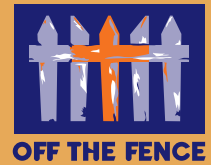


Off The Fence news



Off The Fence Quarterly Prayer Letter • Winter 2008

Forty street-homeless men and women helped into accommodation in 2007

The Antifreeze Centre opened its doors at the beginning of 2007 and each week we have seen steadily growing numbers of clients. The popularity of the service has been an enormous encouragement, and we have been delighted at the number of people that we have been able to help into accommodation.



Antifreeze support session

In the last few weeks we have had the attention of the national press after it was discovered that former BBC news reader Ed Mitchell was sleeping rough in Hove and accessing the Antifreeze services. Homelessness can affect almost anyone facing a crisis and over the years we have met with many other professionals including barristers, doctors and teachers. At the time of writing, Ed has had a number of offers of help with accommodation from local people.

Mervyn Weeks writes, 'Through prayer we know that God has increased what we can offer to the clients who access the centre. So far we've managed to network with organisations such as Emmaus,

sending some of our clients who were previously rough sleeping to various parts of the UK. These are places where clients can receive accommodation, opportunities to begin working again, and where they can receive the support of a community. The centre has also offered us opportunities to speak to clients privately; somewhere where they can open up their hearts in confidence knowing that there's someone prepared to listen. For two of our clients this has led to them coming to know the Lord, putting their trust in God and not in the things that have been factors in their homeless situations in the past. The centre has also enabled us to work across the agencies in seeking to support some of our more vulnerable clients. But, the centre has also become a place of study & prayer.

Please do continue to pray for us in the centre as each day we face the challenge of never really knowing who's going to walk through our doors.



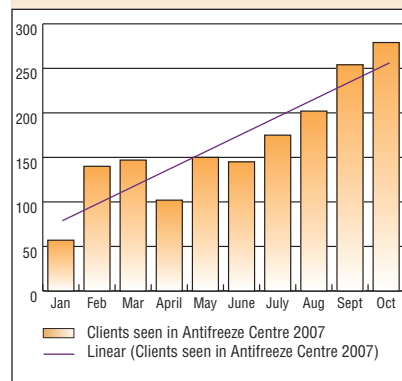
Extra warm sleeping bags provided during the winter months

We've moved!

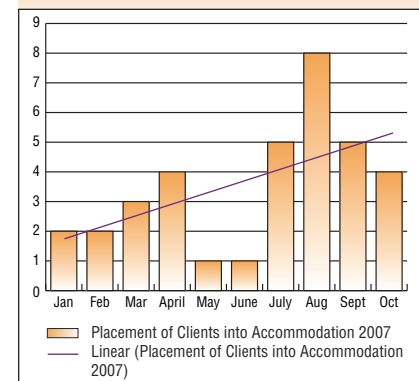
The admin team has moved from central Hove to the outskirts of town. The new address is **Off The Fence Trust**, 20-22 Boundary Road, Hove, BN3 4EF. Tel: 01273 423000.

The **Women at Risk** project has set up base at 49 Blatchington Road, and **Antifreeze** continues to operate from 132 Portland Road.

Clients seen in Antifreeze Centre 2007



Placement of Clients into Accommodation 2007



Welcome

It's been a year of significant project development. Highlights have included the expanding services at the Antifreeze Centre, and the growing numbers of students attending the clubs organised by the Schools team.

It has been a real privilege for the charity's workers and volunteers to be able to establish relationships with street-homeless men and women and to help 40 people off the streets and into accommodation.

This edition of the Off The Fence News and Prayer Letter has been kindly sponsored by Downland Housing Association, to whom we are very grateful.

With every prayer letter there seems to be more and more news. It's hard to know what to include and what to leave out! There is a 'news in brief' section on page 4, but for the full stories please visit our web site.



Your prayers and support have been very much appreciated

*Robert Lines,
Editor*

OTF team changes

We'll be sorry to say goodbye to our project development officer James Webb when his 12 months with us comes to an end in January 2008. However, we're delighted that he has been able to secure a place at a bible college where he will train to work in the ministry overseas.

Welcome to the team members who have joined us since the last newsletter. Steve Swain is an experienced support worker and has had an immediate impact at the drop-in centre offering 1-1 advice to our Antifreeze clients.

Matias Nogler is Swiss, is a volunteer worker at Bishop Hannington Church, and is giving us a hand with admin for two days each week.

Steve Swain assists with a search for accommodation



Support for women in crisis

Women at Risk Project

Paul Young writes, 'This has been a particularly difficult time for Wendy who leads the project. She is recovering from major surgery and this has stalled the further development of the project slightly. However, this gives us enough time to refurbish the base and employ a new worker ready for the opening of the project base early next year. Thank you for all your letters of support and prayers they have been a major source of encouragement to Wendy.'

In Wendy's absence, Jenni Hayward has stepped ably up to the mark to keep the existing project running. Jenni writes,

'Sally had been a client of ours for about two years, but 18 months ago I lost contact. I found out that she was in prison and, after writing to her, a volunteer and I went to see her. She was thrilled to see us and we were equally delighted to meet up again. Sally looked well and in better health than the last time we had met. At that time she was using heroin and had looked drawn and ill. Although being in prison is not the best of experiences, it had at least given Sally time to come off drugs and to be reunited with her family - most importantly her 9 year old son. When Sally came out of prison she was given a train ticket and her clothing but had nowhere to stay. This was a tense time because she was 'sofa surfing' with old friends. This could easily have led her back into old habits.

I rang a Christian agency to see if they had space for her, and just at that time one of their residents was leaving. During this time I went on a training course in Brighton. There were 50 delegates, but I didn't know anyone. I got into conversation with the person sat next to me, and it transpired that he was the very person who ran the Christian agency. I arranged to take Sally there the next day. She was interviewed, and given a place almost immediately.

Sally is now doing well. She's learning to cook and live in the community again and is staying clean. Relationships with her family are strong. She is saving so that she will be able to rent her own flat and is hoping to get a job.'

Website development - www.offthefence.org.uk

Our website has been going through a revamp recently. Please go online and see what's new. We want you to see how your support is making a real difference to the lives of disadvantaged people in Brighton and Hove. You can now:

- discover the latest news
- sign up for the next Brighton Half Marathon
- download our Newsletters and Impact Reports
- flick through photos of recent activities
- learn how your school, church, club or business can provide vital support
- donate online and download Standing Order, Gift Aid and Sponsor forms
- find out how to become a volunteer



We hope you'll enjoy looking through the new site! If you have any feedback or would like to create a link from your website to ours or (vice-versa) please email: office@offthefence.org.uk

Schools and Youth

The school's project has grown considerably this year and the teams are meeting with more and more young people each week.

Adele Waller and Rachel Munt write, 'This term saw the launch of our first all girls' group "Pink" at Newman school in Hove. Publicity had gone out, but we had no idea what the response would be. In the event the two sessions

attracted around 90 girls, some of whom had to be turned away as we couldn't fit them into the room!

We held a Black & White themed launch (with of course a touch of Pink). Games included a blindfold tasting challenge using black/pink or white foods, a newsprint fashion challenge where the winner sported a newsprint wedding dress with a pink tissue veil, and a competition to design a "Pink" poster – not easy in the cramped space available!



Adele Waller and Rachel Munt

We also shared John 10:10 with the girls. Jesus came so that we can have life in all its fullness – not a drab back and white life, but the best life possible! Over the coming weeks we will be looking at a range of topics and issues of particular interest to girls from a Christian perspective.

There were lots of positive comments from the girls including requests that we move to a bigger room! The support from the chaplaincy in the school in launching this group has been fantastic and we are delighted to be working in partnership with them.'

The project is also heavily involved in the planning and organising of the Brighton & Hove Youth Leaders' Conference which will take place on 23 February 2008 at Bishop Hannington Church, Hove. The event is now in its second year and is set to become an annual fixture.

Antifreeze Evening Outreach

This is always a particularly challenging time of year for many of the clients who we meet on the streets. We give thanks daily that God sustains them and has enabled us to meet some of their needs. Since October, Sunday night has become the sixth evening of outreach. This has proved to be successful as many of the clients testify that the



Antifreeze volunteers taking sandwiches to distribute to the homeless

weekends can be difficult with the day centres closed. Another way in which the Lord has blessed us has been through our brothers and sisters at St Luke's church in Brighton. They have hosted an initiative called 'The Carpenter's Arms'. This is a partnership programme with the Brighton Vineyard, the Point and ourselves at Antifreeze. The Carpenter's Arms offers food and worship on the fourth Sunday of each month. Numbers have grown steadily and at the most recent meeting more than thirty people came along and took part. This is a marvellous opportunity for us to continue to demonstrate the love that God has for a group of people who often feel rejected and marginalised. My thanks for all who help at the Carpenter's Arms. My very grateful thanks also go out to each one of our volunteers who give so faithfully of their time to the project. Thanks to you all.

Antifreeze always needs more volunteers to come and serve. This will enable us to continue the great work of making a real difference to the lives of those we meet in Brighton & Hove.



Why not join us? You can contact us directly on 01273 719249, or through the Off The Fence Office on 01273 423000. God Bless. Mervyn.



Mervyn Weeks and Philip Lower

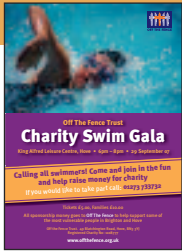
Project Safe House

The supported accommodation project continues to thrive with Yvonne and Jenni working to help our young people into work and independent living. We have four young women in the house. One will be moving on successfully in January 2008 and hopefully another will also be moving on early in the New Year. One of the young women has been with us for 15 months and has successfully completed an English and Numeracy course. She is now on her second year of learning and is enjoying making progress in both areas of learning. At present the house is working well and the young people all get along together. We pray that the harmony and productive learning will continue.

Lounge, Safe House



Volunteers at work in the Safe House garden



Swimathon 2007

What a fantastic night! More than 70 people joined us at the King Alfred Leisure centre at the end of September

2007. All ages upto 93(!) took part in the sponsored swim, cheered on by family & friends. Altogether the event has raised £2632.81 but the money is still coming in. Thanks also go to Starbucks who generously provided coffee and muffins for all the hungry swimmers and spectators. We were also fortunate to get some local media interest (thanks to the amazing James Clark who swam a fantastic 500 metres for the Charity).

Event organiser Angela King said that it was a great family night with lots of fun - and of course all the funds raised will help disadvantaged people in Brighton & Hove.

Harvest Festival Gifts



Thank you to all those who helped raise Harvest Festival collections. We have been very grateful for all that's been donated. Thanks go to Aldrington Primary School, Benfield Junior School, St Christopher's School, Seaford Baptist Church, Bishop Hannington Church, Dorset Gardens Methodist Church and St Andrew's Church. Thanks as well to the Swedish Folk High School, for organising a charity day which raised £200.

Changing lives for the better, now and in the future

Off The Fence is thankful for all our many generous supporters. Your gifts, large and small, enable us to show the love of Christ in action.

Many concerned individuals have chosen to leave a lasting memorial, demonstrating their concern for some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Since our last newsletter we have been pleased to receive pledges from people who have decided to leave a gift in their will to Off The Fence. If you would like to find out more information please see the website or call the office.

By leaving a gift in your will you can continue to make a difference to people's lives long into the future.

Half Marathon Runners needed

Calling all runners! It's almost that time of year again when Brighton seafront witnesses one of the largest road races in the south east of England. In 2007 it was our biggest fundraising event of the year and we rely on the sponsorship money raised to fund our projects. If you are fit (or potentially fit) we really do need your help. The forty members of the 2007 OTF team had a great time, and we hope to boost the numbers further. Paul Young will be sporting a new outfit for the occasion, and if you can join him in the race please contact the office.



News in brief

Investors in People: Thanks to our volunteers for their help in our recent Investors in People (IiP) review. Fifteen people were interviewed and I'm delighted to say that Off The Fence Trust has maintained its IiP award.

Fundraiser: Off The Fence is recruiting to replace James Webb when he leaves for bible college in January 08. Please contact Robert Lines if you are interested in this position.

Buckingham Palace: Paul and Wendy Young attended one of the Queen's garden parties this summer.

Business Supporters Scheme: In the last 12 months we have had increasingly valuable support from friends in the business sector. Please contact the office if your company or business could partner with us.

Tesco Collection: Paul Young dressed up as Santa to raise £188.64 from a Christmas collection outside Tesco, Hove.

Volunteer opportunities

There is no shortage of volunteer opportunities at Off The Fence, so if you can help, we'd love to hear from you:

Antifreeze: Merv and Phil are looking for help with admin 2pm – 4pm on Wednesdays. Also, it would be great to hear from people able to help out occasionally with the evening outreach which takes place Sunday – Friday during the winter months. Car drivers are especially needed.

Events: Paul would love to hear from you if you could help out with a fundraising event.

Best wishes for 2008!

It's been an incredibly busy year and none of it would have been possible without the prayers and help of our volunteers and supporters. From all of us at Off The Fence, 'Thank you so much, and do have a happy New Year!'



This newsletter was sponsored by Downland Housing Trust, to whom we are very grateful.

