World Homeless Week
Events and activities
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Rebuilding Broken Lives
Taking a break

Homelessness deprives people of so many little things that we can take for granted.

People staying at hostels may be recovering from mental health issues and substance misuse. They may have moved to an area they do not know, and be nervous about going outside. Taking time to socialise, exercise, or visit a café can feel extremely daunting.

In central London, a group of hostel residents have started a walking club. It helps them to overcome isolation, and lets them take a break from their daily routine.

The residents choose where they will go each week. Trips have included walking to the Thames, and to landmarks such as Westminster Cathedral and Buckingham Palace. The group also visited Vauxhall City farm and had a picnic, in spite of wet weather.

Church Homeless Trust funds the costs of coffees, picnic food, and snacks, as well as materials such as paper and pens for games and workshops.

Outings like these help homeless people build the confidence to settle into a new neighbourhood when they move on. They feel more able to develop new friendships and explore their community.

Camille, who has been living at one of the services for several months, said:

“I found the walking group a great opportunity to get to know the local area, and a good way to get to know the community.”

The groups are encouraged to notice their environment, especially plants and nature, and enjoy the time outside. They have time to think about the impact that healthy activities have on their overall mood.

Those that regularly join the walks have all felt an improvement in their mental health, as well as getting regular exercise. They enjoy going out together and feeling able to join the local community. Two regular walkers commented:

“It was a privilege to get out of the house and have a coffee and a walk.”

“Many of us don’t have the money to go to a coffee shop and it’s a really good space to have a chat.”
World Homeless Week

A huge thank you to everyone who donated, volunteered, or held activities for World Homeless Week.

More than 80 churches and individuals ordered information packs in order to hold services, fundraisers, and talks for this year’s World Homeless Week, 6-13 October.

In the village of Church Fenton in Yorkshire, generous residents organised a pie and pea supper that raised a fantastic £715.

Groups of volunteers from the public, financial adviser 3i, Riverside housing services, and Church Homeless Trust staff collected cash at major stations (pictured). Some Riverside offices also held collections, and a raffle. Altogether they raised more than £2,000.

Church Homeless Trust Director, Miriam Morris, said:

"Thank you to everyone that got involved. I hope our information helps to support more people. The funding you raised will be a huge help to our beneficiaries."

But while some were able to raise funds for us, others are trying to deal with a growing number of homeless people in their local area.

Islamic charity Who is Hussain? held a rally to mark the beginning of the week. They placed 449 pairs of shoes on the steps of Trafalgar Square to represent each homeless person who had died in the past year.

Church Homeless Trust was also pleased to run a workshop with a group of students visiting London from the Van Lodenstein school in Holland. The students visited the Trust and made care packages with personal notes of encouragement (pictured) for rough sleepers.

One student wrote: “We think of you and will pray for you.”

The students also visited St Stephen’s church in Westminster to talk to the Street Buddies, formerly homeless people who now provide volunteer outreach support to rough sleepers in the city. They heard first-hand about the Street Buddies’ experiences and took part in activities to help them understand poverty and homelessness in England.

Thank you to everyone who marked World Homeless Week. If you have an event to share please get in touch.
In the past six months...

1  A Warm Welcome

Gestures of care and support are very important to homeless people, who can become used to being ignored or mistreated.

Carl stayed in night shelters for four months. He is now getting a driving license to help his confidence and future job prospects.

A breakfast club is running daily at a service for young families, so that they can learn cooking skills and start their day together with a chat and a hot meal.

Lewis was asked to leave home after falling out with his mum’s boyfriend. Your support helped him buy some clothes as he had so few of his own.

Connor was able to buy an electric razor and new clothes so that he can take care of his appearance after a period of rough sleeping, thanks to you.

Matt has been sleeping rough since leaving prison. Your support helped him get some food, clothes, and a mobile phone so that he can stay in touch with support services.

2  Building Confidence

People who have been without a home lose hope. Your funds help them find their confidence and independence.

Over the summer, residents of hostels got out into their gardens for barbecues (pictured) to learn cooking skills, enjoy being outside, and get to know one another.

Veteran Roger is recovering from addiction. He can travel to see his children after your donations paid for his train fare.

Alan can keep in touch with his family and apply for housing with a mobile phone, thanks to your donations.

Hostel residents spent time together, improved their mental health, and built their teamwork skills playing Lazer Quest.

Tanya is fighting alcoholism. Your funds helped her to buy art supplies, kitchen utensils, and a TV to keep herself focussed and occupied.

All names in this newsletter have been changed to protect privacy.
3 Developing Skills

Your donations help people to develop skills and relationships that break the cycle of homelessness.

4 Establishing a Home

Even when people are ready to live independently, they can still face barriers that they cannot overcome alone.

A tennis and pool table in the communal area of a hostel helps residents socialise without drink or drugs. They can spend time playing tournaments with staff or each other.

In the past six months you have helped 230 people move from hostels into their own homes. (April 2019 - Sept 2019)

Tommy is a prison leaver who, thanks to your donations, has begun a welding course so that he can find new work.

Len, a veteran, is able to move back to his home town and rebuild his relationship with his children thanks to your support.

Stefano lost his fingers in a work accident and lost his job. You helped to pay for a gym membership so he could get active and feel motivated again.

Jon’s family threw him out because of his sexuality. Your donation meant he could buy essentials for his flat, including a bed to help his back problems.

George is able to continue his volunteering role because, thanks to your support, he could afford a bus pass.

Harriet slept in her car after fleeing abuse from her partner. She is now settling into her own home, and you helped her to buy a cooker and sofa.

Bob is his partner’s main carer and they have just settled into their own flat. You helped him buy fishing equipment so he can enjoy his favourite hobby.

Denzel is part of the Windrush generation whose paperwork was lost, but he has now been able to move into his own accommodation. Your donations helped him buy essential furnishings.
News from Church Homeless Trust

Church Homeless Trust looks forward to the launch of a fundraising album, and hears about young families and veterans alike who are benefitting from learning new, creative skills and pastimes with other people.

Fundraising album launch on the way

Composer Vince Pope, who has won awards for his work on TV soundtracks such as Misfits, is raising funds for Church Homeless Trust by recording live, original piano compositions in churches around London.

Vince has successfully completed his final recording and is now editing the pieces into an album.

He recorded at nine churches around London including Rosslyn Hill Chapel, Gospel Oak Methodist Church, and St Michaels and All Angels church in Chiswick (pictured).

He will play a live concert to launch the album in February. Album profits will go to Church Homeless Trust.

Please keep an eye on our website if you would like to attend the event or buy the album.

You can also still donate to the fundraising page at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/homelesstrust

Kids get green fingers

Young families at a refuge are enjoying an exciting weekly gardening session.

The gardening is a valuable break from their day-to-day routine, which can be very isolated. The majority have fled domestic abuse, so no visitors are allowed at the refuge. Residents may also be traumatised and afraid to go out in a new area.

It is a chance for the mothers to spend some relaxed time together, and learn new skills. The children also get to play together and have new experiences.

The mums and children can plan and discuss what they would like to grow, including flowers and vegetables.

The garden now has an extended patio with raised beds that the children can work in, as well as insect, bee and hedgehog houses, a bird table, and a small greenhouse.

The most recent addition was some more furniture so that the families can spend more time outside enjoying the garden, even when sessions are not happening.

Baking inspires veterans

Homeless veterans often get very few chances to cook, or may be missing a lot of basic cookery skills.

The Veterans’ Artisan Bakery is an enterprise that supports veterans and their families with cookery classes, social events, and training.

Veterans enjoy learning to cook new things and interacting with others. They find that baking takes your mind off problems, and helps with stress on a bad day.

One veteran at the scheme recreated his favourite childhood dishes. Many use the kitchen to spend time with their children, who love learning and completing activities with their parents.

The bakery provides regular lunches, Sunday dinners, and food for seasonal celebrations, as well as birthday cakes.

Keen cooks can take further courses in Food Hygiene, compete in bake-off and cooking challenges, or volunteer to deliver baked items in the van. Some have gone on to paid work using this experience.
Grants that provide vital support

People experiencing homelessness need more than just a roof over their heads: they also need encouragement and support to try out new activities, overcome complex issues, and rediscover their talents.

**Guildford hostel residents take boat trip**

A group of people recovering from homelessness have gone on a boat trip with their support workers.

The Swingbridge narrowboats on the River Wey are staffed by long-term volunteers. They taught the group how to steer and go from dock to dock, which they really enjoyed.

The day-trippers also learned about the history of Guildford and how the river was beneficial for trading and providing goods to locals.

They loved the experience and were happy to give staff more ideas for future activities!

A support worker who went with the residents said:

“The fact that we were all involved and got to learn interesting facts out in nature meant that residents felt closer to us as humans, not employees.”

**Music makes a difference**

Music is an important way for people with complex physical or mental health needs to have new experiences.

Music therapy sessions at a specialist centre in Huddersfield provided residents with a fun environment to take part in something creative, meaningful, and productive with each other.

The sessions were open to all, regardless of musical ability, to play and experiment with a number of instruments. Residents could work with each other, as well as being led by the therapist, to improvise or sing popular songs.

In one session, two men discovered a shared love of the harmonica and created a small song with a chorus and improvised verse. Both men were really pleased about the song, the experience, and their musical skills.

Huge thanks to the music therapist trainee who delivered the sessions, Ioanna Zervoudaki, as well as Senior Lecturer Claire Molyneux and Dr Helen Loth of Anglia Ruskin University.

**Art therapy helps with trauma**

For people experiencing anxiety or depression, it can be difficult to speak about upsetting memories, or process negative emotions.

This can be especially true of veterans who may have been through highly traumatic experiences. This is where art therapy has huge benefits.

Veterans have been involved with a weekly art therapy class to help them express their thoughts and relax.

Over several weeks, the veterans worked closely with a tutor on their own projects. They were responsible for choosing the materials they used and taking care of their brushes and paints after each session.

Nora Yates, who ran the sessions, explained:

“The tactile nature of paint or pencil on paper distracts from anxieties, and provides a respite that calms both body and mind.”
Remembering Rosie

We were extremely saddened to hear of the death of someone we recently helped.

Rosie moved into her own flat after a lifetime of instability. She was homeless for 11 years, and survived with the help of friends, local churches, and soup kitchens. Her tent was once set on fire while she was sleeping rough, and she was badly burned. She was eventually placed in a B&B by the council until she was offered her own flat.

Church Homeless Trust paid for basic appliances for her flat so that she could settle in comfortably. She was a keen cook, and enjoyed finally having her own kitchen and being able to make food for her friends.

She baked cakes for her local soup kitchen in order to give back to her community, and also taught her support worker how to make quiche from scratch.

Rosie died of pneumonia, complicated by COPD, at home. Many people who sleep rough develop severe health problems like this and struggle to recover.

Despite this tragic and sudden ending, she had some very happy times before she died, and we want to thank the support staff who helped her.