

BRIDGE BULLETIN



BRIDGE
TRUST 

A BRIDGE FROM HOMELESSNESS

AUTUMN 2019

Big plans at The Bridge Trust

A new property is on the way for our Supported Accommodation Service

Many of our supporters will remember that we had a long-term business plan objective to replace one of our properties in Tonbridge, our house in Shipbourne Road, with a property more fit for purpose.

That house was quite small and old-fashioned, with the bathroom and (only) loo, off of the kitchen. One bedroom was over the driveway, making it a very cold space in the winter despite all of our insulating, the house had no outside space at all for our residents and it was on a very busy, and therefore noisy, main road. Because of the noise, the windows in both front bedrooms were pretty much permanently closed, and as a result they suffered from constant damp, despite our efforts with special extractors and damp-proofing etc.



In the end we decided the house should go and we would replace it with a much better property. However, due to a shortfall in our income a few years ago, essentially caused through the loss of our furniture warehouse, which also supplied our charity shops which we therefore also had to close, we decided to sell the house and wait until our financial situation was more secure before replacing it. In the meantime we have been leasing a 2 bed and a 3 bed flat in Tunbridge Wells to maintain our level of accommodation. However, the time has now come to release those flats and buy a new house.

Earlier this year we were approached by an organisation to make a pitch for funding which was successful and this funding will not only allow us to finally replace our 4 bedroom house, but we can now look for a 5 or 6 bedroom property. This will not only reinstate (and slightly increase) our previous provision in Tonbridge, but will reduce our monthly outgoings as we will no longer need to pay rent on the 2 flats.

As we write this, the funding for the new house has not yet been received, so we will be able to tell you more in our next Bulletin, but we have identified some potential properties that would each provide what our residents need, so “watch this space”.

When we do get the new house it will need a lot of work before it can come online as it will need to be altered to meet current fire regulations and also the requirements for a licensed House of Multiple Occupation. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council have kindly offered us help with assessing and meeting those requirements and indeed we will be working together with the Council to allocate the new accommodation to homeless people from the borough.

Over the past few years we have faced many challenges here at The Bridge Trust – mainly associated with funding (the loss of income from our furniture warehouse has already been mentioned). We also face uncertainty with our statutory funding, with no sign yet of any new Support Contract which allows us to provide our essential one-to-one support for our clients. This latest news is therefore a real boost to our work.



All change please.

I have a “Banksy” on the wall of my office. EBay said it was genuine so it must be, even though it was only £12.50!

Anyway, it is a picture of a homeless person begging, holding a sign that says “Keep your coins, I WANT CHANGE”.

The guy holding the sign really does want change in his life but generally speaking, for many of us change of any sort is often not so welcome. After all, it’s human nature for us to like our “comfort zones” and when things have to change we either don’t like it or worse, try to resist it. However, over the past 11 years I have been at The Bridge Trust, I have noticed, and indeed therefore have had to deal with, changes seemingly on all fronts. Changes to the profile of homelessness, changes to funding, changes to regulation and legislation (particularly in welfare), cultural and attitude changes, changes in technology and so on. These changes are all external to the charity, but all have put pressure on us to change internally; our training, practices and procedures, business model and our approach and attitudes.

I have come to accept that not only is change inevitable, but we should actively be seeking it out rather than trying to hide from it; try to be “ahead of the curve”, so to speak. After all, if we can do that then there is an opportunity to shape the change that is going to happen. Ideally, we should be looking all the time to see what changes can be made to make ourselves better. “Better” can mean many things including being more effective, more efficient, more economical, providing more or providing something different and so forth.

I’ll give you a very small example if I may? About 18 months ago The Trust stated our ambition to reduce paper in the office. Our first project was to rid ourselves of endless paper invoices, which were passed from person to person to check and authorise before being paid and filed away in a growing number of lever arch files. I could see the team’s collective shoulders slumping to start with, but now we don’t have a single piece of paper involved in the process from start to finish and apart from the positive impact on the environment, we now work more flexibly and efficiently as we can access and perform any part of the process from anywhere we may be, as long as we have a smart phone, tablet or PC to hand. Last year I authorised an urgent payment when I was sitting on the beach! In these last weeks we have moved to a paperless HR system as well (there go those shoulders again!) But I can now authorise someone’s holiday request from the beach as well. (If we continue like this, I won’t actually have to come into work at all!)

It’s human nature for us to like our ‘comfort zones’ and when things have to change we either don’t like it or worse, try to resist it.

Looking for change is often about challenging things – challenging what we do, how we do them or whether we have to do them at all. We have all heard the phrase “it’s always been done that way”, but these days, probably more than any other time, things can often be done better, and often with the use of technology. Yes, I know many of us are technophobes at heart, but again, just because we don’t like or even understand these things, should not mean we should shy away from them. On the other hand we shouldn’t get wrapped up in doing things just because they are the latest trend. Several years ago I looked into upgrading our office phone system to “VoIP” technology. Everyone I spoke to seemed to be extolling its virtues, but after seeking sensible (and trusted) advice, and getting costs, this simply wasn’t needed for us, so we didn’t change. However, as things have moved on I am now looking again at this technology as in the future the Trust is likely to need to re-model our way of working and a VoIP system would help us facilitate that.

Even the service we offer to homeless people is constantly under review and open to be changed. For example we anticipated and have now seen that more homeless people have mental health issues. We therefore tweaked our support methodology and gained additional training to recognise and deal better with residents who have mental ill-health. We are now much more aligned with “wellbeing” and understand what that means and how our working practices and the environment can affect the wellbeing of residents and staff alike.

The impact of reduced funding is also forcing us to make changes to the way we work; we have already had to change our on-call procedures to cover with less support staff. But we must be open to change and embrace it, whether we agree, or like it or not. After all we are not here to do what’s best for our own convenience, but to do what’s necessary to provide a fit for purpose charity that provides the best it can for those we seek to help.

John Handley, CEO

E-Bulletin anyone?

Under the GDPR regulations we had to contact supporters to a) gain positive agreement to send communications such as this Bulletin, and b) ask how they would like those communications to be made – e.g. by post or email.

Many people wanted to continue receiving communication via the post, which is absolutely fine, but many chose to switch over to receiving information from us by email only, so we have developed a simple “E-BULLETIN” which we can send out quickly and easily.

If anyone would like to receive this Bulletin (and indeed other information we send out from time to time) via our new email E-BULLETIN instead of in the post, please let us know on info@thebridgetrust.org.uk and we will move you from the Bulletin by post list to the E-Bulletin by email list.



The Tonbridge Business Awards 2019

We were honoured to be one of three charities chosen to receive the proceeds from the inaugural Tonbridge Business Awards.

The ceremony, held at Tonbridge School's OBS Gallery, was a great success with many businesses, large and small coming along hoping to receive the accolades that they all well deserved.

Sam Goode from the Tonbridge Old Fire Station announced that each charity was to receive £500 each from the evening.

Getting homelessness on the run

A huge thanks to our supporters who ran the Virgin Asics London 10K for us in July. The Trust participates in many running events throughout the year so please “watch this space” for news of the next events we have spaces for.

Our next one is the Tonbridge Half Marathon on Sunday 6th October – let us know if you want to run for us.

One intrepid supporter, Sean Rustrick from Rustrick Accountants is undertaking his greatest challenge yet, the 2019 Lisbon Marathon.

Sean's training runs regularly take him on a route past people unfortunate enough to be living on the streets. It is for this reason that he has decided to channel his efforts towards raising vital funds for The Bridge Trust.

Please support Sean's efforts by donating via his [JustGiving](http://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/sean-rustrick-lisbonmarathon) page which can be found at: www.justgiving.com/fundraising/sean-rustrick-lisbonmarathon

National Careers Service volunteer to help the homeless



This summer we had three groups of young people from the NCS spend a week raising funds for The Bridge Trust.

Their activities ranged from a stall selling bits and bobs to shaking buckets in the High Street, to engaging people outside Sainsburys – all raising awareness as well as money.

One team also undertook a survey with our clients, the results of which we will use to shape what we provide in our accommodation in the future.

A huge thanks to all those who threw themselves into this venture.





‘Rags to Riches’ Dog Show

The weather stayed fair for what was to prove a wonderful event, organised by Lorraine Baseden, the Tonbridge & Malling Dog Warden – ably assisted by volunteers from the Council and elsewhere.

The event was swamped with proud owners and dogs of all shapes and sizes and it was a real privilege to meet them all (although a little daunting to be the Judge).

In particular, meeting all the rescue dogs and their dedicated owners was a lovely experience – although often heart-breaking to hear their stories.

We were over the moon to receive a £750 donation from the proceeds of the show; a huge reward for all of Lorraine’s hard work.



Doing the business

For over a year now, local Business Networking group, Business Over Breakfast, Tonbridge, have been supporting The Bridge Trust. Not only have they paid for our attendance at their fortnightly meetings, have donated £100 from a collection from the members, and have also donated £200 to us as an organisation.

In addition, Tunbridge Wells business networkers – Friday Club who meet the first Friday of each month at the Royal Wells, also pay for us to attend, and they collect “fines” from members for non-attendance, which will then be donated to the Trust.

John Handley, our CEO attends the meetings and said: *“It’s heartwarming to see how much local business people care about their community and those who need their help. Each group is attended by great people who have become friends and each member is eager to help us in any way they can. I am so grateful to these local businesses for their support.”*

Pass it on...

When you have finished with this Bulletin, perhaps you could pass it on to a neighbour who may be interested. If you do, you can ask them to contact us if they want to be added to our mailing list.

CONTACT US

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

T: 01732 368363 • 01892 3152823 • E: Info@thebridgetrust.org.uk

Like us: [facebook.com/thebridgetrust](https://www.facebook.com/thebridgetrust)

www.thebridgetrust.org.uk

Follow us: @bridgetrust1

Reg. Charity No. 1050291.

South East Water, Tonbridge depot – support the homeless

Employees of South East Water recently collected £500 for The Bridge Trust.

Nick, one of our Support Workers, went along to collect the cheque.



A huge thanks to all who took part in raising this fantastic amount.

Thank you!

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

National Citizens Service (Sleep out)	£370
Tonbridge Dog Show (collection)	£218
Tonbridge Dog Show	£750
Vaultex Ltd (matched fundraising)	£143
St Luke’s Church, Sevenoaks	£32.65
St Andrew’s Church Paddock	
Wood Trade Shop	£300
Christ Church, Southborough	£132
St Mary’s Church, Speldhurst:	
In memoriam	£625
Donation	£925
Coffee Morning	£150
Plaxtol Church	£50
South East Water Employees	£500
St Luke’s Church Matfield	£300
Waitrose, Tonbridge	£323
Children’s Salon:	
London 10K sponsorship	£250

It costs approximately £450,000 p.a. to provide a home to the homeless. These donations allow us to continue to make a difference in people’s lives.

DATA PROTECTION: If you do not receive our Bulletin directly and would like to please let us know in writing, specifying your address or email address. If you already receive information from us and no longer wish to you can opt out any time by letting us know in writing. Any information you give will be used for The Bridge Trust purposes only.