

BRIDGE BULLETIN



BRIDGE
TRUST 

A BRIDGE FROM HOMELESSNESS

AUTUMN 2020

Housing the Homeless – A Special Appeal

We need your help to take local rough sleepers off the streets, and to do that we need to provide more accommodation. Can you help?

The Bridge Trust is currently in the position where we don't have much in the way of excess monthly income to be able to extend our own supported accommodation services, over and above opening up our new house in Tonbridge (see page 2). In fact our budget this year forecasts a £13,000 deficit and we would be pleased if we could break-even in the following years, so it would be irresponsible at the moment to commit further monthly expenditure to new projects.

However, having anticipated the loss of our statutory income via Kent County Council Support Contracts, we built up our Reserves over the past few years as a cushion for when the axe finally fell. In addition, as this took longer than expected to happen, we have used that time to work hard behind the scenes, reshaping our income and expenditure model to cope with much less monthly income. So we are now in a position where we feel comfortable in releasing some of our accumulated Reserves to expand our services once more. Although we do need to be careful to hold some back in case of unexpected events or emergencies, we still have enough that we can look towards using some in the best way we can to further our work with local homeless people.

A couple of years ago the government announced it's rough sleeper initiative called 'Housing First'.

This approach supports homeless people with high needs and histories of entrenched or repeat homelessness to live in their own homes.

The overall philosophy of Housing First is to provide a stable, independent home first, and then intensive personalised support to help them reach a stage where they can live independently. This fits exactly with The Bridge Trust's view of seeing the opportunity to access housing as a basic human right.

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) have been running this initiative for the past couple of years and with the project proving successful they have undertaken to extend their current provision of ten one bed properties with another four. The pandemic put this on hold and they now have only until next March to provide these extra properties; part of their commitment they made to obtain this year's grant from the government.

The Bridge Trust is therefore now working alongside TWBC by agreeing to purchase some one bedroom properties for the exclusive purpose of using them for Housing First. This allows us to utilise our excess Reserves to further our charitable aims of helping homeless people, in a way that is sustainable for both us and them. We see this as a positive step forward by providing these properties for rough sleepers in our local region.

By using some of our Reserves and raising some additional funds we hope to provide three or four properties and we are asking for your help. If feel you can, please donate using the enclosed Donation Form, or visit our website for further ways to make donations.

THANK YOU.



John Handley, CEO

One more park bench no longer needed

Hello! Obviously I'm not going to say my name, but I can still try to make a difference.

My story:

I had lost my job, home, pretty much everything and had a breakdown really. I found myself in hospital and when I came out I was stuck miles away from my family, after working away for so many years. I had nowhere to go...

This is when The Bridge Trust stepped in – they were absolutely brilliant. They helped me travel down for the interview and then gave me a place to live in one of their houses in Tonbridge. They honestly did everything they could... and they are still helping me!

I have now moved-on and am currently decorating my new flat. I had a decorating allowance from the housing agency and I am making it lovely.

The Trust have provided me with a cooker a bed and all sorts of equipment and I can honestly say if it wasn't for The Bridge Trust, I don't know if I would still be here now.

Sally, Nick, Lynne and Steve [the Support Team]; just tell them how it is and they will try to help you – They are amazing.

Never give up and just be honest and you wont feel alone anymore.

Trust me.



Hilden House

Is now OPEN FOR BUSINESS. It has been a long time coming, what with the delays caused by the Covid-19 crisis, but it was worth the wait to have quality accommodation where we are able to support another 5 homeless people. To give an idea of the work required to bring the house up to scratch, we needed to do the following (not an exhaustive list!):

Dug up and replaced patio and side path, installed upper garden safety railings, new front door, and two x replacement windows.

We installed some patio doors, and handwash basins / vanity units in each bedroom, converted an en-suite shower room for communal use, levelled sunken flooring in a loft room, replaced all doors and frames with fire doors, fireproofed the understairs cupboard, installed emergency lighting and a fire alarm system, installed a new consumer unit (fusebox), new wooden flooring in all bedrooms, new carpets for hall, stairs and landings, installed new safety banisters and re-fixed handrails, installed a new boiler and pump unit and... cleaned and decorated throughout!

There were also a seemingly endless amount of other small jobs on top of all this.

Our thanks go to Tunbridge & Malling Borough Council for their help and advice, plus the trades we used who often went the extra mile to help get the job done. Of course our biggest thanks goes to High Hilden Limited and the Kent Community Foundation who provided the money to make all this possible.

There is still more to do, such as replacing fascia boards and replacing and re-pointing brickwork but to be honest, we need a rest from all this building work; other things will get done in due course.





Quiz nights and Tesco

A long-time supporter of The Bridge Trust and homelessness generally, Midge Noding has run a few quiz nights for us in the past but this time she managed to pull one together during these days of social distancing (thanks go to her neighbour who had a big garden!).

Not only did she raise £270 on the night, but whilst doing the leg-work to try and collect donations as raffle prizes for the quiz, Midge asked Tesco in Larkfield for help. However, instead of donating a bottle of something, they decided to donate tons of equipment for us to use directly with our clients. A huge thanks to Midge (and undoubtedly her husband Jim) for all the time and effort put in to helping support us, and of course a big THANKS to Tesco.

NCS Support



Young people from the National Citizens Service took the initiative to put together 30 gift boxes for male and female homeless people.

What a great way to support people in such need in our community.

Tonbridge Cricket Club Support



This summer Tonbridge Cricket Club decided to do something to help local vulnerable people and chose to support The Bridge Trust.

They donated a magnificent £150 which we used to provide a pack of move-on items to one of our residents who was moving-on.

Move on Support

The article from an ex-resident on page two mentioned the practical support the Trust was able to give him when he moved on, with donations of furniture and household equipment. We thought we would tell you a little more about this initiative which, as far as we know, makes us unique amongst local providers.

When someone is offered a flat to move into, it is completely empty – and we mean furniture, and usually not even a light bulb – a great way to start the next part of someone's new life!

Back in the day when we were able to run a used furniture warehouse, we were able to donate some used furniture to people to help them set up their new home, but not having that any more made us realise just how important a service that was.

Since then we have been successful in appealing to several charitable organisations and funders and by using some of the donations our supporters give to us, to buy brand new items for our clients instead.

We currently have three separate funds that we use to provide furniture, equipment and fridges for our people who move on from us. Although they don't often write to us to say how valued this is, our residents are always over the moon to be given such a big kick-start to the next part of their life's journey. Without this, their likelihood of failing would be much increased.



When this is over, we will need a holiday...



We make no apology for telling our supporters again about our tie-up with local travel guru, **Caroline Peers-Noakes**, a local, independent Personal Travel Consultant with **Not Just Travel**

The lockdown days are starting to be a thing of the past and we are all thinking about holidays again. Whether looking for staycations or booking holidays abroad, Caroline can help. She has access to over 450 suppliers, including all the high street favourites such as TUI, Jet2, Kuoni etc. as well as trade only suppliers who don't deal with the general public and pass on their deals only through agents like Caroline.

She does not charge for her services AND she will donate 10% of the holiday cost to The Bridge Trust.

See our website for more details.

Do you shop online?

It seems that many of us are doing more shopping online these days and if you are one of them please don't forget to shop via www.easyfundraising.org.uk

If you search for your shopping site there first, THEN choose to go there, any purchases you make will earn money for The Bridge Trust. Just set us up to receive the donations and GO SHOPPING!



(Our) Community Matters

Not for the first time have Waitrose in Tonbridge and their customers supported The Bridge Trust with their "Community Matters" scheme.

The scheme allows shoppers to vote for one of these charities of the month, with the green tokens they receive when they pay for their shopping. A total of £1,000 is at stake and this is usually apportioned according to the voting that has taken place. However, during these exceptional times when many people are not coming to the store, Waitrose decided to simply divide the total equally between the three chosen charities. We therefore received a cheque for £333.33.

A huge thanks to Angie and the team at Waitrose – stars, one and all.

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.

Thank you!

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

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| St Mary's, Leigh | £1,400 |
| Tonbridge Evangelical Free Church | £1,000 |
| St Mary's, Speldhurst | £750.00 |
| St Andrew's, Paddock Wood – Free Trade Shop | £350.00 |
| St Luke's, Sevenoaks | £100.00 |
| The Paragon Trust | £1,000 |
| The Buckingham Trust | £200.00 |
| The Henshurst Charitable Trust | £1,000 |
| Waitrose, Tonbridge | £333.000 |
| Tonbridge Cricket Club | £150.00 |

It costs approximately £400,000 p.a. to provide our services to homeless people. Donations from both groups and individuals allow us to continue to make a difference in people's lives.

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