

# Care Van News

Issue 22 - Winter 2016

The Care Van is jointly managed by Bethany Christian Trust and Edinburgh City Mission

## Ann Laidlaw —Thank You!

The face, voice, hands and fingers of the ECM office over a period of 35 years, Ann Laidlaw retires at the end of February 2016.



We welcome Adam Campbell to step into her shoes in the office and onto the Care Van Steering Group Committee on which Ann has served for the past 5 years.

Standing in as a voluntary secretary for ECM in the 1970s, Ann has faithfully worked for ECM and served in various ways including with the Care Van. One of her most memorable Care Van incidents was when teams from two different churches turned up one night and she, with the wisdom of Solomon, had to determine whose night it really was! Ann sorted it out with her rota.

Her worst moments were a phone call or email just before leaving the office,



'Sorry, our team cannot make it tonight'. And did that result in the Care Van staying parked up that night down at Bethany? No! Never! She prevailed on others with

gracious VAT [Voluntary Arm Twisting] – perhaps the 'Composite Team' - to fill the gap, and the service users, without fail, received their soup, hot drinks and rolls as well as friendship.

One of her greatest joys was learning that the Care Van scheme was to be cloned in Argentina.



Adam has a very hard act to follow but I am sure everyone involved in the Care Van will welcome him into the family!

And from all of us, a big 'Thank You', Ann.

# Care Shelter Update

Cameron Black

The Care Shelter is incredibly busy this season. We are just over the halfway point on the six month season and we have already served 500 different people which is a huge increase when compared to 410 over the full season just three years ago.



Recently we asked all volunteers across the Care Van and Care Shelter for sleeping bags and blankets and the response has been humbling. We now have a very healthy stock of both. Thank you very much!

We have increased the capacity of the Care Shelter from 40-45 where the halls can cope. However, we have seen even higher numbers than this

presenting on several occasions, especially when the weather is particularly nasty. In this circumstance, thanks to you, we have been able to feed people and also offer people a sleeping bag and a survival bag so that they are better prepared for the night.

The peace of Christ has transcended the situation and we are seeing wonderful times. Last night one of the guys said to me “We are brothers in God here, we just look at each other and we know it”. Even when there has been a flash of frustration from a hurting individual the room has responded calmly and with grace. It has been incredibly humbling to be part of.

We also have seen more external agencies coming into the Shelter than ever before to help people with their health, their housing, their finances and anything else too.



The story of the Care Shelter is this: Real people are receiving real help from a real God.

# A Volunteer's Story

## Lorna Busfield-Welsh

Homelessness is a distressing issue which has always bothered me at home in Newcastle, and since moving to Edinburgh for university in September, where the problem seems to be even more serious, I was keen to get involved in some voluntary work with a charity in this field.

While struggling in my first semester to find the time to fit this around my new courses, I came across an elective module for my second semester at Edinburgh Uni, '*Learning from the lives of others*'. LLO is a course offering practical experience in assisting people with pressing needs to improve their quality of life through personal engagement, while also enhancing my own understanding of civic responsibility, and gaining employability skills in a very different context to a lecture theatre.

The course also features an academic element, learning transferable skills such as reflective writing on my experiences.

So far I've been out on the Lunchtime Care Van a few times, I've done a little administration work and helped out in the warehouse. I've absolutely loved being involved in something so different—it's great to get out of my student bubble and meet the amazing team at Bethany, the other volunteers and the service users at the Care Van. We've met some real characters, with such different stories and personalities to anyone I've met



before.

I'd say what I've enjoyed the most is to see the way my involvement can directly help vulnerable people, in comparison to just donating as I have done in the past. Seeing the results in action inspires me to work harder and put in as much effort and as many hours as I can, and I'd love to stay with Bethany after my course has finished. There's nothing more warming than a big smile or a grateful comment from a service user to make me feel proud of my contribution to the service.

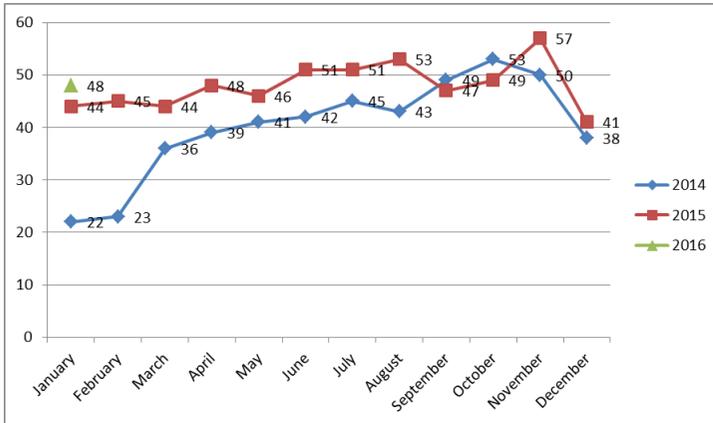
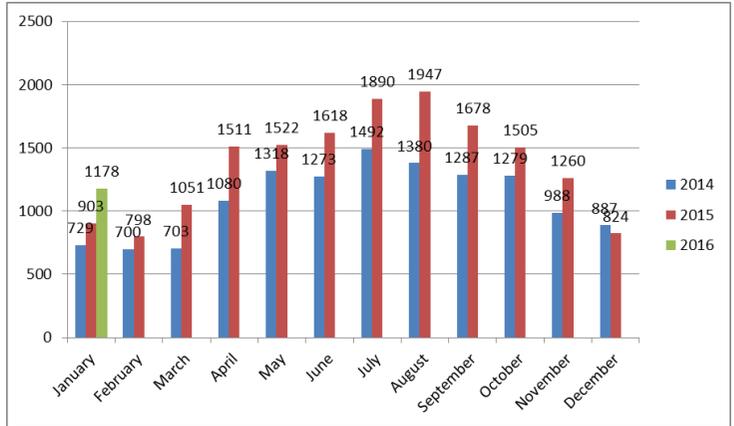
After even just a couple of weeks with volunteering, I'm beginning to appreciate how lucky I am for the life that I have, so much more; from simple things like a roof over my head at night to the opportunity to study at university, and I really admire how kind, friendly and grateful the service users are despite the difficulties many have experienced, so frequently through no fault of their own.

I'm so happy to be a part of this charity, and I'd recommend it to anyone looking to do some voluntary work. There's such a positive, welcoming environment and I'm excited to see the change Bethany makes in the future!

# Care Van Statistics

## Evening Service

This graph shows the total number of people accessing the service per month from January 2014 to January 2016. Unfortunately it shows that numbers are rising each year with the summer months being the busiest.



## Lunchtime Service

These average numbers of people accessing the service by month show a general upward trend. Average numbers are shown here rather than totals per month because the service increased from 3 to 4 days in April 2015.

## Contact Details

**Cameron Black**, Care Van Manager (BCT)  
0131 454 3125 / [carevan@bethanychristiantrust.com](mailto:carevan@bethanychristiantrust.com)

**Ruth Longmuir**, for Lunchtime Care Van & all volunteer paperwork (BCT)  
0131 454 3125 / [carevan@bethanychristiantrust.com](mailto:carevan@bethanychristiantrust.com)

**Adam Campbell**, for Evening Care Van rota (ECM)  
0131 225 9445 / [adamcampbell@ecm.org.uk](mailto:adamcampbell@ecm.org.uk)



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Bethany, 65 Bonnington Road, Edinburgh, EH6 5JQ  
Bethany Christian Trust is a registered charity no. SC003783  
Edinburgh City Mission, 15 North Bank Street, The Mound EH1 2LS  
Edinburgh City Mission is a registered charity no. SC012385

