

BRIDGE BULLETIN



BRIDGE
TRUST 

A BRIDGE FROM HOMELESSNESS

SUMMER 2018

What happens when a resident is ready to move on?

Depending of course on the particular support needs of an individual resident our staff put a lot of hours into empowering our residents to gain the skills and knowledge necessary for them to be able to move into their own accommodation, and more importantly to *sustain any future tenancy*. The Bridge Trust previously carried out a time and motion study into how many hours are spent providing one to one support for each resident and found that this can range from 4 hours to 14 hours a week (the latter amount being what about a third of our clients are receiving at any one time). This depends on the individual needs of a client. For the minority of clients undergoing an acute crisis staff input can be up to 30 hours a week!

Residents receive individually tailored support empowering them to overcome those issues that brought them to our door in the first place (eg mental health, substance misuse, poor life skills, low expectations, short-termism) staff have to support our residents to have realistic expectations and to engage more fully with the wider community (I will return to the latter point below).

When they are ready our residents are expected to participate in our in-house Pre-Tenancy Training Programme which covers such topics as basic DIY and housekeeping, budgeting skills, rights and responsibilities of a tenant.

Finding somewhere to move on to can be a challenge. The most significant new factors that impact on our residents' opportunities to access social housing are as follows:

- affordability tests – if the resident cannot meet the particular financial expectations of certain social landlords they won't be able to access their housing stock.
- the capping of how much can be paid in benefits depending upon age for housing costs
It's particularly difficult to access social housing in the Sevenoaks District Council area.

“the introduction of Universal Credit has given rise to some new challenges”

It is not only recent increases in social housing rent charges that create the greatest challenge in ex-residents being able to live independently but the continuing increases in areas such as utility charges. Locally the private rented sector is pretty much unaffordable to any resident not in full time employment (even if they were able to find a landlord who would house someone in receipt of benefits in the first place). Further still the introduction of Universal Credit has given rise to some new challenges: the well-publicised delay of 5 weeks or more between making your claim and actually getting your benefit and the requirement that the housing element of Universal Credit be paid direct to the claimant which can create problems for some.

At the point of moving into their new home residents receive intensive support to assist them in physically moving home, sorting out benefit entitlements, engaging with utility providers, sourcing furniture and so on. Paradoxically it's when clients attain their goal of having their own home that a whole new set of support issues can arise. Whilst the majority of our residents would no doubt state that they would prefer to have their own space there are some positives to living in shared supported accommodation namely there's always other people around and it's relatively easy to access support even if it's only the empathetic ear of a member of staff. Living alone can bring its own problems whether that be your visitors creating problems with your landlord, the realisation that, just as your key worker told you, having your own flat won't mean that all your problems in life will magically be resolved, or loneliness and boredom tempting you to return to past problem behaviours.

Our staff typically will continue to support those who have moved on for up to 3 months though if necessary support can continue beyond that. In the snapshot stats inside you can see that 24 residents moved on from us April 2017 - March 2018.



Data Protection... Again!

If The Bridge Trust had £1 for all the emails we have received about the new data protection legislation, we probably wouldn't have to fundraise for the rest of the year! OK, a slight exaggeration but my guess is that it's not just me that is experiencing "GDPR" overload.

Unfortunately however, this is a new law and we have to make sure we comply – hence several missives to our supporters over the past 6 months about this, as well as a lot of work internally on policies, revising forms and statements, updates to our website, staff awareness training and more. However, I am keen that we do get this right as it will impact on whether we can communicate with you or not and it would be a shame not to.

Let's take this Bulletin for example. I am proud enough of it to want to send it to "everyone". Why? Well, I accept that I am biased but I do think The Bridge Trust does a great job. We work hard, do the right things in the right way, do them responsibly (see my website blog on ethics) and ultimately achieve good

outcomes for the vast majority of our clients, and surely you can see that *I would want people to know about this.*

Take a look at the end of year stats that are in this Bulletin. I want the world to see these, to see how hard our staff have worked, to know how many clients we have seen and helped and to appreciate the good that their support is doing, and to get new supporters because you can see from the figures that there are so many people out there asking for help and we want to help all of them, but sadly can't because we don't have the funding.

In The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says not to *"hide your light under a bushel (basket). Instead put it on a stand and let it shine for all."* In other words tell the world what your faith has done for you and show everyone else what it could do for them. Wasn't that a call for marketing (although I'm not sure the disciples put out a press release about it!)

Everyone who has a message to give, no matter what they do, needs to be able to

reach their audience and as a charity we are no different – we need to shout loudly about the difference we are making to homeless people in our community and we want you to know about it and, one would hope, continue to support us with this.

Through the requirements of GDPR we may no longer be communicating directly with all those we have previously as they have not given us their express permission to do so. Please don't be one of those. If you don't receive this Bulletin directly then you are not on our mailing list, so contact us to get onto it and tell others about this Bulletin and ask them to contact us too. We do need all the help and support we can get and we want to continue telling as many people as possible about the results this brings about for the homeless people in their community.

We will try not to mention GDPR to you again... but no promises!

John Handley, CEO

Helping people Move On.

The Fine & Country Foundation is a new, charitable arm of Fine and Country estate agents, which has been set up to help those in need in the various Fine & Country regions and, supported by their Regional Manager Chris Doe, The Bridge Trust secured a grant of £3,078.56 to provide 16 packs of move-on equipment.

When someone moves on from our service – usually after a year or two, if they are lucky enough they will move into a flat, but that will have nothing in it at all – no carpets, curtains, equipment and very often not even a light bulb. This money will pay for 16 itemised move-in packs of equipment, from bedding to kitchen utensils and cleaning and bathroom equipment – and the list does include four light bulbs!

Our CEO John Handley went along to Fine & Country's office in Tunbridge Wells to receive the cheque, and said

"West Kent is a relatively affluent area and for people who have nothing at all, living alongside people who seem to have everything brings pressures of its own.

So it's entirely appropriate for a prestige business like Fine & Country to recognise the value and to show its support for so many people who are in such need. Every single penny of this money – right down to the 56p will be spent entirely on helping homeless people get a new start in life."

We thank Fine & Country and particularly Chris for supporting our application and their willingness to support us however else they can in the future.



Well done to all our marathon runners!

Well done and thank you to those who ran the London Marathon and Brighton Marathon for us this year!

Rosie Harris ran the London Marathon raising an amazing £1,199.63! She also runs her own graphic design company, Girl Friday Graphics, and puts together our Bulletins for us for free.

We also had 5 brilliant runners in the Brighton Marathon. Together they raised £2,786.17!

THANK YOU!

We have places for the Brighton Marathon 2019. If you are interested please get in touch via the details on the last page.



Thank you!

A big thank you to those who recently took part in the Tonbridge Triathlon for us and those who did the Tonbridge Charity Walk.

You've all raised nearly £1,000!



Save the date: AGM October 11th 6.30pm for 7pm start

We're very pleased to announce that this year our AGM will again be held at Tonbridge Old Fire Station.

Free drink for a donation of your choice.

Guest Speaker – to be announced...

Snapshot Stats

The table below gives a brief snapshot of our work in the years ending March 2017 and March 2018. This gives a high level indication of the demand for our service and what we have achieved. It also highlights that demand for our services are increasing. The number of people making applications to us increased by 16% in one year.

	2016-17	2017-18
Homeless people coming to us for help and advice	215	243
Those who applied for accommodation with us	150	174
Applicants interviewed	32	44
Accepted into our service	23	32
In our accommodation throughout the year*	34	44
Have moved-on from us	15	24

*Includes those who were already with us before the start of the year

Paddlers needed for Tonbridge Dragon Boat Race, September 9th



This is the 6th year of this popular event and the 6th year we are having a boat!

You can come on board and join our crew as a paddler. Each team needs 18 paddlers and one drummer.

Places are £15pp and we ask that paddlers try to raise £50 in sponsorship (or more!)

As usual each team will get to race at least 3 times in heats, with a practice at the start.

The medieval fair takes place next to the race at Tonbridge castle providing great entertainment for between the paddling sessions.

In all it should be a great day out!

Tonbridge Half Marathon, October 7th

We are delighted to be one of the chosen charities for this year's Tonbridge Half Marathon!

We have 10 FREE places up for grabs. All we ask is that runners aim to raise £50 (or more) in sponsorship.

The event is now in its 8th year and proving popular to runners with its route going through some of Kent's beautiful countryside



If you are interested in taking part in any of these events please contact John. Email: jhandley@thebridgetrust.org.uk or telephone: 01732 368363.

We ask that participants raise £50 (or more!) in sponsorship when they take part in an event for The Bridge Trust.

Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who has donated. Here are a few since the last Bulletin:

Waitrose, Tonbridge – £415.00

Persimmon Homes – £1000

Marks and Spencer – £1026.19

St Mary's, Platt – £75

St Luke's Church, Matfield – £70

King Charles the Martyr Church, Tunbridge Wells – £5366.95

Tunbridge Wells Harriers – £2000

Mereworth Charity Lunch Club – £160.00

Sevenoaks Quakers – £109.00

Royal Tunbridge Wells Round Table – £2670.00

Tonbridge School – £345.05

It costs approximately £500,000 a year for us to provide a home to the homeless. These donations, from both groups and individuals allow us to continue to make a difference in people's lives

CONTACT US

17A Quarry Hill Road, Tonbridge, TN9 2RN.

T: 01732 368363 • E: Info@thebridgetrust.org.uk

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