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# ST NIC'S IN THE CITY

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## May Spotlight

This year we will be giving a bit more profile to some of our St Nic's in the City partners. This month it's the turn of *Nottingham Citizens*.

# May Spotlight

Nottingham Citizens



*We spoke with Bilal Hussian, who works for Nottingham Citizens.*

Bilal, tell us about Nottingham Citizens and how it works.

Nottingham Citizens is an alliance of 37 member organisations who all work together for the common good. We build relational power so that people can, in relationship with one another, discover what their neighbour is suffering with and what issues there are in the community, so that we can together bring change to Nottingham.

St Nic's has historically been quite involved, tell us a bit about that?

Yes! So St Nic's was one of the founding members, it is genuinely one of our best institutions; it's really involved. People at St Nic's get what Nottingham Citizens is about instantly, they get their participation can be conducive towards change in Nottingham.

St Nic's has been involved in our work on hate crime, probably one of the things Nottingham Citizens is best known for. The team got misogyny recognised as a hate crime, the first place in the world, and now that's going towards making national change. Also St Nic's has been involved with our historical work on homelessness. A few years back it was recognized there was a gap in services for those between 16-18. St Nic's collaborated with members from across the institutions to work on a joint protocol for 16 and 17 year olds so that homelessness can be prevented.

They've also been involved with refugee and asylum seeker work. Last year we did a report on the learning's from the Syrian resettlement scheme. Leaders from St Nic's were heavily involved in that. That research got free bus travel for some asylum seekers in remote areas, drastically increased the amount of free ESOL classes in Nottingham, and got the city, county and district councils to come up with a correspondence on things like legal advice, health care, housing and befriending services. So loads and loads of good stuff.

There is a big event coming up on May 10<sup>th</sup> can you tell us a bit about that?

May 10<sup>th</sup> is our accountability assembly, where Nottingham Citizens will seek pledges of support from politicians and other decision-makers for a series of measures on a number of topics.

This time round we are working on hate crime, modern slavery and homelessness. So the hate crime team have done a lot of work in schools. They are the first group of people to do broad hate crime research in schools, which is exciting and that team want to bring 'asks' to the police and council. The modern slavery team has taken up the idea of making Nottingham a slavery free city. They are inviting Nottingham citizen's members, businesses and big employers to come on stage and make a pledge on what they are going to do to make Nottingham a slavery free city. The homelessness team have been working on hospital and prison leavers, who often become homeless. So the homelessness team have been partnering with an organisation called Clean Sheet. Clean Sheet encourage employers to sign up and become employers willing to employ people who have criminal records to help prevent homelessness.

There's loads of change on the way. But one of the things I always say to institutions is none of this will happen in an empty room. One of the great things about Nottingham Citizens is that we are a collective of institutions from many diverse backgrounds. And when we have assemblies like this is as brilliant way of showing decision makers that people care about these issues, and because people care they need to make the right decision. St Nic's in the past have brought loads of people to participate. That is what our power comes from and that is how we create change.



*Nottingham Citizens in action*

***Andy Day is part of the homelessness team and a St Nic's core team member.***

Andy tell us what you like about Citizens, why are you involved?  
What I like about Citizens is the way it brings together people that care about an issue to effectively make a lasting difference. From a Christian point of view it's a great way of seeing God's Justice, God's kingdom come closer in real lives.

You're a part of the Homelessness team, what does that involve?  
I've been part of the homelessness action team since it started almost 18 months ago. I've met with a lot of different people and learnt a lot about

homelessness that I didn't know. It's been challenging at times because it's a big issue and it's not something with an easy fix. It's not a problem specifically to Nottingham, it's a national issue. So it is challenging but I've learnt a lot and I feel like I've been able to contribute, without being an expert myself. That work draws to a close on May 10<sup>th</sup>.



*Andy Day*

Brilliant, what difference does the assembly on May 10<sup>th</sup> make to the homelessness team?

May 10<sup>th</sup> has been our objective almost since the start. It is an opportunity to show people with power what we've achieved. It enables us to bring our research and findings to a wider audience, and discuss the issues as well as possible solutions.

Most of our 'asks' will be directed at the private sector. So key names from big companies will come and share how they are set up to help reduce homelessness and influence other businesses. We will also be asking members of the council to make slight changes that we think will make a difference to people in Nottingham.

If someone was wondering whether to come along, what would you say to them? What difference does it make?

I think the first difference it makes is you get to see how it works, I don't think Citizens is the easiest thing to describe. It's not always obvious what it does, but if you go to the evening you will see people who have worked really hard over a number of months and they will be able to summarize what they've done and how it's made a difference and how it has its power. Its power is through people being there, a large audience that puts pressure on people in power to not just work with citizens but also follow through on the commitments they make.

It's inspiring to see how it makes a difference and from my point of view as a team member it shows people are supporting your cause and care about the work you are doing. I think we at St Nic's should support Nottingham Citizens and turning up in numbers shows what we as a church stand for, we do care about issues in our city and we do want to stand up for justice in our city.

**St Nic's**  
Church Nottingham

**To find out more, to volunteer, or to commit the work of *Nottingham Citizens* to your prayers, contact [city@stnics.org](mailto:city@stnics.org)**