

A History of the Council for Voluntary Service, Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde By Clive Hirst

The Establishment of Blackpool Social Service Council

On 12th January 1934 the Blackpool Borough Council Public Assistance Committee organised a conference in Blackpool Town Hall to address the issues concerning the need for co-ordination of relief of distress. 31 people representing a variety of charitable and voluntary agencies attended the conference.

The conference was called in order to set up a co-ordinating committee representative of the various local charitable and voluntary groups operating in the town. Destitute and needy people in the community currently had their case put before the Public Assistance Committee. Following the decision about the level of support which can be given by the P.A. Committee many people still required further assistance which was outside the province of the P.A. Committee to grant. These cases were referred to local charities and voluntary groups for additional assistance. It was recognised that there was a likelihood of duplication and overlap in the support provided and that co-ordination of assistance was desirable.

The Mayor, Councillor C.E. Tatham explained to the delegates that the Public Assistance Committee had no wish to interfere with the work of local voluntary organisations and he suggested that a Social Service Council could be established in Blackpool. Mr. F Herbert Grime the editor of the Gazette & Herald gave details of requests for help that had been made to his newspaper. If it were not for the Chief Constables Clothing Fund, the Free Feeding Scheme, the Ladies Sick Poor and others, the cases of destitution would be far greater.

The conference passed the following resolution:

“RESOLVED: That in the opinion of this meeting, it is desirable that a committee consisting of one representative of all the various charitable agencies and other persons specifically interested be appointed to obtain the fullest information possible in regard to applications for assistance, and to ensure that there is no unnecessary duplication or overlapping in the relief granted.”

The first meeting of the proposed committee was held on the 24th January 1934. The objects of a Social Services Council were read out at the meeting and it was decided for the time being the Committee was not looking to form a Council for Social Service but rather a Committee to prevent overlap in the relief of distress. A limited form of constitution was agreed stating that the principal objects of the Committee were:

- a) To form a common centre of reference for approved charitable institutions and also between such charitable institutions, public

- authorities and other social agencies.
- b) To train social workers.
 - c) To make all help given as effective as possible.
 - d) To prevent overlapping and impositions.
 - e) To facilitate co-operation between organisations and to further their better co-ordination.
 - f) To consider matters of common interest and to hold conferences.

It was therefore agreed that every charity should be contacted and asked to put forward a representative to attend meetings. The Mayor felt that at some future date a paid secretary should be appointed but until then, the Borough Council would arrange clerical support through the Town Clerk's department. Meetings could be held in the Town Hall and the Borough would cover all postage costs and expenses. Mr. F Herbert Grime was nominated as Chairman and Mr. Wood would act as secretary until someone was employed for the job. It was agreed that the Mayor should be President of the Social Service Council. It was also agreed that at an early date Mr. Danby of the Manchester and Salford Social Service Council should be invited to address a meeting about setting up a Blackpool Social Service Council.

February 1934

Mr. Danby addressed a large public meeting. He described the history of the movement and its growth and development and stressed the many advantages that affiliated organisations received as a result of co-ordination.

July 1934

The Town Council agreed to grant £100 per year to the Committee for the setting up and maintenance of a mutual register of cases dealt with by local charitable organisations. A sub committee of the Relief of Distress Committee was established to look into the staff, premises and equipment needed to set up such a register. Rev. Father Oldham stated that if a registrar were employed that person should have human sympathy and not just be an 'official organiser'.

August 1934

Mr. Whitefoot of 9 Queen St had written to the Committee to offer his services as registrar at an inclusive salary of £104 per annum which included the use of his offices, rent, lighting, rates etc. and his equipment including typewriter and duplicator. The Committee were to provide filing cabinets, stationery and telephone. Some debate took place at the meeting concerning Mr. Whitefoot's experience and it was agreed that an advertisement for a Registrar be placed in the local paper as follows:

THE BLACKPOOL COUNCIL OF ALLIED SOCIAL SERVICE
LADY or gentleman, with experience in social work, wanted as
REGISTRAR AND ORGANISER for the above scheme. Full
time appointment. Apply BY LETTER ONLY, with references,
details of experience and starting salary required to the Hon
Secretary, THE BLACKPOOL COUNCIL OF ALLIED SOCIAL
SERVICE, care of Town Hall, Blackpool. September 1934

62 applications were received for the Registrars job. 4 candidates were shortlisted. 2 candidates were interviewed and Mr. D Taylor was appointed to commence work on 8th October 1934. Office space was secured at 31 Springfield Rd at a rental of £25 per annum. Mr. Taylor was given permission to purchase a desk and chairs and a telephone was to be installed.

It was decided that the name of the newly formed organisation “Blackpool Council of Allied Social Services Relief of Distress and Co-ordination of Assistance” was too long and cumbersome and that it should be changed to “**Blackpool Social Service Council**”. This was proposed, seconded and carried unanimously.

It was proposed that the 'Council' would:

- a) Work in harmony with the Public Assistance Committee.
- b) Encourage The Chief Constables Children’s Clothing Fund to be affiliated
- c) Take over the Social Relief Centre
- d) Explore all possible avenues for funding and should appeal for public subscriptions.
- e) Not compete for funding with individual affiliated groups.
- f) Not involve the Registrar in either the financial side of the 'Council' or in the Social Relief Centre.
- g) Consider the question as to conditions of affiliation and membership fees at a later date
- h) Agree that clear cut cases would be referred to the appropriate charity for assistance and urgent or doubtful cases would be dealt with by a Case Committee.

October 1934

All equipment had been purchased and the Registrar’s office opened on the 15th October 1934. The Registrar immediately set to work on setting up a register of clients of local Charities beginning with the Blackpool and Fylde Blind Society. Mr. Taylor had visited Liverpool and Bolton Social Service Councils to look at the way their systems were set up and how they interviewed applicants for relief. An appeal was to be launched to raise funds for the Allied Social Services Council.

A relief centre was to be established and there was a possibility that the Recreation Hut belonging to the Blind Society at Marton might be a suitable venue for distributing food parcels etc.

January 1935

Mr. Grime (Chair) was concerned that the main source of income (donations) seemed to be falling off and suggested a big appeal was necessary. He suggested that a “Social Service Sunday” be held by the Churches. A discussion also took place about moving office premises from Springfield Road to the Tram Sheds at Marton recently vacated by the Blind Society. Mr. Grime would make enquiries with the transport manager.

Milestones in the Development of the Council for Voluntary Service

1939

Blackpool Social Service Council established Blackpool and Fylde Blood Transfusion Service and Blackpool Citizens Advice Bureau.

1942

Blackpool Social Service Council was asked to prepare for action once the war was over as the need then would probably be great.

1945

The Chair, Mr. Grime, submitted proposals for the re-organisation of the Executive Committee. The existing executive was to become the General Council and the new Executive Committee to be constituted as follows :

- 5 members nominated by the Relief Committee
- 3 members of the Case Committee
- 3 members of the Clothing Committee
- 3 members of the Chief Constable's Fund
- 3 members of the Citizens Advice Bureau

1946

The growing importance of the Citizens Advice Bureau was noted.

1948

Blackpool Old People's Welfare Committee was formed during the year and a grant of £25 was given to them by the Social Service Council.

Problems - owing to the pending legislation (National Assistance Act), the future of the Chief Constable's Clothing Fund, the Blood Transfusion Service and the Citizens Advice Bureau were uncertain. The doubts about the Council's future meant there would be **no** appeal for funds.

Mr. Grime tendered his resignation as Chairman, having held office for the past 14 years. Mr. Duxbury was elected Chair.

Mr. Grime was elected Honorary Life President for his services to the Social Service Council.

1950

The Ministry of Health had taken over the organisation of the Blood Transfusion sessions and supplies but the Social Service Council was still responsible for the donor panels.

1951

- 871 Blood donations
- 820 enquiries received by CAB
- 11 clubs set up by the Old Peoples Welfare Committee for approximately 6000 local elderly people.

A question was posed as to who accepted responsibility for elderly persons receiving care and attention but were not sick and in need of hospital treatment, yet were unsuitable for an old people's home. It was pointed out that the problem was being addressed by the Local Authority but that it should be a matter for discussion between the Local Authority and the Hospital Management Committee, however finance was a major problem.

A letter was sent to Blackpool Football Club to wish them luck in the English Cup competition.

1954

Enquiries to CAB had increased considerably since the Housing Repairs and Rents Act came into force. The Law Society visited weekly to answer queries re Legal Aid and in addition a representative of the Divorce Division attended twice a month.

Posters publicising the work of CAB were displayed in the offices of the National Assistance Board, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of National Insurance, the Town Clerk's Department, on the Town Hall notice board and in the Information Bureau.

1963

Blackpool Council for Voluntary Service became a registered charity

1974

National Citizen Advice Bureau registration scheme came into force. The Blackpool CAB would need its own management committee and would need to register.

Blackpool Borough Council Grant was increased from £1750 to £4050 and the Police and Resources Committee requested direct representation on the Executive Committee.

Community Health Councils were established and Blackpool Social Service Council were asked to organise the appointment of 10 representatives from voluntary organisations to serve on the CHC. A meeting was called and 10 people from amongst the 170 representatives attending the meeting volunteered to serve on the CHC.

1975

Blackpool Social Service Council changed its name to the ***Council for Voluntary Service*** The following objectives were prioritised:

- a) The Council should seek to bring together all voluntary organisations for the common purposes of mutual help and promoting and supporting voluntary effort.
- b) New premises should be obtained.
- c) A volunteer bureau should be established linked with the development of a 'good neighbour scheme'.
- d) Consideration be given to the production of a bulletin of information to organisations in membership.

Funding for the Volunteer Bureau was sought from Lancashire County Council. It was hoped that in the light of the Woolfenden Committee meetings on the role of voluntary service, the grant application may be successful.

New premises were identified. These were the old Motor Taxation Offices on Cookson Street, owned by Blackpool Borough Council.

1977

The CAB separated from the CVS. This meant having a separate secretary for the CVS on a part-time basis. It was agreed that both organisations be operated from Cookson Street premises.

1978

Mrs. Launn was appointed Secretary to CVS.

The Woolfenden report was supported by CVS and formal response to the consultation document was forwarded by the Chairman, Mr. Hodd.

1979

The Volunteer Bureau was still on the Agenda, but no funding identified.

A News bulletin was circulated to members. (This appears to have closed as quickly as it began).

Meetings had taken place between Dr. Cooper and the CVS Committee with a view to setting up a 'Hospice' locally. It was agreed that the CVS Offices be used as a temporary office by the Hospice group to enable them to receive mail and telephone calls.

1981

CVS were asked to pay rent to CAB of £400 per year. The Borough Council now gave a grant to CAB/ CVS of £12000 and it was agreed that £1210 be allocated to CVS.

1985

The Joint Consultative Committee was established. The CVS had responsibility for the election of three voluntary representatives. The idea of employing a paid officer was muted. It was suggested that a bid be put to the Local Development Agency, but this funding was for a 3 year period only and there was difficulty in setting up a fully staffed service with time limited funding.

1986

Jill Rouse from the Community Council of Lancashire gave a presentation to the Committee about the role of the other CVS's in Lancashire and their funding/staffing levels. It was felt that the 'structure' of Blackpool CVS had gone wrong at some point and that a full time Chief Officer was needed with clerical support to bring it in line with the rest of the County.

The Chairman pointed out that since its inception in 1934, the CVS had always struggled for funding. Perhaps we ought to consider getting involved with Wyre and Fylde who have no CVS. It was agreed that a meeting be set up with Social Services to look at applying to Lancashire County Council for funding for a Chief Officer and that an approach be made to Blackpool Borough Council requesting an increase in the annual grant.

1987

An approach for funding was made to the Joint Commissioning Team for money to be made available from Joint Finance to fund the full time CVS Development Officer Post.

Mr. Mike Bullock attended a committee meeting to discuss the format of the application to Joint Finance. He said that it was likely that £10000 would be made available from April 1988. It was agreed that Blackpool CVS would strive to extend it's work into the other two Boroughs. If the area in which the CVS worked was extended, then the constitution needed to be amended and the Charity Commission notified. It was agreed that Fylde and Wyre Boroughs be approached to ask them to consider funding if the work of CVS expands to cover their area.

Fylde and Wyre Borough Councils again declined to give their support to the full-time Development Officer post. It was clear that more work would be needed in trying to convince Fylde and Wyre of the benefits of having an active CVS in their area.

1988

Funding was finally secured for the Development Officer. Interviews were held in October 1988. Julie Elliott was the successful applicant and commenced work as full-time Development Officer on 6 November 1989.

1989

The CVS extended its remit to cover Wyre and Fylde as well as Blackpool. Our quarterly *Newslines* magazine appeared for the first time
Membership stood at 40 organisations

1990

The CVS moved to 98(a) Park Road (behind All Saints Church Hall) The CVS had 93 member organisations.

1991

The funding for CVS was secured with Health and Social Services agreeing to fund the organisation on a long term basis.

Staff establishment rose to two (Development Officer and Administrative Officer)

1992

Lancashire Social Services agreed to fund 70% of the running costs, with the District Health Authority covering the remaining 30%. The Park Road premises were extended to include a Conference Room.

Funderfinder, a computerized database of funding sources, was introduced

Membership stood at 132 organisations

A Community Care Development Worker was appointed, funded from Joint Finance for three years.

1993

The Development Officer was now designated Chief Officer.
Membership stood at 152 organisations
Carer's A to Z Guide produced (3000 copies)

1994

A Directory of charity and voluntary groups which are not CVS members was produced.
CVS membership totaled 170 organisations

1995

A CVS Outreach Office, open each Tuesday, began in Fleetwood.
The CVS staff now comprised the Chief Officer, Office Manager, Community Care Development Worker and Clerical Assistant

1996

The CVS attained the status of a Company Limited by Guarantee. It had 210 members.

CVS outgrew its Park Road premises and moved to 95 Abingdon Street on the 1st of May. Blackpool Borough Council provided a long lease and covered rental costs. Joint Finance and volunteer help was used to renovate the interior. Blackpool Challenge Partnership provided funds for the building to be used as 1st Step Centre. This would be the initial contact for local individuals and groups wanting to be involved in voluntary activities. A Community Chest was set up to make small grants to voluntary groups.

Outreach offices now operated at Mount Cottages, Fleetwood and Lytham Library.

Four new Projects began

- The Advocacy Project (Support in Getting Heard)
- Blackpool Volunteer Bureau
- Wyre and Fylde Volunteer Bureau
- The Community Care Consultation Project (following on from the Community Care Development Service)

A Deputy Chief Officer was appointed, bringing the staff total to 14.

1997

A year of consolidation after such a flurry of change

1998

Stephen Heath became Chief Executive. Membership was now 205. The Fleetwood Office was moved to a shop in Albert Square, refurbished by Wyre

Borough Council. The Blackpool Outreach and Resettlement Project was set up by the CVS and partners from the statutory sector. Its aim was to reduce the number of rough sleepers on the streets of Blackpool

1999

The CVS decided to appoint Terrie Williams as Chief Officer for Wyre and Fylde, with Stephen Heath remaining as Chief Officer in Blackpool. The Advocacy Service and Blackpool Outreach and Resettlement Project were floated off from the CVS and came under new management. Staff remained at 14, and membership rose to 220

2000

A reorganisation resulted in Chief Officers Terrie Williams and Stephen Heath being replaced by Matthew MacDonald as Chief Officer for the whole area. The outreach offices in Fleetwood and Lytham were closed. The Community Care Consultation Project ended. The number of staff fell to 11, but membership rose to 240.

2001

A Development Worker, able to assist groups with development and funding, and an Information Officer, were appointed and paid from lottery funding. Carers Projects for young carers and adult carers were established. A popular recycling project, supplying free computers to voluntary groups, began. Pat Edwards, Company secretary since 1996, died and was replaced by Director Les Williams.

2002

Matthew MacDonald was replaced as Chief officer by Carol Neale, who had previously run the Blackpool Volunteer Bureau. The CVS became the lead organisation to administer the Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest and the Community Empowerment Fund. Staffing rose to 15 and membership to 300. The Volunteer Bureau was amongst the first in the country to win the Quality Mark from the NAVB.

Sources

CVS Annual Reports

A Brief History of the CVS 1934 to 1995, by Julie Warburton