

## **Bethany Christian Trust: 25 years of helping homeless people**

Do you remember 1983? The year Wham and Boy George topped the charts. Margaret Thatcher reigned in the political arena and John McEnroe and Martina Navratilova wore the crown at Wimbledon. 1983 was the year we hummed the theme tune to Dallas and Sue Ellen's shoulder pads mirrored the fashion trends, makeup and hairstyles of bright, bold and BIG. "Yuppies" purchased trendy, luxury items and the Western World felt confident. The affluence of the 1980s encouraged the rise of home ownership; for the first time council house tenants were able to buy their own homes.

For some though, the 1980's were not characterised by glamour and wealth, as Alan Berry, then Minister in Leith, Edinburgh, was well aware.

At that time, Leith was an area of great social deprivation, characterised by poverty with widespread social problems. Working as a Church minister, Alan was confronted daily by destitute and desperate people coming to his door for help. The scale of the problem looked insurmountable, but Alan resolved to do what he could to ease the suffering of those around him. It was out of this love and compassion, into this social context, that Bethany Christian Trust came into being.

Thanks to generous gifts and support Bethany was officially formed and a property was purchased to provide accommodation. This home became the first of many to offer a place of safety for homeless people over the following 25 years. It became evident very quickly, however, that lacking a home was only a symptom of homelessness and that causes, such as broken relationships, alcohol and drug addiction and gaps in education, also needed to be addressed. With this realisation, the Trust quickly began to deliver more than just accommodation.

The work of Bethany Christian Trust is now as varied and wide-ranging as the people who need the services. From street work through to education and work placements, Bethany works with hurting people to find a home, find out why they became homeless and prevent it happening again.

The secret of Bethany's longevity and success over 25 years lies not only in its excellent service provision, but in its unique ethos and motivation. From the first day to the present, Bethany seeks to live out the parable of the "Good Samaritan" and show unconditional love to those in need, irrespective of their background, race or social standing.