

## Court in the Act

Where would you find, under one roof, a mixture of people who may be either: homeless, mentally ill, coping with bereavement or family breakdown, facing serious debt, addicts of one kind or another, petty and serious criminals, alongside migrant workers, asylum seekers, abused adults and children, their supporters and abusers? Just come down to Bradford Magistrates' Court any day of the week and you will find what His Honour Judge Clifford Bellamy described as "a mass of human pain and misery".

Bradford has the second highest number of recorded crimes in comparison with 15 similar policing areas and has an ethnically and religiously diverse community, which has seen its share of tension. The great news is that a group of volunteers, from a variety of faith backgrounds, who want to make a difference in the lives of some of these people who are hurting, have come together and set up The Bradford Court Chaplaincy Service (BCCS) to try to fill this huge gap in provision.



**Bradford Magistrate's Court Chaplaincy Team**

We intend to provide a multi-faith Chaplaincy service to all court users, initially at the Bradford Magistrates' Court. There are currently ten courtrooms plus the Coroner's court on site used by between 850 and 1,100 people on any one day. This Independent registered charity is an exciting, innovative and challenging project and is Independent of any single faith group or denomination, so the team will be able to offer services to those who are accused of committing crime, those affected by crime and the criminal justice process, and those who, on a daily basis, deal with distressing and difficult cases., including probation service and court staff, magistrates and members of the legal profession. I will be of special help to repeat petty offenders and those with multiple problems. We also want to provide a Quiet/Prayer Room on site.

A generous grant from the Sir Halley Stewart Foundation will help us employ two part-time chaplains (one Christian and one Muslim) to recruit, train, and supervise approximately 24 committed Volunteers from all faith backgrounds and from people of no-faith. Volunteers will be the mainstay of the project and will need the support of their faith group. We now need funds to help with project development and volunteer training and expenses.

Coming to court can be a distressing experience and, for some, it may be a turning point in their life. We aim to provide a truly sensitive and confidential service; staff will give space and time to clients to discuss, in total confidence, any issues, spiritual, moral or emotional, which trouble them. BCCS is keen to establish close links with all faith groups and court users, such as probation staff and solicitors, to work collaboratively for the benefit of clients and in particular defendants and their supporters. Among other things, our project will play a major role in linking offenders and their families to existing support in the community, thus reducing crime, helping to rehabilitate offenders and developing greater community cohesion.

We have a strong Board of Directors and an impressive group of external advisers. What we now need is funding to get this ground-breaking project up and running. We would also love to hear from anyone who is interested in the post of Chaplain or Support and Development Officer or who has expertise in fundraising or bid-writing. We need approximately £35,000. Businesses or Church groups willing to offer sponsorship or practical help please contact Mary Carroll, JP Chairman of the Trustees on (01274) 390111. We would be happy to arrange for someone speak at any of your meetings. Any donations should be made out to BCCS and sent to Bradford Magistrates' Court P0 Box 187, The Tyris, Bradford BD1 1JL. Donations can also be "Gift Aided" please email: [courtchaplaincy@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:courtchaplaincy@hotmail.co.uk) for a form.