at the possibility of running a video club on Thursday afternoons after the meals are served. [This has been done]
- The videos on Thursday afternoons are much appreciated and Paul G. has a number of good films lined up to show.
- Other suggestions were made about things that would be good to introduce during the tea and biscuits time in the afternoon. They included snooker, scrabble and other games, cards. [This has been done] Workshops on woodwork, drama etc were also mentioned.
- One client complained that some of the volunteers were aggressive at times. [True, but only when badly provoked – most of the time the volunteers respond calmly to aggression from the clients: we have to live with this kind of double standard]

2.2 *Problems with Client Feedback*

The main problems we have in using the feedback in section 2.1 above can be summarised in the following four points.

- Clients tell us what we want to hear. That way, we are more likely to help them.
- Clients tell us things that will help them get what they want. Whether what they say is true or not is completely irrelevant..
- Clients tell us what they feel right now. They may feel the opposite in an hour's time.
- Clients do not understand the issues and constraints we face, so requests and suggestions tend to be irrelevant and unachievable.

These four points are not consistent, but this does not seem to cause any problems to the clients. For example, I have been told in two recent conversations, “I’m starving – I haven’t eaten for two days... You can’t expect me to eat ham with no mustard to go on it!” and “I’m homeless, I’ve been sleeping rough for weeks... you can phone me or post {the information I want} to this address.”

As another example, we have been repeatedly told by our clients in no uncertain terms that we are providing our food too cheaply, and we ought to charge at least a fiver for our meals. We are also told off by them (this is a euphemism) for selling food when we have been given it in the first place.

The ethical problems are seemingly impossible: people with a street background are quite willing, in general, to lie, steal, cheat and use physical violence in order to get what they want or feel they need – and that is still true after they have made a profession of faith, seen many answers to prayer, and made real sacrifices because of their faith and their desire to follow Jesus.

On the other hand, there are often very strict ethical principles, especially to do with fairness. I was told very recently by one of our clients that selling the *Big Issue* was as bad as begging, because the *Big Issue* sellers don’t pay the full price for the magazines. (The implication was that I might not have been aware that I’m being cheated by the *Big Issue* sellers.) I tried to explain the difference between begging and selling, and the concept of mark-up, but it was all in vain.

2.3 *Volunteer Response*

The volunteers are encouraged to provide ideas and feedback in a variety of ways.

- We collect some information on the volunteer application form all potential volunteers must complete before they start working for us.
- We have a meeting for all the volunteers every two months, at which they can respond to recent or proposed developments and raise questions or issues to be discussed.

- We have another meeting every two months for the Duty Managers – the volunteers who take responsibility for sessions in the coffee shop. We are able to talk in more detail about the development of policies and procedures, and how we can respond to particular challenges.
- We circulate a quarterly newsletter to all our supporters, encouraging feedback on a variety of topics.
- We have recently been circulating a monthly ‘Link’ news-sheet to our volunteers, providing more up to date news and, often, a feedback form on a topical question.
- Feedback is also collected in the ‘Incident Book’ and when the Duty Manager gets the volunteers together at the end of a session after the coffee shop closes.

To summarise the main messages we get from our volunteers:

- They are grateful they can be involved in such a ministry.
- They feel they have grown as people and as Christians through their involvement.
- They appreciate the training we provide and benefit from it when they attend, but struggle to make the necessary time.
- They care deeply about the needs of our clients, and would like to see better provision made for them.
- They believe the Church ought to put more resources into social action projects.
- They want to spend their time doing useful things, not filling in reports and monitoring forms.
- They struggle to make enough time to volunteer, balancing the needs of the project against many other needs and responsibilities (they often face significant challenges both at home and in their church life).
- For some, volunteering with us is the only way in which they can give something back – to the Church, or to society in general.
- They like the way we work alongside other organisations and take a lead in the development of service provision in Bristol.
- They generally like the way we are open to Christians from all denominations and theological persuasions, even though this sometimes causes difficulties.

2.2 Trustee Response

Initial feedback from the trustees supplied the following response.

- The key thing is that we should evaluate against what we have stated we will try to do

- What do the punters think of what we do? Do they value it and do they feel involved in it?
- What have we achieved – quantitative and qualitative – what do the stats tell us and what do the stories tell us?
- Is the governance of the project effective – how could it improve?
- Are we making effective links with like minded others – networks?
- What do our volunteers think of the work?
- How can we be more successful in resource investigation?

3. Past Projects

Some of the key projects CCM has undertaken in the past are briefly described here.

The Bus Stop Project. A single-decker bus was purchased, and used as a mobile evangelistic base for several years. Evangelistic events were undertaken, sometimes alone, but mainly in partnership with local churches, who invited the bus and associated CCM personnel into their area.

The Bristol Nightstop. This was a scheme to provide young and vulnerable homeless people with a place to stay overnight, while something more secure and permanent could be arranged. It ran for a few years and died out, but has recently been resurrected by a national charity.

The Bridgehead Church. The original plan was for everyone contacted and converted to be fed immediately into an existing local church. This proved to be unrealistic, so a ‘church on the street’ was formed. This has gone through many changes, but continues to function with a dual purpose: to be an authentic church, culturally accessible to our clients; and to feed people into the more traditional churches when they are ready for it.

The Meal Vouchers. People buy meal vouchers from CCM, and give them to people begging on the street. This allows them to respond to the needs of the beggar, while avoiding giving money, which will normally be spent on alcohol or drugs. The idea has been taken up by similar projects around the country, and is currently being implemented (in a modified form) as a nationwide scheme.

The Food For Life Bakery. When people have come off the streets and want to start a new life, it is often difficult to find an appropriate job. CCM has been involved in a number of job creation schemes over the years. The Bakery began as a CCM project, was established as a workers’ cooperative, and is now functioning as an independent business.

The Workshop. This is one of the last projects Derek was involved in. He was seeking to establish a workshop to provide practical skills in carpentry, joinery and general wood working, while generating sufficient income to employ a manager-trainer. There was many good aspects to this scheme, but it depended on having the right skilled person available to run the project, and the right person could not be

found. A workshop was rented and tools purchased, but the project never got off the ground.

The LITE Course. Since 1990, we have been running a ‘Lifeskills Initial Training for Employment’ course. This was one of the first lifeskills courses in the country, and still caters for many people who do not have the capacity to be part of a traditional training programme. Most of the people whose lives have been transformed by their involvement with CCM have been through the LITE Course, sometimes several times. We continue to struggle for funding, and to retain enough people on the course, and are experimenting with running the programme in different locations.

The Pink House. This was a large house in which we ran a rehabilitation and discipleship programme for some 18 months. CCM did not have the necessary skills and infrastructure, so it was only a partial success for the people involved; and various statutory services failed to provide the support and finance they had negotiated within an adequate timescale, so it never achieved financial viability.