

LANCASTER MEN'S HUB NEWSLETTER



Issue 1 September 2021

What is the Lancaster Men's Hub?

The Lancaster Men's Hub was formed on 29 April this year by a group of active and retired professionals from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. The aim was simple: to provide support in the community for men who had become vulnerable or isolated through economic circumstances, poor mental or physical health or bereavement. Research suggests that men in these categories are at particular risk because they often lack the support of others and are less likely to benefit from social interactions, with its attendant benefits, than other groups into community. The group adopted the term 'hub' because it envisaged providing social and practical activities directly to its target group, but also reaching out to existing specialist groups and services where appropriate. Lancaster Men's Hub is affiliated to the UK Menshed organisation and shares the philosophy that practical activities can provide ideal opportunities to encourage the kind of social interaction it exists to promote. The approach of the Lancaster Men's Hub can thus be summarised in the phrase "Wellbeing through Doing" and all its attempts to reduce isolation and offer support will be based in directly practical or participatory social activities.

Chicken or Egg?

The old dilemma of the chicken and the egg is the biggest dilemma facing the Lancaster Men's Hub as it starts to get off the ground. The first and most obvious example lies in the purpose of the organisation. The Hub exists to provide opportunities for vulnerable or isolated men to meet together and have social contact and support in a variety of settings, including practical work. Where the chicken and the egg come in is that, so far, we have concentrated on practical work, but this cannot take place in isolation, without guests to give it point. Otherwise, it is simply providing practical work for the trustees and members. However, when requests for help come in that would provide the necessary opportunities, we cannot offer help without the clients to involve. Without projects we cannot provide opportunities, but without opportunities we cannot easily recruit clients.

The second example is funding. Our accommodation has been provided to date by the good offices of Lancaster Methodist Church through the Cornerstone and through donations by individual trustees and members. All tools and materials have also been provided by members. Some initial funding has been promised by Lancaster CVS but has not yet materialised. Again, chicken and egg! Without funding we cannot easily expand our offer of opportunities for contact and support, but to obtain that funding we have to show that we have projects in train.



Craft activities at the Cornerstone Cafe

To sum up, in order to advance and fulfil the charitable objectives that we submitted to the Charity Commission we require two things urgently. One is assistance in compiling a register of men who would appreciate the kind of support we can offer, and this can only come initially from the services and organisations already at work in the community. We can be of service, but our prime objective is to provide the contact and support; the completion of projects, however worthy in themselves, is secondary. The second is funding. Without funding, our offers can only be limited in scope and appeal, and if we are to combine supporting our potential client group with projects that will be of real benefit to the community, we need funds to be made available to us in a properly audited manner. We would appreciate any assistance in either of these areas.



Meet the Trustees

My name is Simon Stewart and I am chaplain at The Cornerstone in Lancaster. I have been working here for almost 5 years and feel very blessed to be in this position.

Formerly, I have worked as a prison chaplain at Lancaster Farms and school chaplain at St. Mary's Catholic College in Blackpool. I have also worked in adult



education, justice and peace work and homelessness. I am very happily married to Helen and have 3 grown-up sons. A lot of my work is concerned with pastoral care, particularly supporting people after bereavement. I am passionate about helping people find a purpose and meaning in life. I have been involved in 'men's work' for about 20 years and I feel as though we, as men, have lost our way a bit and our role has become quite confused. I think men's work is about helping guys find companionship and a sense of usefulness. It is also about creating an environment where men can talk on a deeper level. I'm really hoping that Lancaster Men's Hub will provide plenty of varied opportunities for men to get involved with positive activities that will help them with their mental health and self-esteem.

Big Green Week Fair.

Lancaster Men's Hub will be taking part in the Big Green Week Fair at the Cornerstone on Sunday 25th September. They will have a stall giving out information about the aims and activities of the Hub and selling some of the products made in our crafting sessions during August. All the items are made out of recycled and scrap wood and will make great Christmas presents. Items include decorative Christmas trees, bird feeders made from recycled wine bottles, dice shakers and fairy doors. Any profits will be shared between the Lancaster Men's Hub and the Cornerstone.

ORGANISATIONS WE WORK WITH

Band of Brothers

Band of Brothers (BoB) is a project to support men from the asylum seeker and refugee community of Lancaster and Morecambe. We started up in April 2021 but asylum seekers have been arriving in the district for several years. Lancaster & Morecambe City of Sanctuary began in 2015 when people arriving in the UK fleeing war and persecution in their home countries were sent here to wait for decisions from the Home Office about their claims for asylum. BoB extends a welcome to men who have arrived here on their own or with their families. We host a weekly cafe where men can meet, chat, play games and socialise with British-born men. As well as the cafe BoB also enjoys support and collaboration with other groups of men in our community. We have regular football training and a growing number of friendly fixtures against local teams and we have benefited from partnering with **Lancaster Men's Hub** and other groups to participate in woodwork, walking, snooker, hobby crafts and other community projects.

Through connecting with our British-born brothers we all have the opportunity to share a little of our experiences, customs and concerns; and it's great to realise after some turbulent and perilous journeys Lancaster and Morecambe is a place of welcome and safety. We're looking forward to meeting more of you in the months ahead!

Keith Carman

You can contact BoB through

admin@lancaster.cityofsanctuary.org



Visit our Facebook page or our website - thelmh.org.uk

or contact Simon Stewart on 01524 840027 or John Strivens on 07842 826482