



# WDGB

## Newsletter

Spring 2005

## WHO CARES?

**H**omelessness is not just a matter of being without a roof over your head. In the process of reaching that point much else is lost. Some find a temporary disruption in their lives is overcome with just a bit of help and are soon back on their feet, managing as before.

But for others they have no-one to turn to. Often family, has been estranged, friends have deserted and debts have mounted to the point they overwhelm. And for those with mental health issues, learning disabilities or drug and alcohol problems the whole business of taking on a tenancy and managing a home becomes just about impossible.

For most people advice on buying furniture, decorating, and even cooking and cleaning is given as they grow up in a supportive family. But suppose you have parents who cannot cope themselves? Perhaps they were abusive or just not there. If, to cover the pain of a dreadful upbringing or a devastating loss, all the money that has ever come in has gone out on drink or drugs, the whole notion of saving is foreign and to expect someone to suddenly learn is unrealistic.

Then all you have is the streets or a floor in someone's house. Sympathy disappears at about 15 years of age – no longer an abused child who needs protection, but a nuisance at best and a 'junkie' or 'hooligan' or similar dehumanising term at worst. It becomes your own fault that you cannot cope and any self-esteem you had is finally squeezed out by indifference or hostility.

Sometimes homeless people are not as refined as others would like them to be. Not for them the social chit-chat of a morning coffee and a discussion about the latest home gadgets.

The WDGB offers opportunities for those with little else



Staff at the WDGB Office - left to right; Maggie, Joy and Gary

going for them financially and help with the basics of setting up a home and managing a tenancy. It offers a service to landlords that gives them the security of knowing that a tenant accepted through the scheme will have some support in understanding the responsibilities of a tenancy and a guarantee that they will not lose out financially.

The thought that at least someone is interested in helping them find a home encourages many to change attitudes and lifestyle. Not all of course; putting someone in a flat does not change everything – families are not conjured up from nowhere and deep-seated issues are not addressed by bricks and mortar.

However, to be in your own home is important; to have an address gives access to many more services and brings people into mainstream society. The dignity of having your own space is important to everyone. And once on that ladder of opportunity there is one less reason to hide away from reality. Help is more easily available to overcome those other things which have held you back.

The WDGB does more than to get people a home; it gives them an opportunity to make changes in a safe environment and take responsibility for running their own lives.

HOUSING THE HOMELESS

Tel: 01934-617617

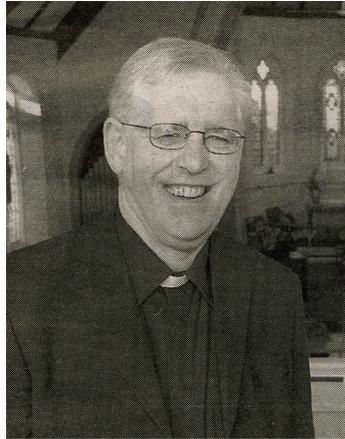


## HOW IT ALL STARTED.....

By Miriam Stockbridge

The beginning of the WDGB was a lobby to Parliament for homelessness on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1992. Woodspring was represented by two "Friends" from the Portishead Quaker Meeting. In Westminster they met Liam Fox, a new MP who had been elected in May that year. He was very welcoming and expressed a concern over the problem of homelessness. During the lobby there was a meeting in the Methodist Central Hall where the delegates were told of a Deposit Guarantee Scheme running successfully in Australia.

On 30<sup>th</sup> January 1993 there was a meeting of 'Prayer and Action' by the Council of Churches in Portishead at



The Revd Alan Taylor

appointed staff and made other practical arrangements resulting in the launch of the scheme in February 1996.

which the speaker from Shelter explained how a Deposit Guarantee Scheme works. The 30 people present at the meeting were enthused and it was decided to make an attempt to start such a scheme in Woodspring. There was encouraging response from public and voluntary bodies alike including the Council's Housing Department and the YMCA in Weston super Mare who offered us a room. The Scheme has been run from there ever since. A Steering Committee was set up with The Revd. Alan Taylor, Rector of Portishead, as Chairman. This committee devised the constitution, obtained funds,

## AT THE SURGERY;

*THE DIFFERENCE WE ARE ABLE TO MAKE IN THE LIVES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE.*

Every Tuesday and Thursday, you can call to see Gary and Maggie at the YMCA; and you don't need to make an appointment. WDGB is mainly in the field of housing, but peoples' problems, similar to our own, do not fall neatly into administrative categories, as the examples below show.

Peggy came to the drop-in session, desperate, on the last day of the notice to quit she had received from her landlord, who was selling his property. She had tried in vain to find alternative accommodation as no landlord would accept the dog to which she was devoted. He was her life and there was no way she would give him up. She also suffered from learning difficulties and physical disabilities, so was in urgent need of help.

We were able to negotiate with a landlord to allow Peggy and her dog to move into a flat near Ashcombe Park. Unfortunately it was on the first floor and there were problems about her ability to manage the stairs. We contacted Social Services and explained the situation and it was agreed that a suitable handrail and other minor modifications would be made to the property. Peggy and her dog are now happily at home there.

Peter came to apply for assistance with a deposit fund. But that was not his main anxiety. He was, he explained, looking for work and was worried that as soon as he started work his benefit and rent would stop. How was he going to survive until his first monthly pay cheque was cleared at the bank? We were able to reassure him and to give him relevant information about the "Ready 4 Work Scheme", which assists people in finding training or work placements and provides financial help during the initial period. We also made an appointment for Peter with our Contact at the Job Centre. We have since heard that Peter has been accepted at a training course, has secured a flat and can take charge of his future, now that the uncertainties surrounding the transitional period from benefits to first payment has been resolved.

## NEW LINK IN CLEVEDON

Andrew House in

Clevedon offers supported accommodation for men

recovering from addiction. Recently it has begun to work closely with the WDGB at the point when residents are ready to move into independent living.

'For these guys, moving on can be fraught with many obstacles' The Manager of Andrew House said, 'not the least of which is saving enough for a guarantee on their own accommodation. We were delighted when the WDGB were able to help them out.'

The first person to take advantage of this new liaison, Stuart, moved into his own flat in March. Andrew House will continue informal specialist support for Stuart.





## Farewell to Patrick

Patrick died last year in his early 60's. Gary summarises the significance of the WDGB to him with the words 'We were there for him and we miss him'. In fact the WDGB was there for him in life and in death.

Patrick was illegally evicted some years ago and came to the notice of Gary, our project manager. He had had a good job with the post office and had been a very able footballer. Gary found him accommodation which he took to as a duck to water, decorated, put up pictures and cared for his bicycles. He lived there for four years, but sadly had unresolved alcohol problem and did not complete courses of detoxification treatment. He remained a regular and welcomed visitor at the Office where he frequently came for a chat. Eight months before he died he developed liver problems and stomach cancer. He prematurely discharged himself from the hospital and Gary gave him a lift home. At this time he talked of his father. He died shortly after. Gary found his father's phone number and contacted him only to be told 'I buried him 20 years ago, so will not be coming to his funeral'

There were four people in the congregation on that occasion; two of his friends and two from the WDGB. The Service was lovingly taken by the Revd Geoffrey Eales, Vicar of Emmanuel Church, Weston. The words of Jesus come to mind. "In as much as ye have done it to the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

## Virtual Bouquets

We dare not send expensive real flowers to Councillors and Officers of North Somerset who from the start have understood and supported the work of the Guarantee Board so effectively. Misuse of your funds in this way would soon be spotted by our clever auditor. So we send virtual bouquets with this Newsletter to express our thanks for the courteous and constructive co-operation that makes our partnership a pleasure.



Bristol • Bath & North East Somerset • North Somerset • South Gloucestershire

This year we have embarked on a partnership with the *Quartet Community Foundation*. We had feared that with the cessation of the grant from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister our Rent Guarantee Project for the under-25-year-olds was in danger of coming to an end. But *Quartet* stepped in with a generous donation of £5,000 allowing us to continue to help house this group of needy young people and to build on the foundation we laid in the previous year. We are particularly pleased that the *Quartet's* emphasis is on "Support and Advocacy" for this group.

*Quartet* is the new title of the charity that used to be known as Greater Bristol Foundation and is one of over 60 community foundations throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Set up in 1987 *Quartet's* mission is to bring hope to the heart of local communities by offering grants to groups such as WDGB to build better future for the local people.

The stated values of the Foundation mirror those of WDGB including being "Passionate about what we do, caring, flexible, stable, listening and learning, and knowledgeable". As a result their grants go where they are needed most.

The £5,000 donation is itself an encouraging comment on the value placed on our work, as the average size of grants by *Quartet* is just under £2,000.

We greatly appreciate this practical support for the part of our work dedicated to assist vulnerable under-25's.

### DATES FOR THE DIARY

#### **AGM**

**Monday 4th July 2005 at 7:45 pm**  
Yatton Methodist Church, High Street, Yatton

&

#### **HOMELESSNESS SUNDAY SERVICE**

**Sunday 29th January 2006 at 3 pm**  
Emmanuel Church, WsM (behind Town Hall)



## POPULAR CHAIRMAN RETIRES

It is with extreme reluctance that we announce the retirement of our Chairman, Mrs Janet Turner who has led the WDGB for many years with commitment, wisdom and common sense.

Despite her very busy family and working life, she has been a constant inspiration because of her compassion and concern for the people we help. A practical lady who brings practical ideas, she has made sure we keep our feet on the ground and our aims centred on real people who matter and the things that make a difference to them.

Janet has steered the WDGB through many phases of its development including involvement of the North Somerset Council in setting up a new Scheme for the Statutory Homeless and the new Rent Guarantee Scheme for the under 25's. She has made a unique contribution to the present success of the work which will reach its 1000<sup>th</sup> tenancy this year.

She has guided the Management Committee gently, giving everyone space for their own ideas and then pulling it together to be an effective body dealing with a very difficult problem.

We will all miss her very much, her humour and her cakes.



Mrs Janet Turner

### How you and your church can help

- Keep the WDGB, its staff, tenants and landlords in your prayers.
- Consider joining the Board of the WDGB and oversee its work. It has usually four meetings a year.
- Make a financial contribution which would be gratefully acknowledged by the WDGB Office
- If you are in a position to offer accommodation for letting, ring our staff who will explain the safeguards and support WDGB is able to offer.
- Come to the Annual General Meeting on Monday 4th July 2005 at 7:45 pm at the Methodist Church, High Street, Yatton.

#### WOODSPRING DEPOSIT GUARANTEE BOARD

Charity No: 1045354

Room 8/9, YMCA, 2 Bristol Road Lower, Weston-super-Mare,  
North Somerset BS23 2PN

Tel: 01934-617617 Fax: 01934-641463

Email: wdgb@aol.com

Patron: Tony Targett

President: The Revd Alan Taylor

Management Committee: Janet Turner (Chairman), Xavier-Michel Duverger MBE (Vice Chairman), Isabel Cummings (Secretary), Nasser Madani (Treasurer), Ian Peddlesden, Gaynor Targett, Sue Betts, Chris Hibbs,

Staff: Gary Twinn (Manager), Maggie Lyons (Assistant Manager), Joy Palmer (Rent Guarantee Scheme Officer)



**WDGB** is a Charity for housing homeless people in North Somerset by guaranteeing a deposit to enable them to rent accommodation. Since its beginning in 1996 it has supported some 2000 people to find a home. It operates throughout North Somerset and so is able to help local people. The Charity employs three staff members and is supported by individuals and Churches in the area, by North Somerset Council and *Quartet* Community Foundation.