

# BRIDGE BULLETIN

A BRIDGE FROM HOMELESSNESS



BRIDGE  
TRUST 

WINTER 2020

## Why We Exist

**Over the years, The Bridge Trust has helped thousands of homeless people in need – the vast majority from our local region. Our help has spanned many things, from advice and sign-posting, to giving out essential supplies; such as tents and sleeping bags, to giving people somewhere to live. In this edition of our Bulletin, after a particularly difficult year for us all, we thought we would remind you why this work is so important. We have therefore dedicated this Bulletin to those we have helped – let them tell you why we do what we do...**

"In August 2009 I moved into the Trust's North Farm House and was allocated Sally as my key worker. Sally unstintingly helped me with completing forms for various government departments, pointing me in the direction of Citizens Advice Bureau and a GP, and helped me to deal with various problems as they arose. She also gave me guidance and the motivation to be able to join the Trust's Supported Move-on scheme (a project that has now sadly had its funding removed)."

"Around April this year I was reallocated to Jenny as my key worker; I was to be her first Supported move-on within the Trust. After bidding on several properties, I was eventually offered an apartment, which I gladly and gratefully accepted. Jenny organised the move-on, furniture and transport, and the utilities were all sorted in one afternoon and totally stress free for me as well. I am very pleased and happy to be living there. I therefore would like to take this opportunity to give my thanks to all the supporters and friends of The Bridge Trust, all the team at Quarry Hill Road and a special thanks to the Support Team, without who's constant support I would not be here now."

"With the help of my sister, I approached three homeless organisations. At first The Bridge Trust, the only one of the three to this day who replied to me, didn't have a vacancy, but then one came up and I was able to move in. My keyworker and the life coach I saw at The Bridge Trust taught me to break down my mountain of difficulties into smaller more manageable steps that I could deal with. After six months with the Trust, I moved into the perfect flat, near to my sister and the rest of my support network in Tonbridge. Being close to them plays a big part in making me feel settled. And, although we have our differences, my wife and I have maintained a good relationship for the sake of our daughter."

"I am really happy now and proud of myself but if it wasn't for The Bridge Trust I probably wouldn't be here now, I'd probably be six foot under still with a drink in my hand. They've helped me a lot and I really appreciate it."



"There are a lot of opportunities where I can give back some of this help from The Bridge Trust and I am sure that everyone thanks the whole team for supporting us in our desperate time of need".

"I have had many periods of homelessness, and for the first time, due to The Bridge Trust and their Empowerment Programme, I have a reason to get up in the mornings. I am now on an apprentice led scheme and am feeling confident about life".

"The support I have been given has allowed me to open up my desire for learning and skills and allowed my ambition and dream of ultimately owning a narrow boat. I am now settled for the first time in my adult life".



***"I didn't choose to be in this situation, but it's my choice how to get out of it."***

"I began my residency with The Bridge Trust nearly three years ago after a six month period of being homeless. The introduction of relative stability, by which I mean the Trust, is what it says in the name 'a bridge' to permanent stability."

"I have had some bad experiences when I have slept on the street. Now I am under the wing of the Bridge Trust I am starting to address my problems and plan for my life. I am very thankful that I now have hope for the future."

"I was homeless with my children until I decided to go to rehab. This was the start of a long journey of success and failure, periods of homelessness and very black times. My children ended up in the care of my ex-husband and I found myself in a violent relationship. Finally, I was ready to accept the help I was being offered and I left yet another rehab for a place at The Bridge Trust and I greatly appreciate the support I have received from them. When I left rehab in June I knew I wasn't ready for the responsibility of my own home. After 15 years of alcohol and drug dependency and homelessness I didn't really have any life skills. That was nine months ago and I now feel ready for independence. I feel I have all the staff at BT to thank for that, especially my Key worker, Sally. She is a true inspiration, she gets things done, she's on the ball, and she's sympathetic but very capable of giving me a kick up the bum when I have needed it. Sally reminded me that deep down I am a capable, competent person."

"I have participated in many events at the Trust and got a lot from them. I have loved the social inclusion events, I learned a lot from Money-go-round, I have found direction and confidence from Nextsteps and it has given me hope in the future. I especially enjoyed the artwork for the (Empowerment Project) launch I have loved getting involved and it helps me feel 'worth it'. Anyway, thank you all, (and you know who you are) because today I am starting to believe in myself. I have improved my relationship with my children and am enjoying being a proper nanny to my grandson and you have all helped me with that".



"I want to say thank you to Nick and Brian for finally making me feel as if I'm getting somewhere in my search for accommodation and safety."

"Can not go wrong with this place... They have saved my life ten-fold. Not to be biased, but these people have worked so hard to get those in need to the place they need to be."



"When I moved in (to The Bridge Trust) I felt very relieved and soon settled into a routine with my bills. I had come to the Trust with debts and the staff taught me to reduce these, offering advice, they helped me do a budget sheet and to negotiate with my debtors so the payments were more manageable. The Bridge Trust helped me get furniture for my own place and for that I am grateful. They were also there to support me while I found my feet in my new home".

***"If you asked me five years ago what my impression of a homeless person was, it would be very different from what I know now."***

"After 10 years of what I thought was a happy marriage, I came home from work one November day to a request from the Child Support Agency for details of my income and expenses. Upon querying this with my wife, I was told that she was leaving, going back to her mother in Manchester. I also queried with the CSA who advised that, despite the fact that we were living together, 'It was not as man and wife'!

Forward to Christmas Eve. I had been out shopping, including for a new television, and on returning home I was greeted with 'open our son's present with him as we are leaving afterwards.' With a response of similar to, 'Don't be so silly!', she picked up a suitcase, our son, and off she went. Needless to say, the television and the £15,000 in the bank account went with her.

January and February past with no communication, no response to telephone calls or letters, and only the CSA rating of £140 a week based upon my salary and her being unemployed and no contact. It was time to get a solicitor involved. Throughout the remainder of the year there were 12 visits to the Family Court, and monthly visits to Manchester for observed contact with my son. This necessitated giving up my full time teaching position and dropping down to supply while still having to pay the CSA plus the travelling and accommodation expenses up to Manchester. I had to sell the house, but with some arm twisting by the local MP, managed to get a housing association flat in Tunbridge Wells.

The next seven years followed the stories one hears about from time to time of the 'absent father' travelling to contact, only to be denied for a number of reasons. In and out of Family Court getting Contact Orders, knowing that they would be broken again. The CSA would not budge on cost because I was not getting enough contact time to qualify for a discount.

Another nine years passed with no contact allowed, the CSA refusing to accept that my salary had dropped, and I was getting deeper into debt when a Deduction from Earnings Order was placed on my salary, after which I was left with insufficient funds to pay the rent on the flat. Arrears accrued until the housing association finally applied for an eviction order. I made the decision to voluntarily give up the flat and declare myself homeless, choosing instead to sleep in my car and maintain a reasonable standard of hygiene by going to the local swimming pool before attending school. Alas, in April my DBS expired, essential for me to be able to work with children, thus I had no option but to lose my job.

Through April and May I had walked past the Bridge Trust Shop in Tunbridge Wells and one day in June I swallowed my pride and went in explaining that I was sleeping in my car. Three days later I summoned the courage to go into their Tunbridge office and begin the process of becoming a resident. That was 16 months ago so what has The Bridge Trust helped me to become now? I have around £700 of the £12,000 I had in 2014 left to pay. I am an Assistant Head Teacher with responsibility for the IT systems at a Secondary School in Folkestone. Back to my confident self and September's D.E.O. should be the end of the CSA. I am also again enjoying my love of football as a referee and have become a trainer/mentor to those starting out on their career. In the words of my mentor when I was training to become a Teacher 'Don't let the buggers get you down'. I would have muddled through life somehow, but express my deepest gratitude to you as sponsors, Sally my keyworker, and all those at The Bridge Trust who have steered me back to where I am today.

And what of the future? Having been a resident of The Bridge Trust for 16 months now and held my position as an Assistant Head Teacher for little short of a year, my thoughts are now turning toward returning to greater self-sufficiency. This would have taken much longer to achieve if not for the outstanding support of The Bridge Trust".

***"I have had some bad experiences when I slept on the street. Now I am under the wing of the Bridge Trust, I am starting to address my problems and plan for me life."***

***"I am very thankful that I now have hope for the future."***

**“The Bridge Trust hasn’t just put a roof over my head, they’ve actually given me skills to progress. They’re trying to make you so you don’t end up in this situation again.**

**They’re a good charity.”**



## I want to help more homeless people rebuild their lives.

<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to make a donation by cheque/cash of £ <input type="text"/> (cheques made payable to The Bridge Trust)	<b>Your details:</b> Title ..... First name..... Surname..... Address ..... ..... Postcode..... Tel. No. .... Email .....
<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to give regularly by Standing Order Bank/Building Society ..... Branch ..... Address ..... ..... Postcode..... A/C name:..... Sort Code ..... - ..... - ..... A/C no..... <b>Please pay to:</b> CAF BANK LTD For the credit of: The Bridge Trust Corporation Account No. 00017729 Sort Code: 40-52-40 <b>The sum of £</b> <input type="text"/> Starting on the ..... day of ..... 20..... and the same amount: *monthly/quarterly/annually on that day *until further notice *until the ..... day of ..... 20..... (*delete as applicable)	<p align="center"><b>Gift Aid Declaration</b></p> <p align="center"><b>Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate</b></p> <p><b>In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:</b></p> <input type="checkbox"/> I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years, to The Bridge Trust. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code. Signature ..... Date..... Please notify us if you want to cancel this Declaration, change your name or address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.
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## 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

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