Saving Beeston’s Community Mental Health Resource

A large step forward

When we published our first newsletter in October the Resource Centre at Middle Street was under threat of closure, because the County Council had not only decided to withdraw from managing the Centre itself, but had stated that in order to save money it was considering closing the Centre altogether and using the whole building as offices.

We are delighted to be able to announce that a few days later, on 13th October, we received an outline proposal from the Council indicating a basis on which it would pass over the management of the Centre to BCR for a trial period running from April 2015 to March 2016, with the prospect of a formal lease to BCR from April 2016 if it judged the trial to have been successful. We were required to submit a business plan by 1st December, and have done so; which the County will consider before committing itself to the trial period.

Clearly nothing can yet be taken for granted, but the County’s offer demonstrates that it is willing to allow the Centre to remain open provided that there is a realistic prospect that it can survive and thrive under new management; as we believe there is. We now wait and hope for an early decision in our favour, so that we have a secure basis on which to plan for a smooth transfer of management from next April.

Our October newsletter contained much background information about the Middle Street Centre, and it is still available on request in paper and electronic form – see back page for contact details
Middle Street Stories

Beeston Day Centre – a personal view from Steve Plowright

In the late summer of 1976 I was between psychiatric hospitals. I was heavily medicated, having spent several months in the late lamented Saxondale Hospital and making little progress, and awaiting admission to the Lawn Hospital at Lincoln.

It was at this point that I found my way to Middle Street and was introduced to the then manager of Beeston Day Centre, Peter Burgum, who welcomed me with open arms and assured me that there would be a place there for me as soon as I was out of the Lawn and in recovery.

So it was that at the start of 1977 I began what has been a ‘love affair’ with Beeston Day Centre. Yes, I still call it that against the tide of current thinking and political correctness – it’s up to those of us who go there to reflect the positivity that this place we attend during the day brings to our lives.

I could write a book about the positive effect this early 70’s building and the people (both staff and ‘clients’, as we used to be called) have had on me. It’s the reason I started making corn dollies, which led to work in schools and community groups. Over the past 38 years, it has also supported me in developing my skills as a poet, folk singer and artist, enabling me to use them for my own therapy and for the benefit of others.

When I first attended the centre, the ‘Large Activity Room’ was a hive of industry under the tutelage of the wonderful Beryl Bickerstaffe and other excellent workers such as Nuala Hutchison. We had two storerooms full of materials for making baskets, caning chairs and weaving borders for trays and stools. It was the aptitude I found for these, which led me on to corn-dolly making. There was also a fully functioning woodwork room, which I didn’t take to so naturally, but under the wing of the patient and caring Charlie Litchfield, I became proficient enough to make a doll’s house for my niece and later a farmyard for my daughter.

We had football and cricket teams over the years and many events and activities. The wonderful Robert Ashford and, before him, the manager Graham Bragg, have worked wonders in establishing and encouraging a flourishing music scene.

There are so many staff that have helped me through difficult and improving times – the names of Steve Edwards, Cherry Taylor, Sally Grice, Alison Maclean and Teresa Wood-yett deserve special mention. I’ve made many friends here over the years and those relationships have been special and have endured.

More recently I was out of the picture and virtually housebound for seven years – a situation I believe that was partly created and certainly exacerbated by the uncertainties, cuts and changes at the renamed Middle Street Resource Centre. The loss of individual key workers and threat of losing my home from home hit me hard.

Under the Mindset banner we adapted to save the building and its facilities. We have had to move with the times – something I admit I find hard to do sometimes – and the activities are different, but this place is once again a haven, a sanctuary, a place to create, build and sustain relationships and mutual support, to survive, relax or thrive.

I really would be lost without this place. We are one of few ‘Day Centres’ to survive. It’s scandalous that this is the case – closing them is false economy. Please use our “Day Centre”. Whatever the name, it’s part of Beeston’s community.

Margaret Binder’s story

After being unwell for many years I came to Middle St and have absorbed so much care here that I am now in a position to manage myself a bit better.

It is so important that such care needs to be available to other people now so that they too may be enabled to take good care of themselves.

Peoples’ support of one another which takes place here is a vital part of the process. In being together and sharing activities we both give and receive. Middle St has long been a place where good things happen. I very much hope that this will continue. It is our challenge now to once again seek to provide that safe haven.
Karen Medd – profile

As a user of Middle Street Resource Centre I was active in resisting the proposal to close it down in 2010-11, and I am now part of the team seeking to undertake the management of the Centre to ensure its long-term future. I am trained in peer-to-peer support for mental health service users.

I'll avoid talking about the past here, because my vision for the future is much more important. I hope it's sufficient for me to say that when I was referred to the Middle Street Resource Centre in 2009, after decades of dealing, more or less by myself, with destructive mood swings, I thought I'd found the best thing ever.

So when there was talk, in early 2010, of the Centre being closed down, I thought my future was being taken away from me. The Centre was too meaningful to me, is and has been for many others for 40 years, to let it go without a fight. If we hadn't succeeded thus far, I dread to think what and where I would be now.

Since 2010, some County Council representatives have been telling us “...you can go somewhere else, to libraries, colleges, church halls...." but we have always replied, we have been there and tried such places, when displaced by refurbishment, and the tram works, but nothing has worked for us like Middle Street. So we, the users of the Centre and our supporters in the drive to keep it going when the County withdraws from its management, are saying to the local community: Look what a much-loved and well-established Centre is in your area; come and enjoy it with us, and, in doing so, help us to fight the stigma surrounding the challenges for mental health.

Jeannie Thompson

Jeannie is new to Middle St, and was attracted by the energy and determination to make a success of the Centre. She has started a PLAYBACK drama group, and describes it like this:

“I first came across this form of drama in 1989 and have been doing it ever since. I realised I could have great fun without any experience or acting skills. It is quite different from school! We play games and laugh a lot. Connecting with other people lifts our spirits and makes us feel good! It is creative and we learn to be more spontaneous and trust ourselves."

Come along to the DRAMA group. Every Wednesday 2 pm to 3.30 pm at Beeston Community Resource Centre, 74, Middle St, Beeston, Nottingham NG9 2AR. Drop in and give it a try.
Rumour and Reassurance

On 20th November there was a meeting of the County Council, at which a motion was proposed that the Council agree to recognise its duty to protect services, and to transfer from reserves (where necessary) funds required to achieve seven disparate objectives, including “c) Ensure that the Middle Street Resource Centre in Beeston remains open for community use”. This composite motion was defeated, and since then we (BCR) have been contacted by concerned local people who had gained the impression that the effect of the vote was that the Council had decided not to save Middle Street.

We wish therefore to assure our readers that the present position relating to the future of the Middle Street Centre is as stated on the front page of this newsletter. Our local County Council member, Cllr Kate Foale, is a staunch supporter of our enterprise, and we have her permission to quote from her speech to the meeting on 20th November, as follows:

“Thank you for including in this motion the proposal - To ensure the middle street resource centre in Beeston remains open for community use - because this gives me the opportunity to bring you up to date on the work I’ve been doing with officers and members try to achieve just that, not to deliver a council run service, but one for local people, designed and driven by local people that can meet the needs of local people now and in the future. This is in the true spirit of ‘redefining your council’, we are doing our very best to support them to make it work and want to continue to do so.

Last month the newly established steering group and their partners ran an excellent open day to showcase the different activities going on at the centre which actually has never closed. Central college were there who run courses, music and stained glass classes were going on, there is a thriving gardening group as well as a new memory café for those with dementia. All the evidence suggests that more groups are interested in using the centre.

To that end we have made an offer to the new user led steering group at their request to give them the opportunity to run the centre. It is early days, but we are working with them to try to enable them to provide a sustainable future for the centre as a community resource to meet the needs of the local community both now and in the future.”

Whilst nothing is yet settled and we must not relax in our efforts until we have secured a firm commitment from the Council to allow us to manage the Centre, it is comforting to know that there appears to be a consensus at County Hall, across the whole political spectrum, that Middle Street Resource Centre should indeed remain open for community use.

Christmas Happenings at Middle Street

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday 16th December</td>
<td>MindSet, Co-Production and Frame-work invite you to a Christmas Party</td>
<td>11.30 am - 3.00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 18th December</td>
<td>MindSet Christmas Fayre – entertaining fund-raising – fill your stockings here</td>
<td>1.30 pm – 3.00 pm</td>
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<td>Friday 19th December</td>
<td>MindSet presents Poems and Pies – “Kindle the flame of the fading year with poems, pies and Yuletide Cheer!”</td>
<td>1 pm – 3.00 pm</td>
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Looking ahead with BCR

If you would like to know more, or become actively involved in shaping the future at Middle Street, we would be delighted to hear from you. At the moment our contact details are:

Address: c/o 5 Barratt Lane, Attenborough, Beeston, Notts, NG9 6AD
Telephone: 0115 9179025
Email: graham.machin@ntlworld.com

Look out for the announcement of a public meeting to be held at Middle Street early in the New Year, to report on progress and discuss plans for the future.

Please pass on our message. We need wide support to ensure that we can retain and develop a Beeston Community Resource at Middle Street.