

banner

**Bahá'í Journal UK**Journal of the Bahá'í Community of the United
Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
Volume 19, No.4 – September, 2002 / 159BE **LARGE PRINT** / Standard Print.National Committees and Departments

Bahá'í Office for Social and Economic Development

All you need is one person – a BOSED project in Bradford-on-Avon

ON APRIL 8, 2002 the Universal House of Justice sent an email to the Bahá'í Office for Social and Economic Development (BOSED) praising a Bahá'í from Bradford-on-Avon for her efforts in initiating a Tranquillity Zone as part of a probation programme for juvenile drug offenders in Trowbridge. The Universal House of Justice especially emphasised the demand by participants, the staff and local government for this spiritual component of the probation programme.

The Tranquillity Zone (TZ) is part of a pilot programme run by the Trowbridge Probation Service to try and cut down on drug addicts' reoffending. Out of several pilot projects in the country, the one in Trowbridge is very successful (with fewer people re-offending). The project gives young drug offenders (heroin users) the opportunity of either attending this programme or going to prison. The programme also includes counselling (group and individual), medical attention, literacy lessons, storytelling, shiatsu massage, and art and colour therapy.

The Bahá'í and a friend are part of the Probation team and have been allocated a special room to set up the Tranquillity Zone every week. Currently 20 offenders attend the TZ, sometimes joined by the counsellor, probation and social workers, and a general practitioner. The number of clients will soon increase to 40 as fewer clients are re-offending and new ones are starting the programme. In future, the Service hopes to use this room to end each day with a meditation (10 minutes).

Local government has provided cushions, candles, vases and a tape/CD player. A special portable tent is also used. The aim of the TZ is to create a beautiful, loving space that feeds the senses and feels very safe and nurturing. For some of these young adults it might be the first time they have experienced real unconditional tender loving care just because they are considered special. It is not possible to use the word "God" in the readings, because the Service is very sensitive to any sort of religious persuasion. However, Bahá'í writings are used in tiny amounts. Clients are taken on a meditative journey with music, stories and quotations.

The theme for the first few weeks was "Being a mine of inestimable gems", while the theme for the next 9 weeks will be "Shining your light". Each session lasts for 45 minutes. At the end of it, each client receives a card with a quote and a shiny gem sticker backing up the story to take home. They also have a small assignment for the week that is about giving to others or shining their light in some way. Often new clients are quite disturbed when they participate in the sessions, but after a while they settle down and really relax. The organiser is still amazed that they can settle for so long. Clients say that they really like the atmosphere, the cushions, the flowers and the feeling in the room. Some of them have been taking flowers home to give to family or friends, thus indicating that they start to think of others as well.

The Bahá'í running the project is inspired by the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

"Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as

can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.”
(Bahá'u'lláh: *Gleanings*, p. 141, UK Ed.)

She therefore trusts that the few words of Bahá'u'lláh that they receive each week, reach deep into their subconscious and must have an effect, however small. During the musical parts, she also silently says the healing prayer for them.

The probation officers send regular reports to the Home Office and all courts in Trowbridge are aware that this Tranquillity Zone is a Bahá'í project. She has also been invited to a special day session with 12 members of the probation team. Two of the team plan to attend the Empowerment Training programme in Swindon. The future aim is to train local social workers to continue the project.

The Bahá'í project founder continues to try out new materials and she's willing to share these materials with friends who'd like to initiate similar programmes in prisons or elsewhere. She says that the one important thing this project has taught her is that only one person is needed to initiate an inspiring project.

Committee for International Pioneering and Travel Teaching

'... a journey only begins when we take the first step.'

FULL OF THAT summer school spirit? Topped up with Ruhi courses and ready to go? It is not too late to get yourself on a cheapish flight this autumn to a priority goal country in Europe for a quick relaxing travel teaching trip or a short term pioneer stay and maybe apply some of the knowledge and skills you have acquired.

Why keep it to yourself? All that great effort to hone your knowledge and skills will only go stale and quickly diminish without some immediate reinforcement through service. You know it makes sense! Go on, exchange the fleshpots of the Balearics for the spiritual rewards of the Balkans or for one of the challenging chosen islands on the edge of Europe!

Let's get ourselves focused once again on the call to overseas service from the beloved Universal House of Justice to the United Kingdom community and look at where we stand on the UK Five Year Plan score board as of June 2002:

Overseas Pioneers (short and long term)

Goal: 150 To date: 44

Overseas Travel Teachers

Goal: 500 To date: 107

We wait in eager anticipation and excitement for our September 21 committee meeting when the final summer tally will be in. Please tell us about your summer of service if we don't already know about you. All the feedback from those who have responded so far to the call to service tells us that the new three pronged approach of devotionals, children's classes and study circles – open to all, is starting, worldwide, to open the hearts of seekers, reawaken community dynamic, and re-empower believers to service. The more experienced we are in facilitating these aspects, the more useful we will be to the Faith in every corner of the globe. Wherever possible, please get yourself involved in all three of these as you work towards that point in time when you feel impelled to get up and go!

Even if you are thinking longer term about venturing out to meet the rest of humanity, please, please let us know and give us some details about yourself so that we can encourage and sustain you in your plans. Maybe, in the interim period, you could get to know your country of choice by direct contact by email or royal mail, encourage and sustain existing pioneers, understand local needs, plans and expectations. The scope is infinite. Remember, a journey only begins when we take the first step.

The recent Commonwealth Games were full of athletes who were highly focused, trained and mentally prepared to give of their best when the time came to perform. They were all winners just by taking part. Go out and get your gold medal!

You can get in touch with the CIP 1 1 by email at peyman@onetel.net.uk.



Copyright, © 2002, National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom. All rights reserved.

