

## Homelessness – an indicator of society's ills

David Thomas, the manager of Esther, and Olu Adetola, manager of Wayside, kindly agreed to talk about the issues that contribute to homelessness for this edition of *The Way Ahead*.

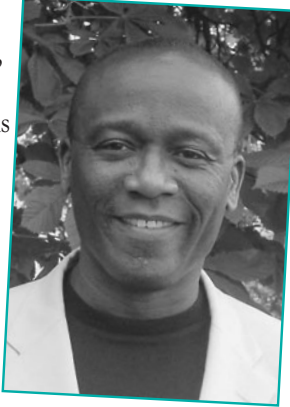
It is very easy to make assumptions about the causes of homelessness and to think that we are reasonably informed because we read the newspapers and have a heart for society. However, it was very illuminating to talk to David and Olu, and I found myself challenged and enlightened by what they had to say.

From reading the press, particularly following the media coverage of the five women who were murdered recently in Ipswich, it would be very easy to think that drug addiction is the major cause not only of prostitution, but also of a whole raft of anti-social behaviour and ultimately homelessness. However, David Thomas was very quick to share with me his belief that drug use is usually a symptom not a cause; that young people turn to drugs when something else has gone terribly wrong in their life.

In his experience, the one significant problem, which often leads to a drug habit and, sadly, a homeless existence is family break down. Our society is paying a very sad and heavy price for the undermining of traditional family values. Marriage break down, and the subsequent division of loyalties; absent parents; new partners and complete lack of security lead to young people having no role models, no secure home and no unconditional love. Women who are missing a father figure from their lives will seek out substitute older men, often flirting with them and becoming entangled in completely inappropriate relationships which really stem from a desire to be loved and protected. Of course, the awful truth is that more often than not these men will exploit and corrupt rather than respect and care for the women.

In some cases, the young person will be lead astray by peer pressure, or a willful personality, and then even a very strong family may be unable to support and prevent the woman from becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol. One family, for example, who has contact with Esther, tells how the rest of the family are doing well, but one daughter has gone completely off the rails. David says that all too often today 'People are taught about their rights and not their responsibilities', and the evidence of this can be seen right across the attitudes and behaviour of society.

David and Olu both agree that as a nation we are not good at looking after and supporting the poor among us. One example of this was a resident who went £2 overdrawn and was then sent a letter for which she was charged £30. Or another who was charged £80 for dropping litter by a



Community Support Officer, and then when she couldn't pay was taken to court and given a £120 fine.

At any one time in our homeless projects there will be a mixed group of women, some with mental health problems; some with drink or drug issues precipitated by mental health problems; some with emotional issues – they may have lost their home through bankruptcy, or their children through substance abuse. David predicts that this particular issue will get worse: benefits for the under 25s are very low, and the pressure to spend, get into arrears and take out loans is extremely high. A lot goes on, he claims, that most of us wouldn't be aware of and that heavily penalises the poor.

Olu was thrilled to report though that two of the residents at Wayside have recently completed a Prince's Trust course. Both of the women had deep problems and had given the staff cause for concern. However, the team members were delighted when both women completed the 12-week course which will make it easier for them to apply for jobs; and one has started to attend church. Please continue to pray for the Lord to work through all of our staff to touch the lives of the women for whom we care.

## Words of encouragement

Over the course of the year, we receive letters from all sorts of people thanking us for the love that we have shown, either to them personally, or to members of their family. These letters help us to gauge how well we are matching up to our Aims and Objectives and we'd like to share some extracts with you.

*'I am writing to express my gratitude for the care my Mother received whilst a resident at Fair Havens. Mum moved from Kent in April 2005 to Fair Havens (a real answer to prayer when a room became available), and from her first day she always said how happy she was to be living there. As she became frailer, and her care and nursing needs increased, it was wonderful to see the quality of that care demonstrated by the staff.'*

*'Dear Mr Thomas  
Thank you so much for your kindness and sensitivity at such a sad time in our lives. Helena said that there was a high level of support on offer at Esther and spoke very highly of you and the staff .... Carry on with the tremendous work that you do.'*

*'What can I say about the staff? They are absolutely wonderful, the care they provide is of a very high standard. Matron providing that lovely role model of excellence which they worked hard to attain. Nothing was ever too much trouble, the staff were always cheerful, courteous and remarkably patient.'*

Congratulations to Seton Bennett, a long-standing Keychange trustee and our Vice Chairman, who was awarded the CBE on 11 October 2006 at Buckingham Palace.

KEYCHANGE CHARITY

2006-2007

# The Way Ahead



T. Geoffrey Ellis, Chairman, at the Glenfall Conference

One of the greatest dangers for a long established charity it to assume that the path we have pursued for so long is the right one. Here at Keychange we look back with a great sense of thankfulness to God for what has been achieved through the generous giving and prayer of you, our donors and supporters. Having reviewed our position, seeing God at work in so many areas, and being confident of His leading we have put in place a five year plan which we trust will be a gradual and prayerful expansion of this work of Christian caring. These are difficult days in which to maintain a clear and positive witness to the Christian Gospel which is at the heart of our work. Increasingly we are under pressure to 'go easy' on our application of our Mission Statement, a part of which states 'to offer acceptance, care and active Christian community to people in need on the basis of

our faith.' Our work amongst the frail elderly (at present we care for 188 people) requires much time and effort and we are now in the process of major enlargement and refurbishment of our Homes at Wimbledon and Cromer and actively seeking three further Homes to bring under our management. We are constantly required to raise our standards and we are determined that our projects will be places of excellence. Thanks to the dedicated work of our team of managers and Head Office staff our standards are excellent but always we continue to strive for greater care and efficiency. We count it a great privilege to have the care of these older folk probably during the last months and years of their lives. Our Social Action programmes at Reigate and Exeter house 42 people and every year we turn away hundreds of homeless, needy, unloved and problem-ridden women. This saddens us and, with this in mind, the directors are committed to opening 4 further centres in the next 5 years. Funding will always be a problem but we believe this is feasible with your prayers and gifts. You will have seen in the Christian Press that we have recently become the managers of a Christian Charity called DOOR OF HOPE. Door of Hope works amongst the street sex workers of East London and was about to close the doors on its work The Directors of Keychange after much prayer decided it was right to throw out a lifeline and become involved with the day to day management of its activities. This work does not receive any direct funding and to increase its effectiveness and raise the staff levels will mean we must go to our donors both corporate, who have been most generous in this area, and to the Christian Public in general for financial support. These are days of mergers and takeovers. We are not in the business of empire building but, under God seeking to build His Kingdom. We are actively seeking new partnerships that will enhance the work of Keychange but always ensuring that our Aims and Objects remain faithful to our vision. As our country slides further and further into becoming a secular society will you stand with us to enable our work to play its part in seeking to bring Christ into the lives of needy people? Whether it is the frail elderly, homeless young women, or those involved in the sex industry, this is where God has called us, as a charity, to serve. We believe we have God's vision for Keychange for the future and your partnership in giving, praying or other support are essential to that vision. It is our desire that you be kept up to date with all progress made in achieving these goals.

## Fundraising review

Report from Mark Nixon, *Financial Director*

26%	General donations	£25,421
41%	Chairman's appeal Exeter	£40,040
4%	Woman's Run Reigate	£3,921
17%	Legacies	£16,454
11%	Gift Aid	£10,668
SOURCES		

23%	Care Homes	£22,391
7%	Reigate	£6,860
52%	Exeter	£50,510
17%	General purpose	£16,743
NET DONATIONS AND LEGACIES		

The work of Keychange relies heavily on the generosity of the charity's benefactors and supporters. As a Christian charity, we aim to be as transparent as possible, and we thought that many of you would be interested, as well as pleased to be better informed about our fundraising income.

Analysis of the figures shows that some 83% of the donations by value (excluding legacies and gift aid) came from 20% of our donors, and this 20% gave an average of £120 over the course of the year.

We are extremely fortunate to have had a number of significant donations this year, with our ten largest donors giving £48,500 in total. However the great majority of our support comes from those who give prayerfully and regularly what they can. 50% of our donors give £30 or less per year.

Overall, the average annual gift was approximately £143, and the median annual gift was £30.

£10,668 has been reclaimed as Gift Aid. This figure seems low when compared to the total donation figure, but this is because many of the larger gifts come from trusts or companies on which Gift Aid cannot be recovered. Many other gifts are via CAF vouchers (or similar) or from non tax payers – which also means that Gift Aid cannot be recovered. However, the amount of money that we are able to recover through Gift Aid is obviously significant, and we need to see if we can increase the percentage of eligible donors who are willing to sign a Gift Aid declaration.

## Keychange mission

To offer acceptance, care and active Christian community to people in need on the basis of our faith as a means of provision coupled with responsible financial stewardship and an underpinning of prayer in all we do.

## Conference 2006



This year's staff conference took place at Glenfall House, the Gloucestershire Diocesan retreat house, in June. Once more we were particularly thrilled that so many of our supporters made the effort to join us for the Visitors' Day. In fact, because the number of staff has increased again as new projects have come under the Keychange Charity umbrella, Glenfall House is no longer big enough to accommodate us. As a result the 2007 conference will be held at the High Leigh Conference centre in Hertfordshire between 12th–14th September.

Please consider coming along yourself next year – it is a wonderful opportunity to meet the staff and gain real insight into the work of the charity. Further details will be published as soon as they are available, alternatively you can call Head Office (020 7633 0533) to find out more.

## Cressingham House

We are delighted to announce that Cressingham House in New Brighton, Merseyside has become the latest home to come under the management of Keychange. The current house is made up of four terraced houses, which have been incorporated into one large, comfortable home. The manager, Susan Sherwen, is very excited about becoming part of Keychange. Head Office staff are currently working on a new brochure for Cressingham House which should be available in late January.



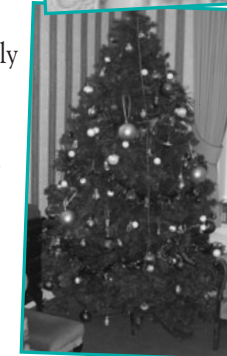
## Keychange Homes update

Our staff and the friends of the various homes have worked especially hard over the Christmas period to ensure that all of our residents were able to enjoy a happy and relaxed festive season. Here's a snapshot of some of the recent activities.

**Rosset Holt** residents enjoyed a wonderful Carol Service just before Christmas on the 19th Dec which was followed by a special high tea for the residents. The staff also put on a Nativity play and the house was visited by more than one group of carol singers. **Walmer House** residents were not only celebrating the birth of Christ, but also the birth of Lucy Wade who was 100 on the 4th December. Her nephew flew over from Australia, and the home hosted a big party which was attended by the deputy mayor. Lucy was particularly thrilled by the Queen's telegram!

At **Esther**, our homeless project in Exeter, Christmas was a happy time with all of the women attending a communal Christmas dinner, at which staff presented each woman with an individually chosen present. A happy Christmas was followed by a nice Boxing Day and the residents enjoyed lots of food and attention and all agreed that they had a great time!

From **Rose Lawn**, Margaret Haxton reports that they enjoyed a superb Christmas, and that the residents and staff particularly enjoyed the extra social spaces that have been so



recently added to the building. The enhanced space in the dining room was especially noticeable at the very successful family Christmas party. However, Rose Lawn have also celebrated a significant birthday, when one of their residents, Ann Farquharson celebrated her 104th birthday on 3rd January! We think that she is the oldest Keychange resident.

At **Mount Eventide** Christmas was celebrated all together in the big lounge, where an afternoon of games and quizzes, including countdown and pass the parcel followed a delicious Christmas lunch. Mrs Robson reports from **Fair Havens** that the usual party was a very happy event, and that the chef did them proud with beautifully presented, delicious food. The residents had spent a lot of time in the run up to Christmas making beautiful, individual table decorations.

Elizabeth Dhliwayo of **Alexander House** reports that the staff and residents had a lovely time over Christmas. The highlights were a Pantomime put on by The Carousel Theatre Company – Jack and the Beanstalk, and a Carol Service led by Rev Graham Cocking which was held just before the Christmas Party.

**Upton House** enjoyed a very busy Christmas and a highlight for them was that a resident couple, Bill and Janet Andrews, celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary! A special buffet tea was held for them. The staff and residents are bracing themselves for the start of the refurbishment programme which should be starting in the next two months. They'll be thrilled when the improvements are completed!

## Door of Hope update

Fiona Churcher, Manager of the Project writes:

As the New Year begins it is always healthy to both look back and to look forward. 2006 was a tough year in many ways for all concerned at *Door of Hope*. I was so thankful for the amazing intervention when Keychange were willing to become the Trustees. Some of our funders gave us amazing support in the rebuilding period, showing great faith in the project and huge commitment to the work that we do. This was such a fantastic answer to prayer and has given a more secure foundation for continued rebuilding.

Our evening outreach has continued throughout this time, thanks to an amazing group of volunteers – who continued with us after our resurrection! We have continued to meet many new women. Two of the volunteers had a lovely meeting with a woman last week,



who immediately asked them 'are you Christians?' When they said yes, she said she used to live in Southampton and had been prayed for regularly by a group there!! God knows how to link us in even if we are not aware of it. This conversation went on in the presence of two other street sex workers! I hope continued contact will build with her.

Over the last 8 months I have met with other women during the day to offer them support and advice. We have had some really powerful answers to prayer, like one woman who was pregnant gaining a place in a Drug Rehabilitation Centre for her and the baby! She is phoning me regularly from there, which is fantastic.

So what does the New Year hold? Rejoicing – as a new full time Project Worker is currently being appointed – this will make such a difference to what can be done and for me to have some company! The main focus for this year is to gain suitable premises from which to run a drop-in centre for the women: in the East end of London availability is small and cost is extremely high – so we need God to intervene and would value your prayers for this. The other main aim is to rebuild some of the relationships with the women where time constraints have limited our contact, and to continue to establish new relationships.