

In memory of the

976

homeless people whose deaths were recorded across
the UK in 2020; an increase of a third from 2019

**TOGETHER, WE CAN PREVENT
AND RELIEVE HOMELESSNESS**



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Front page statistics gathered from The Guardian, 2020.



A THANK YOU TO PETER DAVEY

Last year marked an incredible milestone in the career of our long-standing Chief Officer, Peter Davey, as he celebrated his 20th Anniversary of leading The Bridge (East Midlands).

Having nurtured our organisation from its small beginnings to the twelve thriving services we currently offer, Peter decided it was a good time to step down from his role as Chief Officer and leave the organisation earlier this year. Under his leadership tens of thousands of local people have received advice, support, and avoided housing crisis or homelessness.

"As staff, Trustees, volunteers and clients of The Bridge, we owe him so much thanks."

As Chief Officer, Peter's passion for social justice and equality was inspirational. His dedication to supporting overlooked members of our society and creating strong communities has undoubtedly enabled our charity to achieve so much in the last twenty years.

Working with elected members and Councils and advocating for change both nationally and locally, Peter was often the voice for thousands of local people who had sought support from The Bridge.

His ethos has played a huge part in shaping our mission, vision, and day-to-day working style. In fact, much of what our organisation prides itself on has stemmed from his leadership: the family-feel amongst our staff, the person-centred approach to our work, and our shared desire to never let a member of our community go without support.

Peter; as an organisation, we are so grateful for your twenty years of service. Your longevity is testament to your success, commitment and to the incredible relationship you fostered with your staff team.

Thank you.

"Developing sustainable housing solutions for individuals and communities through partnership, empowerment and good practice."

- Peter Davey



OUR VALUES

RESPECT

We have a commitment to fairness and equality. We acknowledge an individual's needs, beliefs and their right to make their own choices.

QUALITY

We have a commitment to delivering excellence; providing a high standard of services with a person-centred approach.

PARTNERSHIP

We work with others to create trusting and positive relationships which enhance the delivery of services for the benefit of the community.

EMPOWERMENT

We encourage clients and staff to develop their existing skills and knowledge. We help to build self-confidence and increase opportunities to make positive contributions.

POSITIVITY

We have an optimistic attitude and approach which is focused upon identifying innovative solutions for all.

FUNDRAISERS, YOU ARE AMAZING!

This year has been extremely tough for us all but, despite the circumstances, you have supported us like never before. Words cannot thank our donors enough for the funding we have received in the last year.

When we started out on our 25th Anniversary campaign in 2020, our target was £25,000 – a higher amount of community donations than we had ever received before...

Thanks to you, our 25th Anniversary community donation total for the year 2020 was an incredible £61,049!

But, your generosity did not cease: our April 2020 – March 2021 community fundraising total was a mind-blowing £96,995!

Your unwavering support and kindness has meant that our services have been able to achieve fantastic outcomes throughout periods of vastly increased demand.

The creativity and enthusiasm of fundraisers was fantastic, during a year where normality was halted. A few examples of what you achieved are:



We even had extremely generous individual donors who have funded whole projects, such as Christmas Food Parcels and Private Rented Deposits for those in need!

On top of this, we would like to thank our regular monthly donors, whose ongoing support means the utmost to our charity and has made the world of difference to our work.

Every time that you donate, fundraise, spread the word about our services, or share our posts online, you are helping us fight homelessness every day, and we couldn't do it without you!

Jessica Metson
Communications and Fundraising Manager



Amanda Soraghan



Jay Webb



Jo Emmett



Sue Lees



Steve Ablett



Richard White



Rosie Thomas



Ashiedu Joel



Jon Olds



Karen Jewell



Helen Tighe

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD

Another year to remember for us all in one way or another! We have just completed our 25th Anniversary Year of delivering services and it has been a whirlwind for everyone at The Bridge. We have seen such positive spirit throughout the pandemic, juggling the provision of services whilst adapting to constantly changing circumstances due to COVID-19.

Throughout the year, we have experienced generosity on an epic scale from the public, businesses, local organisations, volunteers, community partners, the local council, churches, politicians and clubs. We have worked together and been supported to raise funds to help some of the most vulnerable in our society. Thank you all so much.

Unfortunately, we had to prolong the closure of our front facing doors, but we redefined and adjusted our services to a significantly increased number of enquiries, respecting social distancing and dealing with additional, new and very vulnerable clients.

I want to pay tribute to our dedicated and hard-working Board of Trustees who do so much for The Bridge, and who are pictured below. While ensuring that we undertake our governance role properly, they do so much more to support the organisation and consistently give their time and expertise.

We have lost some very key members of our team who have gone on to new pastures, including our Communications & Fundraising Manager, Jessica Metson, who has done so much to raise our profile. We have also had to face the loss of our lynch pin, Peter Davey, who was our Chief Officer for over 20 years and will be missed greatly. Peter gave unstintingly of his time and effort and did so much to help so many over the years, developing a strong team which he leaves as his legacy.

No organisation can exist without the hard work and dedication of its Strategic Management Team and the staff who work to deliver services. I want to thank them all for the fabulous work that they have undertaken during the last 12 months, rising to the challenge every day. You make me proud to be part of such a great organisation.

Jay Webb
Chair





**RESILIENT,
COMPASSIONATE
COMMUNITIES
WHERE INDIVIDUALS
THRIVE IN SAFE AND
SECURE HOMES.**

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Hello, and welcome to this year's annual report.

I am sat here reflecting on the last year and a half, just as the Government have relaxed all COVID-19 restrictions and we venture into the unknown. Are cases going to run out of control? Are we going to go back into lockdown? Will things ever go back to "normal"? Who knows? All we do know, is that this last year has been a whirlwind of ups and downs, for so many reasons.

The COVID-19 pandemic has really shown how resilient our staff are, and how much they care about the clients who we work with. Being locked down from March 2020, and forced to work from home ever since, they have continued to provide our services throughout, and have had to quickly adapt to new ways of working – I could not be prouder of the team.

Unfortunately, this year as also seen the departure of our leader, Peter Davey earlier this year. Peter first employed me when I was 18 years old, and has always been so supportive, both professionally and personally. We will all miss him, but we thank him for everything he has done for the organisation, the sector, and our communities, over his 20-year tenure.

Moreover, our communities' strength and compassion has really shone through as well. From the first lockdown to the street parties for VE Day, to the weekly claps for the NHS, highlighting just a few examples of people really coming together as a society. 2020 also saw the public raise a record amount of money for our organisation as we celebrated our 25th anniversary, for which we will be eternally grateful.

There is still so much work to do though as we begin recover from the last 18 months. As an organisation, we are still experiencing very high levels of referrals, the same high level of demand for our services that we had during the peak of the pandemic. The impending cut to Universal Credit, and the rising costs of food and utilities, have meant that poverty insecurities are rising at an alarming rate, and for more people than ever.

With the economy recovering, we must not assume that everything else is too. The lack of availability in housing, combined with the aforementioned difficulties, our work could not be more vital. We strive to continue to deliver the highest quality services we can offer and look forward to working with our community, our partners, and colleagues across the sector to overcome the challenges which lie ahead – together we can achieve so much more.

I shall end by saying that it has been an absolute honour to "steer the ship" throughout the pandemic, and our recovery phase. As we now enter an exciting new stage of development, I will be handing the reins over to our new Chief Executive Officer who will be in post by the end of 2021. I look forward to working closely with them, to further build upon the great work we do to ensure The Bridge (East Midlands) continues to provide crucial services for our communities.

I wish you the very best.

Paul Snape
*Deputy Chief Executive
(Head of Business & Development)*



NUMBERS TO NOTE

From April 2020 to March 2021, we received **6,202** referrals

A huge **39%** increase compared to 2019-20!



That includes working with **2,483** households - a 13.4% increase compared to the previous year.



OF OUR CLIENTS IN 2020-21...

100% happy with service received



92% of homelessness prevented or resolved



Financial circumstances improved² for **80%**



Many of our services work with clients over longer-periods, to help them create positive, stable futures: of our clients, **48%** were helped to access education or training³ while **41%** were specifically supported to access or maintain employment



Improved housing conditions for **88%**¹

84% reported improved mental health



Improved physical health for **81%**

- ¹ Better living conditions can include moving home or having repairs undertaken, etc.
- ² Including debt reduction, increased income, or charity applications for essential household items.
- ³ Assistance with applications and research, attendance to open days, etc.
- ⁴ CV writing, assistance with job applications, interviewing skills, etc.
- ⁵ Including taking better care of oneself
- ⁶ Increased communicative skills, positive relationships with friends and family.

88% of people making more positive life choices⁵ with **76%** reporting reduced alcohol or drug consumption



90% said they were able to make their own choices and solve their own problems, after our support



69% reported being less lonely or isolated, despite so many facing these issues during the pandemic



68% improved relationships - despite so many being distanced from loved ones during lockdown
71% improved communication skills⁶

84% reduced involvement in crime or anti-social behaviour



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR



Peter Davey celebrated his 20th Anniversary as Chief Officer at The Bridge, last Summer!

This year, The Bridge was awarded a contract with the Ministry of Justice, working with Nacro, as the lead organisation, to provide support and accommodation advice to ex-offenders facing homelessness.



We have also teamed up with Vita Health Group, who are the lead organisation for the IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) service, who provide in-depth mental health services. Our clients can access their support, and we also provide housing advice for IAPT clients whose mental health is worsened by housing issues.

Working in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council and John Storer Charnwood, we have helped with the distribution of over 25,000 food parcels for Charnwood Community Action, which was set up to distribute food parcels safely during the pandemic. Working alongside our partner agencies on this project has been fantastic.



A new free 0800 telephone line was set up, to ensure that everybody was able to contact us: whether it be by telephone box, or a mobile without credit.

The Bridge, alongside partner agencies of the Charnwood Food Poverty Group and Charnwood Community Action, has led the planning of a 'Social Supermarket' model for food provision; reducing dependency and aiming to assist people before they reach crisis point.



OUR STRATEGY 2020 – 2024

1

WE WILL EXPAND UPON OUR EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION OFFER

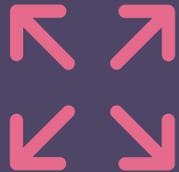
The organisation has expanded its service offering for clients through a number of new partnerships. This includes a new specialist Housing Advice Service for the sub-regional IAPT Service, working closely with VITA Health Group. The organisation has also entered into a partnership with Nacro to deliver an East Midlands wide Dynamic Framework for the Ministry of Justice.



2

WE WILL ENSURE THAT EVERYONE CONTINUES TO BE VALUED, NURTURED AND RESPECTED

Throughout the last year, the organisation has driven forward work to further improve its governance. The Board of Trustees and Strategic Management Team have created a Governance Improvement Team. The team's remit is to review, and continually improve, the organisations systems and processes relating to the Board of Trustees and the relationship of the Board with the Strategic Management Team.



3

WE WILL CONTINUALLY DRIVE FORWARD A SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATION BUILT UPON OUR REPUTATION AND INTEGRITY

"Lockdown", as for many voluntary sector organisations, has created an opportunity to review fundraising and communications practices, and has been a time for innovation and interacting differently with the public and supporters. The organisation has been able to work differently, and as a result, has increased the public profile of The Bridge, along with the number of community donations.



4

WE WILL BE ADVOCATES OF BEST PRACTICE, TAKING A REFLECTIVE APPROACH TO CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

The organisation is proud to announce that it passed its Advice Quality Standard again for its Specialist Housing Advice Service. This is a bi-annual audit which The Bridge has been committed to for the past two decades. Furthermore, the organisation's Business Improvement Team has continued to meet throughout "lockdown" and has been instrumental in the improvements made to the organisation's recruitment processes.



THE NATIONAL PICTURE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

When we wrote our Annual Report last spring we crossed our fingers in hope that, by the time of writing this year, we would no longer be affected by the pandemic. Of course, the COVID-19 crisis has maintained its grip on society in many ways; but I am proud of the way that the charity has conducted itself to support local people through this time.

This year has truly shown the invaluable work of the voluntary sector as a whole. Pushed to our limits in terms of capacity, demand and reconfiguring services, we have seen true determination and dedication from all of our partner agencies and fellow voluntary sector organisations.

Our success over the last year is testament to the ability of all local organisations to work together in such an incredible way; a key demonstration of this being Charnwood Community Action, which is shown within our Food Poverty work.

Across the nation and the world, a new era of digital working was forced upon us. Reconfiguring our services to meet the ever-changing landscape of the pandemic has been difficult, and our staff team have taken on-going changes in their stride. Ensuring that all of our staff members had the equipment and support to achieve our high-quality outcomes from home was crucial, while we fostered a work environment that supported their mental health and overall well-being.

Although the nature of our work is people-facing, and we are excited to re-open our doors very soon, we anticipate the changes made this year will alter our working practice as we anticipate significant increase in demand for services in years to come.

The Government's approach to the COVID-19 crisis has had a definite impact

on our work on the ground. The Everyone-In campaign (housing rough sleepers during the pandemic) offered accommodation to thousands of people across the UK. Allowing space to self-isolate, it has no doubt protected the lives of vulnerable people. However, the work has highlighted the true numbers of homeless people that still continue to fall under the radar.

Government statistics suggest that, by November 2020, the scheme has supported 33,000 people into emergency accommodation.¹

The Big Issue confirmed in 2021 that as many as 26,167 people have moved on to permanent accommodation via the scheme.² As a consequence, we have seen and continue to expect a swell in demand for our services that support individuals to maintain a tenancy. At The Bridge, we understand that homelessness is not simply resolved with a roof and a bed; often, those experiencing homelessness have complex needs that requires intense holistic support.

Evidence of the need for this type of in-depth assistance is clear: especially for some of those housed in the scheme, who faced their accommodation being withdrawn due to rule-breaking or substance dependency. Without the right support to overcome these issues, many returned to sleeping rough.

The Government estimated that in autumn 2020 there were still 2,688 rough sleepers nationally- not including those who are hidden homeless (such as those sofa-surfing, or avoiding detection).³ The East Midlands is no exception: our Rough Sleeper Services will continue to identify those who are experiencing homelessness and support them on their journey to safe and stable homes.

Moving forward, we will continue to review and build upon our service offer, with regards to supporting people to maintain longer-term accommodation and prevent the cycle of homelessness. It is a prolonged challenge to obtain permanent housing for clients with the national housing shortage, making it as important as ever for us to continue to work preventatively to avoid people getting into, or back into, the cycle of repeat homelessness.

More broadly, we are looking forward to expanding our food poverty work. By identifying new areas within the locality that need further support and creating Social Supermarket models to catch those struggling before crisis point, as well as empowering people to work towards financial independence, we believe that people across Charnwood will benefit greatly.

Both in terms of food poverty and housing crisis, local people have been facing growing instability and battling various issues, which contribute to their vulnerability to homelessness. In some cases furlough or redundancy has reduced income, or a new dependency on Universal Credit caused monetary delays; whilst other families simply tried to meet the increasing food costs and bills during lockdown. Across Leicestershire and nationally, more households than ever have faced uncertainty, and sought support to try and find their way out of a housing crisis.

These added stresses, alongside the detrimental effect so many have suffered from facing isolation and being home-bound, have played an important role in to a growing mental health crisis. The Office for National Statistics states that an Opinions and Lifestyle Survey in 2021 showed that 21% of adults were facing some sort of depression as the

country entered its third lockdown. young people were impacted particularly hard, with 4 in 10 young women experiencing some sort of depression.⁴

It is with this in mind that we are so grateful to be partnered with VitaMinds new IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) Service for Leicestershire. As we navigate our way out of the pandemic, IAPT will link closely with us. Providing specialist mental health support for local people and referring clients who are facing housing crisis for advice here at The Bridge.

We will have to continue to seek funding for much needed growth and development. Restructuring of the teams at The Bridge will help rejuvenate our work as we foster new and existing partnerships to bring expansion and security to our services.

The launch of our new 4 year strategy in October 2020 has re-invigorated and refocused The Bridge. Not only are we aiming to maintain and grow our offer to clients, we are also looking forward to officially launching TheBridge²Excellence. This will enable us to expand our working relationships with a range of agencies through offering a service to upskill colleagues, and promote knowledge and best practice.

Molly Boggis
Head of Programmes
and Services



¹ Government Statistics, 2021: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020

² The Big Issue, 2021:

³ Government Statistics, 2021: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/rough-sleeping-snapshot-in-england-autumn-2020

⁴ Office for National Statistics, Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, 2021: blog.ons.gov.uk/2021/05/05/are-we-facing-a-mental-health-pandemic

FIGHTING FOOD POVERTY

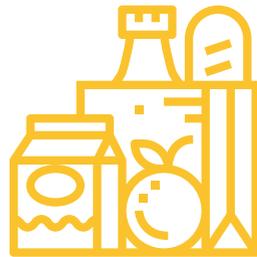
In what has been a challenging year, unlike one we have ever known, the community response to supporting the issue of food poverty has been so positive. From the start of the pandemic, one of our greatest challenges has been the sheer size of the response required, the constant need to replenish food and the initial barriers to recipients being able to collect this food.

The success of this emergency food response could not have been achieved without a great deal of partnership work, with the Charnwood Food Poverty Group (CFPG), for which The Bridge (East Midlands) is the strategic lead, played an important role in the coordinated response of Charnwood Community Action (CCA). This work was delivered in partnership with Charnwood Borough Council and John Storer Charnwood.

Local food banks and food services who are members of the CFPG, worked tirelessly to support different stages of the response as the year progressed. Members of the community who have donated food, fundraising and volunteering hours have very much enabled this community response, of which everyone involved can be very proud of.

Finally, I would like to place on record our thanks to Joe McSharry (Independent Chair of the CFPG), colleagues from John Storer Charnwood, Charnwood Borough Council and all members of the CFPG, whose hard work and dedication has enabled a coordinated response to significantly increased levels of food poverty across Charnwood.

22,970 FOOD PARCELS WERE DISTRIBUTED BY THE CCA, FROM MARCH 2020 TO MARCH 2021.



Our projects are growing! For instance, our Mountsorrel Community Fridge is becoming a Social Supermarket; offering support to help a wide range of Mountsorrel residents to avoid crisis point.



WHY IS OUR FOOD POVERTY WORK CRUCIAL?

It is a sad reality that food poverty has been rising for a number of years; unfortunately, the pandemic has only worsened this growing issue. With households facing redundancy, ill-health, reduced wages due to furlough - as well as the increased living costs of staying at home, like electricity bills – many more people are struggling to cover the cost of their next meal.

This reflects a national crisis...

In September 2020, the Food Foundation released research that stated 14% of UK households were unable to eat properly in the previous six months because they could not afford or access food.

That equates to **4 million** people, including **2.3 million** children.

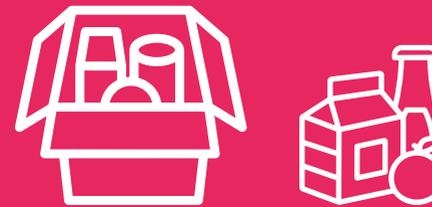
“4% of adults living with children reported having gone for a whole day without eating in the last 6 months”¹

Nobody deserves to go hungry. For more information, visit the CFPG website at www.charnwood-fpg.org.uk

Clare Fillingham
Quality and Business Manager



469% INCREASE IN FOOD PARCEL DISTRIBUTION BY THE CHARNWOOD FOOD POVERTY GROUP IN 2020/21, COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR.



¹ The Food Foundation, September 2020

CUSTOMER SERVICES

Customer Services are the first point of contact for people presenting in crisis and for all other general enquiries.

The Customer Services Team (CST) plays a vital role in the journey of nearly all our clients; making sure every person feels listened to, understood, and triaging them into the most relevant service.

The team can also directly assist people to access a range of help, such as:

- Offering food and toiletry provision and vouchers, and organising referrals for Charnwood Community Action food parcels
- Signposting to services that can help people access debt advice/food parcels/meals/washing facilities
- Organising Charnwood Welfare Provision (support with food/heating/lighting)
- Referrals to SOFA for discounted household goods
- Distributing Starter Packs (household essentials)
- Administering 'Care of Address' arrangements for clients without a home

3,747 CST enquiries received from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 – a 72% increase in comparison to 2019/20

The past year was one of vastly increased demand, as the effects of the pandemic took hold. More local people than ever are facing instability, food poverty, reduced income, ill-health and more. Demand peaked in June 2020 and January 2021, but was most demonstrable in March 2021 when enquiries rose by 123% compared to the previous year.

To respond to this crisis while our office has been closed in lockdown, our team have worked tirelessly to continue to create a welcoming and reassuring environment, albeit via our free phone number and electronically. We extended working hours through the pandemic and increased staff capacity to work on the phone line. This free phone number has been a lifeline to many; ensuring that people could contact us without phone credit, or even by phone box.

Every person we support is treated with respect, and by triaging and signposting, we provide a service in which clients are empowered to make positive changes.

100% of clients were happy with the service they received on the day

97% of clients saw improvement in financial situation and mental health

Hannah Brookhouse
Executive Administrator



VICTORIA'S STORY...

After a drastic change in circumstances, Victoria is lodging with a friend. Usually supporting others, this was the first time Victoria had to reach out for help herself.

"I've known about The Bridge for a long time because I've supported a lot of people when I was volunteering. When my relationship ended badly, I was left with nothing and no money. So, I'm staying on the floor of my friend's home.

"He's an elderly gentleman and he never leaves the house; I support him with washing, cooking, cleaning. But, when I moved in I realised that he only had £1.60 on his electricity meter and no hot water.

"We had no money and neither of us were getting paid for weeks, so I knew I had to ask for help. My friend didn't know about The Bridge and said sometimes he just sits there in the dark. It was hard to accept that I had to ask for help for the first time, but I did."

Victoria was able to receive a Charnwood Welfare Provision utilities top-up from our Customer Services Team, and advice on where to get clothes or items as she wasn't able to retrieve belongings from her previous home.

"It made the world of difference. You can't go out when you haven't got hot water to bathe in or if you can't wash your clothes, feeling bad. You just end up laying there; the emotional toll is horrible."

"We couldn't have managed without the top-up. Even though I'm on someone's floor at the moment, it's better than my situation before. The Bridge were so quick and wonderful. Talking to Reception, they were lovely. I didn't feel judged."

"When I was volunteering, I referred so many people to The Bridge Reception for all sorts: food parcels, signposting, support. Having that one place that's so consistent and a team who have proper, practical knowledge of what to do immediately is amazing."

"I hope, in the future, they might also be able to help us with our housing situation: the friend I am staying with can't get up and down the stairs where he currently lives and he hasn't left in maybe two years."

"If anyone else is in the same situation, my first advice would be to ask The Bridge for support. I honestly can't sing their praises enough."



HOUSING ADVICE

Advice, assistance and advocacy for social tenants, private tenants, the homeless and landlords, who live in the Borough of Charnwood and who are over 18.

Our Housing Advice Team (HAT) has received 799 referrals in the last year from people living in Charnwood requiring housing advice.

Of these clients, 96% stated their housing conditions had improved and 95% said their homelessness was avoided or resolved!

We are fortunate to be well-established within the area, demonstrated by a high number of self-referrals (96%) and we have worked hard to adapt to the changing working environment this year, ensuring that our clients can continue to access the advice they need at the right time.

The proportion of our clients reporting to be statutorily homeless or threatened with homelessness within 56 days has increased by 25% this year, with 10% experiencing rough sleeping.

A further 135 households were at risk of future homelessness at the point they accessed the service.

In previous years, the end of an assured shorthold tenancy has been cited as the most common cause of homelessness amongst our clients. Whilst this has still been prominent this year, the main cause of homelessness has been relationship breakdown, accounting for a fifth of all cases, closely followed by eviction from parental, family, or friends' homes, and harassment and violence.

The team have faced additional challenges this year in response to the coronavirus pandemic including keeping up to date with the changing legislation around evictions in England. We anticipate an even busier year ahead as the impact of this becomes known.

Leanne Fletcher

Advice Services Team Manager



100% of clients said that they were making more positive life choices



DONNA'S STORY...

Donna was referred to Housing Advice at The Bridge to support her in the process of finding a new home and getting a fresh start. With limited finances, setting herself up in new accommodation was difficult.

"When I first started talking to my Advisor, I didn't have anything at all. I had no way of getting everything I needed all at once, like paying for rent and kitchen appliances. The Bridge helped with all of that side of things.

"I was lodging with my now ex-partner at his mum's house, but it was overcrowded and so we bid to move into this house. My Housing Advisor helped me initially by applying for a grant from the Vicar's Relief Fund to cover the first months' rent as a deposit that allowed us to actually move in.

As Donna's relationship with her partner broke down because of his behaviour, she was left with all the responsibilities of the house.

"It was difficult at the time, I knew I couldn't get all these things sorted on my own and coping with that was hard. It was a slow process but I did it.

"My Advisor also helped me in applying to CharityLink for kitchen goods, like the cooker and fridge-freezer. I would have struggled to do that without their help."

Donna was also eligible for a Starter Pack from The Bridge. Starter Packs help people who are moving into new accommodation, supplying them with key items, such as pillows, a toaster, cutlery and more.

"They also supported me with other issues too, putting me in touch with people who helped me with my bills and budgeting; for example, I couldn't afford my water bill and they helped me sign up to make the bill more affordable, and so that I'm not left short. The Budgeting advice has really helped as things are more stable and I'm more confident now.

"I feel a lot more positive about the future, there are only a few things that I haven't got. I hope to stay on top of my bills but I know that I can reach out again for support if I struggle again.

"Most of all, I'm hoping that I can have my children back at home too. I still see three of them, but it's been very hard and I miss them."



YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

talk²sort

A mediation service offered to 11-19 year olds and their families, either individually or in joint appointments.

This last year has brought about challenges for us all. Whether young or old, mixed emotions, increased social isolation and a loss of autonomy have all taken its toll. Throughout the pandemic, talk²sort has continued to deliver a specialist mediation service to young people and families across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

Now more than ever, the ability to communicate effectively, resolve conflict and increase resilience is key. As a service which is recognised as delivering best practice in homelessness mediation, we understand the importance of giving people a safe space to explore feelings, thoughts and emotions. We empower people to make decisions that are right for them in the absence of judgement or a set agenda.

talk²sort is able to deliver a tailored service which meets the needs of young people and families who need help at a time that is right for them. Supporting with wellbeing and mental health, conflict, communication and defective coping mechanisms, we work in a future focused way using tools which can be used long after involvement with the service.

84% of young people reported improved family relationships as a result of accessing talk²sort

90% of young people experienced a reduction in conflict at home

100% reduced their intake of drugs/ alcohol and reduced involvement in anti-social behaviour

Chantelle Bramley

Specialist Services Team Manager

Single Access Point

Supporting 16 and 17 year olds in Charnwood who may be having difficulties living at home.

This year we have had 38 referrals to the service, all from young people who are experiencing homelessness or difficulties with their housing situation: one young person had experienced homelessness before, and another had been rough sleeping.

100% of clients said their housing conditions improved, and their homelessness was avoided or resolved.

Did you know? 68% of young people access our services due to family breakdown.

Other causes of youth homelessness this year have included overcrowding, harassment and violence, and leaving care. Seven of the 38 people we supported this year were parents themselves which, for most, presented further challenges. Additional considerations were needed when sourcing stable and suitable accommodation to enable the young person and their child to feel safe, settled, and happy.

We have signposted many of our clients to relevant mental health services, having seen a significant **340% increase in reported mental health difficulties amongst our clients.**

The young people we have supported have engaged well with the changes made within the service due to the coronavirus pandemic, namely the use of telephone and messaging services which has enabled us to continue providing this vital service to young people across Charnwood.

Leanne Fletcher

Advice Services Team Manager

TALK²SORT MEDIATION: SONIA'S STORY...

talk²sort

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When Sonia was first contacted about talk²sort Mediation with her daughter, she was shocked. The family were referred through School and consequently had around eight months of Mediation.

"It came as a surprise at first, because I didn't think things were that bad. It was hard to have that initial self-reflection but looking back, has helped me so much more than I thought it would. I felt so much better after talking.

"It started with individual appointments, where we would talk to our Mediator separately. That was really helpful as we were able to say things freely.

"We were arguing a lot back then and I put it down to her being a teenager. I felt like I couldn't say anything right and I didn't like how she spoke to me.

"Our Mediator would sit and listen, but also identify things about ourselves, to then reflect on. The cogs turned and we saw things that we didn't realise we were doing.

"I think, for Jessica and myself, it really helped us open up and communicate. Jessica felt that she couldn't talk to me or her Dad. It gave her the space to be honest about her feelings and we were consequently referred to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) for further professional support.

"We were both holding a lot of things back before, I also started to think more about my phrasing, or what type of things I don't have to tell my children. It was such a big learning curve, in learning about how each other works."

Sonia now recognises Jessica's behaviour

might not be just because she's a teenager, and that there might be something wrong.

"I used to snap at her quite easily, but now I stop and think about whether there might be a reason for her acting that way.

"I now know to open up conversations but respect when she doesn't want to talk sometimes. There were other techniques given too; like writing a letter of our feelings and destroying it afterwards.

"Jess used to be really close to me and we went through that spell where she wasn't. Me and my husband both feel like that closeness coming back now, which is really lovely."

"I am so much more confident in my whole life now and our home environment is happier; I am even working again. I feel so much more positive about our relationships as a family, and our Mediator was fantastic. They checked in on us even after closing our case, which I really appreciated."





"IT'S BEEN REALLY BENEFICIAL TO GET SUPPORT FROM THE BRIDGE AND FROM OTHER PLACES LIKE THERAPY"

SINGLE ACCESS POINT: MYAH'S STORY...

Having to leave home at a young age can be stressful. When Myah was first referred to the Single Access Point, she was splitting her time between her Dad's sofa and her Dad's friends' houses.

"I had just moved to Loughborough from my Mum's; I had left and then gone back to her initially, but I'd been thinking about properly leaving for a long time.

"I was trying to work out ways that I could move out and have money, but things got too bad and I left quite immediately in the end. I still feel stressed by things that have happened and it feels messy; we're not in contact at the moment.

"Staying with Dad and his friends is better because there's no shouting or drinking, and because Dad's friend is also a Mum, I still get to have that family environment around me.

"My SAP Worker helped me so much with application processes and getting on the housing register, which can take a really long time. There was lots to think about, even just getting my stuff from Mum's which was hard with the pandemic.

"Other agencies weren't as persistent as The Bridge, and it was really helpful for my SAP Worker to be so consistent; she would remind us of deadlines, because my Dad often forgets with his ADHD.

"It was also really nice to have her check in with us and make sure that we are doing well."

Currently, Myah is waiting for the outcome of her housing application.

"Things feel more stable now. I'm studying Level 3 Art and Design at the moment and next year I'm doing Level 3 Applied Sciences because I want to do Neurosciences and Psychology at University; when it comes to my future I've always been really driven. I want to learn about that so I can help others."

"Before, I contemplated leaving for so long that it got too bad and I just couldn't be there. I learnt that way, but I wouldn't want people to go through that too.

"It's been really beneficial to get support from The Bridge and from other places like therapy, which helped more than I wanted to admit when I was there. I would definitely recommend reaching out to the Single Access Point and advice from The Bridge, they do great work for young people who are having a bad time at home."

"MY SAP WORKER HELPED ME SO MUCH WITH APPLICATION PROCESSES AND GETTING ON THE HOUSING REGISTER"



PART OF A BIGGER JOURNEY: ALISON'S STORY...

RCWS

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When Alison first started receiving support from The Bridge, her case was complex. Fleeing domestic violence, her mental health had deteriorated and debts had started to build up.

"I was at crisis point when I first started with the service. Although I lived separately, I was on the receiving end of extreme domestic violence from my family members.

"I relocated, and left everything I had known. My Support Worker helped me through the processes of police intervention and restraining orders. There was a huge emotional impact; I had interventions with crisis teams and was hospitalised a couple of times because I couldn't cope. I was suicidal and couldn't see any way out.

"The Bridge was my lifeline and I don't believe I'd be here without them. I can't say that enough. They were always there at the end of the phone, referring me to suitable services for specialist help."

While Alison was dealing with the matters of abuse, housing issues were growing in the background.

"I was struggling hugely with all my finances; everything was being left, which created debts. My mental health had a huge part to play in that. I overlooked my bills because my priority was getting somewhere safe.

"My Support Worker organised appointments with debt agencies, Citizens Advice, contacting companies and setting up payment arrangements for me so that I could work through my debts. It wasn't just housing; it was all of the other things that needed addressing. They were there for it all.

"I've had to move again, and now many of the threats – like severe violence – have gone. I am recovering from surgery from the attacks, and I have mental health problems that I'm still working through.

"But, on moving, there were new challenges; setting up bills, letters from housing benefit, organising a GP, and things like that. I was in a mess. My Support Worker helped me through it all, again.

"The Bridge, when I look back, were always the ones who stepped in. They were friendly and non-judgmental, which I liked. Mental health can be massively misunderstood, and I never doubted that The Bridge could understand me.

"They were easy to talk to, open up and tell them what I was struggling with. I would recommend them to everyone; the help is there."

SUPPORT SERVICES

The Rutland Community Wellbeing Service

Providing the residents of Rutland with support and advice on a broad range of wellbeing issues. The service is delivered in partnership with Citizens Advice Rutland, Longhurst Group, Age UK and Vista.

During the past year, The Bridge has received 40 referrals for clients who wish to access support from the RCWS regarding housing, money management and various health and wellbeing difficulties.

The service works holistically, engaging with other partner agencies to ensure that our clients get the specialist support they need in all areas that they are struggling. This in turn helps in setting them up for a stable and positive future after the service, where they are able to happily maintain their tenancy and are no longer vulnerable to homelessness.

Clients sometimes have complex cases; for instance, their mental health may have stopped them from working, or learning difficulties or disabilities may be preventing them from completing applications or paperwork related to housing or benefits.

Generally due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, client needs have increased throughout the year with many clients requiring intensive support with mental health, substance misuse and social isolation.

The average length of support over the past year has been 1 year and 4 months, demonstrating our desire to help create long-term and lasting change for our clients.

Of the clients that provided feedback following a programme of support:

66% have reduced drug and alcohol use

80% report improved housing conditions

78% report improved emotional and mental health



Molly Splevings
Support Services Team Manager



RUTLAND COMMUNITY WELLBEING SERVICE: MARK'S STORY...



When Mark was first introduced to the Rutland Community Wellbeing Service, he needed support to overcome multiple obstacles. His Support Worker has helped him reach a stable and positive point in his life.

“When I first started with the service, I was in a right mess. I had my own place, but I was struggling and had nothing. I was drinking really heavily; I had support from my girlfriend and when that ended I was really stuck.

“With everything going on in my life, including debts, I couldn’t cope and I just turned to the drink.”

“I really needed that support to get through. It was overwhelming. Back then, my future was a mess. I was at breaking point and thinking of ending my life.”

Mark was referred to The Bridge for a Support Worker by a partner agency of the Rutland Access Partnership. At that time, he was going through a tribunal, as he was not receiving the Personal Independence Payment he was entitled to. Mark’s Support Worker, Nicola, said:

“Mark was struggling with money, bills and debt, so it was crucial that we sorted his PIP payment out. I sent a supporting letter outlining Mark’s learning difficulties,

which make the paperwork and processes extremely hard and frustrating for him. We then needed to gather evidence for his case.

“When PIP was awarded, the financial difficulty was eased and Mark was able to buy a washing machine and clothes for example, which all improved his well-being and as a result, he is more stable now.”

Mark’s Support Worker has also helped him enrol in English lessons to improve his skills.

“My aim for the future is definitely to succeed with the English lessons. Having my Support Worker has changed my life and I’m so happy with the help I received. I don’t know what I would have done without it.

“My support worker/the service also helped me engage with the GP for assistance with my mental health, and I’m feeling a lot more stable and positive about the future now.”

“It’s difficult to go and ask for help, but if you leave it everything gets worse. If anyone is facing a similar situation, I would want them to ask for help. It’s not going to be easy but you can get through it.”



HOUSING MATTERS: LINDA'S STORY...



“Without the support I've received from The Bridge, I honestly don't think I would be here

Linda was referred to Housing Matters after neighbourly disputes got so bad that she knew she had to leave her address. On a long journey of PTSD, declining mental well-being and a chronic health condition, The Bridge were able to support her to create a new, safe home.

“I knew I had to leave my current home. I knew that I could find a house exchange... But that would take time, and I needed to get out.

“My daughter accompanied me to The Bridge for an initial assessment and I just broke down. They allocated a Support Worker to me and she was my outlet, helping me through some of my toughest times.

“When I first came to The Bridge, I felt like I didn't belong anywhere. I would cry to my Support Worker, because I didn't know where to run to. But, I finally felt safe and I needed that stability.”

Linda was able to move into her daughter's previous house and her Support Worker was there to assist with this transition. Housing Matters offers longer-term assistance like this, supporting people to maintain stability.

“Because of my health conditions and mental health issues, I was overwhelmed by the different paperwork for things like utility bills in my new home. My Support Worker would sit with me; calling people like the Council or nurses, or organising appointments.

“It was the start of me being able to accept someone was on the end of the phone, as I wasn't even capable of making a phone call before. My mental health particularly bad.”

“My Support Worker helped with my budgeting and helped me get discounts where I was eligible, for things like water bills, which saved me a lot of money.

“The Council had tried to take me to court for not paying Council Tax as my Doctor had signed forms to prove that I was exempt, but the forms had been lost. My Support Worker hand delivered new copies and helped me through the stress of that, even though it is ongoing.

“Without the support I've received from The Bridge, I honestly don't think I would be here. It's been very difficult for me to accept who I am now, after everything with my health.

“I'd never had to ask for help in my life; but something can happen or you can get a mental health issue and suddenly the person you were is gone. But now I am in a new home and it is so much calmer.

“The Bridge even helped us with food parcels when things got particularly tough last year, in the pandemic.

“When I had heard of The Bridge, I thought it was solely for homelessness. But they don't just support you with that. I can't thank them enough; my Support Worker was everything.”



SUPPORT SERVICES

Housing Matters

Accommodation and housing related support for individuals over the age of 18 in Leicestershire who require support to positively manage accommodation and reduce risk of future homelessness.

As of July 2020, the service (a partnership between The Bridge, Nottingham Community Housing Association and Falcon Support Services) received two years' worth of funding to deliver a revised housing related support service. Key changes include a larger focus upon drop-in support, a reduced period of up to four months' floating support and the introduction of a countywide housing advice line to offer advice and signposting to residents across Leicestershire on a range of housing related issues. Meanwhile, the accommodation aspect of the service remains the same.

In 2020, our Accommodation Project (delivered by Falcon Support Services) received 349 referrals, supporting clients who are not owed an accommodation duty via the Local Authority.

Our floating support service (delivered by NCHA and The Bridge) received 307 referrals; 182 of which were drop-in requests.

The most frequent presenting issue continues to be rent arrears and issues surrounding affordability.

Of clients that chose to provide feedback:

84% reported being more independent following a programme of support, with 90% improving their mental health.

Housing Matters Families

This year marked the final year of funding for our Housing Matters for Families service (delivered in partnership with Nottingham Community Housing Association), which came to an end in March 2021 after being funded by The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF) for five years: we are so grateful to TNLCF for their long-term support. Families will now continue to be supported under the general Housing Matters contract.

During this time, the service has delivered floating support to vulnerably housed families across Leicestershire. It has supported hundreds of clients to make positive changes to their housing, from support to access essential household items to moving to adequate housing that meets their needs.

Over the past year, of the 43 referrals received to the service, 77% were for females and 33% were for males.

The average age at referral was 36 years old.

Of clients who chose to complete our closure feedback:

75% report their housing conditions have improved.
91% reported that homelessness has been prevented.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Rapid Rehousing Pathway

The Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) focuses upon finding accommodation for individuals across Leicestershire and Rutland who are over the age of 18, homeless and not eligible for help elsewhere.

The RRP is there to support individuals who become homeless with no other options of support; this sometimes occurs when authorities deem that an individual has chosen to leave their home. An example of this is when somebody has decided to leave in cases of relationship breakdown.

Short-term accommodation is provided within the project for up to 6 weeks, whilst longer-term solutions are sought. When a stable source of accommodation is found, clients are empowered to maintain their tenancies through support in applying for furniture, resolving debt issues, setting up bills, and more.

Through this well-rounded support, we can be confident that the individual is no longer vulnerable to homelessness.

Delivered in partnership with Local Authorities across Leicestershire and Rutland, we work alongside Falcon Support Services to support individuals who are rough sleeping to access and maintain accommodation, working to prevent repeat homelessness by offering flexible, intensive one-to-one support to individuals who would not be able to obtain accommodation without the scheme.

DURING 2020, WE HAVE SEEN A STAGGERING 1000% INCREASE IN REFERRALS TO THE PROJECT

after the government's 'Everyone In' initiative revised the approach taken to all rough sleepers during the coronavirus pandemic.

Of those accommodated this year, **100%** have maintained their accommodation with support.

92% of clients said that they are now able to make their own choices and solve their own problems

92% said their confidence had improved



RAPID REHOUSING PATHWAY: MUKESH'S STORY...

Rapid Rehousing

RRP

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Mukesh was referred to the Rapid Rehousing Pathway (RRP) after losing his job due to a combination of physical health problems and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Debts built up and, unfortunately, he became homeless. After phoning other agencies, he was referred to the RRP.

"My situation was very bad, my head felt very heavy and I wanted to just run away somewhere. Because I lost my job I was unable to pay off the debts I had. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. I had enforcement agents at my door, which I found really worrying.

"I felt a lot of pressure on me. I didn't know where to go or where to turn. I had no family to support me and my mental health got worse."

The RRP seeks to find short-term accommodation for those eligible, in order to resolve their immediate homelessness while longer-term options are found.

"I was able to move into Mill House, and my RRP Worker supported me to apply to the housing register and then to bid on housing.

"Once I moved into my own home, they helped me set up a bank account, utility payments and also to contact a debt charity – Stepchange. I applied for bankruptcy which has really helped my mental health and my finances.

"I was supported to discuss my mental health with my GP and to access my medical history so that I could apply for PIP and Universal Credit – a health and disability payment.

"The Bridge also provided food parcels when I have been struggling with my money."

As part of the holistic support offered by the RRP, Mukesh was able to see improvements such as reduced debts, improved well-being and self-esteem, budgeting in his new home and even applying for English classes to help future employment prospects.

"This has been a big turnaround for my life, I didn't think I would be supported as much as I have been by my support worker at The Bridge.

"I couldn't see the future before but now I can see hope in my situation. I know where to ask for help now. It is good to know I have someone I can talk to who knows my situation. I hope to volunteer to help others who are homeless soon.

"People should reach out as there is a lot of different support available. Whether it is food, housing or finances, there are people who can help you."

"I couldn't see the future before but now I can see hope in my situation."

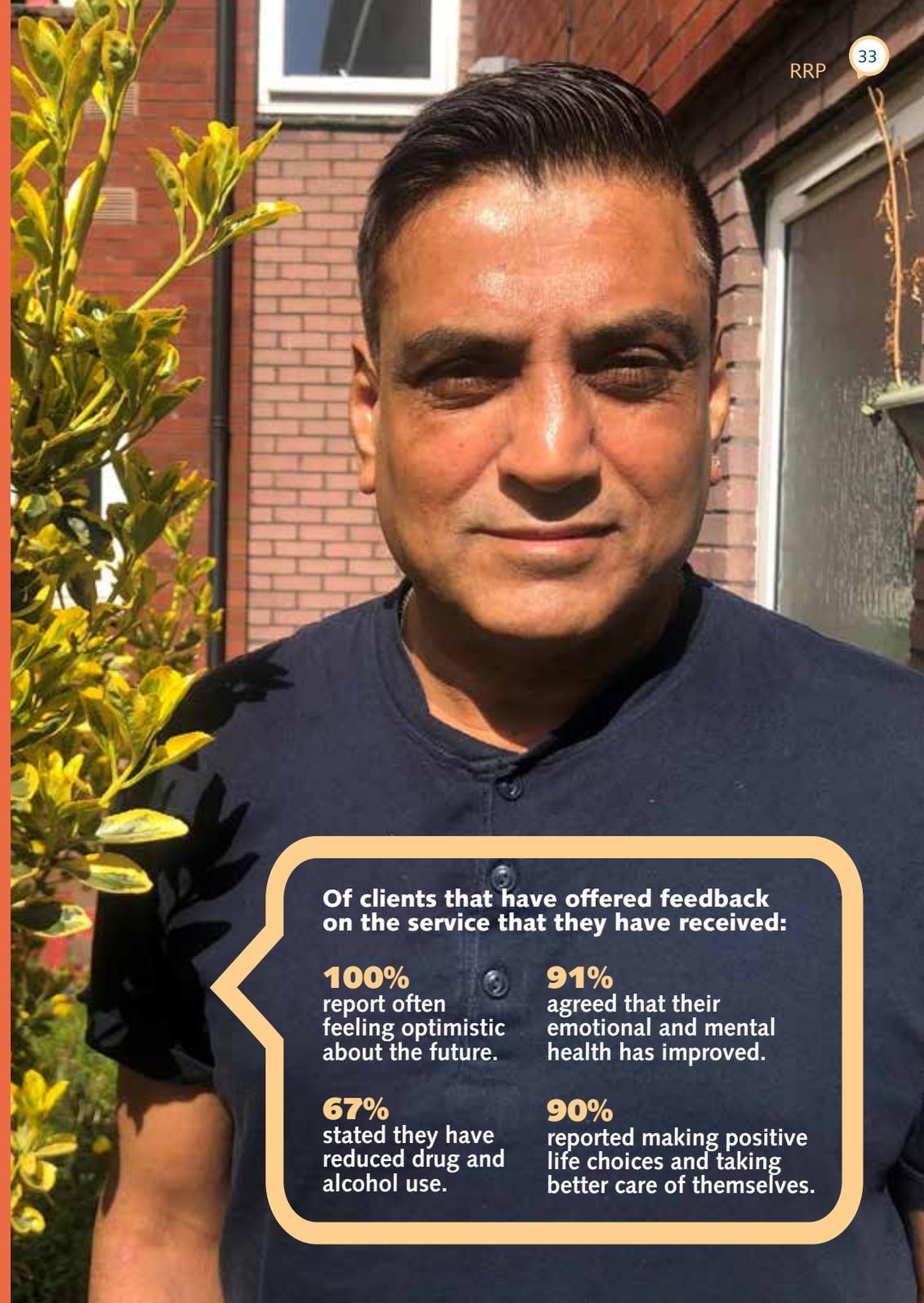
Of clients that have offered feedback on the service that they have received:

100% report often feeling optimistic about the future.

91% agreed that their emotional and mental health has improved.

67% stated they have reduced drug and alcohol use.

90% reported making positive life choices and taking better care of themselves.



HOMELESS OFFENDERS SERVICE

The Homeless Offenders Service (HOS) provides intensive and holistic support for clients with an offending history and who are homeless or rough sleeping, to access accommodation.

We support our clients to access suitable accommodation, sustain a tenancy where applicable, and reduce the likelihood of reoffending.

Our specialist HOS Mediator is available to provide mediation to strengthen and improve relationships with family members or key individuals to support more positive futures.

Service demand is consistently high; we have had a 15% increase in referrals to the service last year from prisons, probation services, and local authorities, along with many self-referrals.

Despite the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, we have continued to provide street outreach each week to support our most vulnerable clients and identify those who may be new to rough sleeping.

We are proud to share that 96% of our HOS clients stated that their homelessness was prevented or resolved during their time with the service, with 94% stating their housing conditions had improved.

88% of clients reported that they had reduced their involvement in crime or antisocial behaviour

93% of clients felt more able to make their own choices and solve their own problems.

Leanne Fletcher

Advice Services Team Manager



HOMELESS OFFENDERS SERVICE: JOSEPH'S STORY...

Determined to move forwards, Joseph has been engaging with the Homeless Offenders Service, after his Probation Officer referred him for support. However, his case was made complex as he fled a toxic relationship and had suffered violence.

"I was in a relationship but it was very toxic, and there were too many things going wrong. We were in accommodation together, but I just had to leave. I took the clothes on my back and left.

"I had nowhere to turn. I was facing homelessness and I ended up facing a lot of other trouble. Everything's been emotional. But you can't stay down forever and you have to make the most of the help you've got."

Joseph suffered a series of traumatic events prior to and during his time with The Bridge, so his Support Workers have supported him through this. Other accommodation options were found after initial placements were deemed unsafe for his circumstances.

"My Support Workers were always on the end of the phone to talk to. They've been there for loads of different things really. They even got Primark vouchers because I couldn't go back to my previous home to get my clothes."

From helping with private rental accommodations, talking to different councils and looking into accommodation options, food parcels, Universal Credit, PIP, and mental health support, Joseph's Support Worker has consistently supported him through his journey.

Despite the obstacles he has faced, Joseph has finished his monitoring supervision with Probation and looks forward to finding stable employment as time goes on.

"The main thing is putting one foot in front of the other. I've been through a lot but there's no point staying thinking about it, you have to move forwards."

"In the future, I just look forward to settling somewhere and having my own flat, hopefully. It feels more achievable now with the support I've had."

"I was a landscape gardener before, and I'd love to do that again in the future. I feel positive about that; I know I can do it and it will only be me that stands in the way. It's hard work in landscape gardening, but I like seeing the project done from start to finish.

"If anyone else is in a similar situation, I would definitely recommend The Bridge. The biggest thing is getting out and getting the support that's there, by picking up the phone."

"In the future, I just look forward to settling somewhere and having my own flat, hopefully. It feels more achievable now with the support I've had."



BUILDING BETTER OPPORTUNITIES

The YES Project

Supporting young people aged between 15-24 to take steps towards employment, education or training.

The YES Project is delivered by a number of local organisations and offers a range of activities and support services to empower young people to overcome barriers to achievement. It strives to support and inspire young people to meet their goals and achieve their maximum potential.

An Intensive Young Persons Support Worker provides holistic and tailored support, covering a range of areas from housing, benefits and emotional wellbeing and mental health. The support is tailored to each individual and future focused.

COVID-19 has tested young people and adults alike. Increased social isolation, poor emotional wellbeing and a loss of purpose are just some of the issues faced by YES participants. As an organisation we are proud to have continued to deliver support to young people accessing the project throughout the pandemic, ensuring their needs are met.

To date, the YES Project has supported over 600 young people to work towards employment, education or training.

75% of young people have improved their confidence as a result of engaging

72% have increased their skills set through the support and activities delivered on the project.



Moneywise Plus

Supporting those who are unemployed or economically inactive in Leicester and Leicestershire, to move towards job search, employment, education or training through improved digital and financial skills.

Moneywise Plus has supported over 1,200 clients, which we are very proud of. As a service we recognise the importance of digital, financial and employability skills, but understand that there are often barriers to achieving a positive outcome. For example, low confidence and self-esteem, poor wellbeing and unstable housing. That is why Moneywise Plus is made up of a number of local organisations, all of whom offer specialist services, tailoring the support to the individual needs of each client.

Our advisors are dedicated to supporting clients to achieve what is important to them; whether that is increased access to the internet, financial savings or the creation of a CV. We work with the client, at the client's own pace, ensuring that they feel empowered to succeed.

Chantelle Bramley
Specialist Services Team Manager



YES PROJECT
Believe, achieve, work



JORDAN'S STORY...

YES Project

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When Jordan was first referred to the YES Project, he was not in education, training or employment.

With the help of YES Intensive Young Person's Support Workers at The Bridge, he has been looking at various volunteering opportunities, community involvement, improving his financial situation and building confidence.

"I started with the YES Project back in early 2020, and they've helped me with a lot of different things. One of the main problems was with my bank account, which was closed as I was a victim of fraud.

"My Support Worker has done a lot to help me in contacting the banks and trying to set up a new account, which has made it a lot easier than doing it alone."

Because Jordan had no active bank account, he was unable to apply for things like Universal Credit. With his Support Worker, he will take these steps to become more financially stable.

The YES Project are able to offer clients involvement in a wide range of courses and opportunities, like online cooking courses, The Princes Trust or, in Jordan's case, the Leicester Street Soccer Foundation.

The aim is to improve overall wellbeing, confidence and help young people overcome barriers to work, education or training.

"Starting football again has been really good, because it's getting me used to going out more again and really helping me with confidence. My Support Worker helped me get signed up.

Confidence building is a main aim for Jordan, as he has had negative experiences when out in the community.

"My advice to anyone else in a similar situation to me is to reach out. The YES Project can help you and you just have to get involved."

"I feel more positive about the future now and I'm looking forward to getting involved with more football and volunteering opportunities."



"THE YES PROJECT HAS ALSO HELPED ME A LOT IN GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY AGAIN. I WANT TO GO INTO SOME VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES."



Stephen struck financial difficulty after the passing of his father in 2016, who he had cared for. As he was not a named tenant in his parents' property, he was offered a new home by the Council, but debts and arrears started to build.

"It has been an absolute financial disaster since I lost my Dad. When I moved here, the initial wait for Universal Credit left me five weeks without money and so the arrears began."

Since starting with the Moneywise Plus service, Stephen has received a lot of budgeting support for his arrears to increase his stability; his Advisor has helped with applications, and arranged a monthly repayment plan for his debts.

"I've had various jobs and I've really enjoyed some of them, but three months has been the longest employment in recent years; and short-term agency work and the pandemic have made it even harder.

"Having my Advisor there really helps and they've been brilliant. Before, I was really at the end with it all.

"The reality is that it's quite lonely and I am what I call 'financially depressed'. I owe friends money and that's the worst bit, I look forward to being able to repay them.

"It's difficult - once all my payments are done every month; the amount I have left to live on is almost nothing. I have to get gas and electric from that too, so I've relied on food banks. My Advisor has helped signpost

me for help with those sorts of things.

"Although the main aim is for me to find work again, I'm off sick with osteo-arthritis at the moment, so my Advisor has also helped me to improve my well-being and my home, like getting a donation of paints to re-do my walls, and applying for a cooker and new flooring.

"I've been close to eviction before, and while the repayment plan is tough, I know I'm not going to lose this place now."

Although Stephen is still on his journey to find employment and faces barriers such as his health and well-being, he is more stable with the budgeting support offered by his Moneywise Plus Advisor.

With his repayment plans in place, he is no longer at risk of housing crisis or eviction, and his Advisor will continue to take direct and holistic steps to improving his financial situation, job-seeking and employability skills.

"MY ADVISOR HAS ALSO HELPED ME TO IMPROVE MY WELL-BEING AND MY HOME, LIKE GETTING A DONATION OF PAINTS TO RE-DO MY WALLS, AND APPLYING FOR A COOKER AND NEW FLOORING."



OUR STAFF

We value our team highly and recognise the importance of offering our staff plenty of meaningful development and learning opportunities to help them flourish in their careers and create a staff team that we can be proud of.

We also want to achieve the best outcomes possible for our clients as many have complex needs and circumstances. So we seek to ensure that all staff are fully equipped to provide the best quality service possible.

In the last year, we made the most of all that was available to us, despite many events taking place digitally. Our team has taken part in many digital learning opportunities, including:

- ✔ Personality Disorder Training
- ✔ Children's Mental Health Capacity Act Training
- ✔ Benefits Training
- ✔ Anti-Discriminatory Practice Training
- ✔ Transferring a Tenancy Training
- ✔ Understanding Neglect Training
- ✔ Universal Credit Training
- ✔ Adult Safeguarding Training
- ✔ Suicide Awareness
- ✔ ACE and Trauma Awareness Workshop
- ✔ Time Management for Effective Remote Working
- ✔ Introduction to Radicalisation Training
- And much more...



Welcoming our New Starters...

Gemma Skevington	Catherine Cox	Alisia Heslop
Molly Beaumont	Jim Dziemianko	Rachel Wood
Marley Emms	Natalie Steiner	Hannah Fox

A big hello to the newest members of 'The Bridge family'!

Congratulations to Parmit (Senior Homeless Offenders Officer) and husband Harks on the birth of their baby girl, Amara, as well as to Lydia (Housing Support Worker) and partner Ben on the birth of their boy, Albie.

Two of our Intensive Young Persons Support Workers are also celebrating; Kerry and husband Stephan welcomed little Ella-Faith, while Vickee, and husband Kam, gave birth to their baby Arjun. Congratulations!



WORKING AT THE BRIDGE

If I were asked what I enjoy most about my job, without a doubt my answer would be the clients I support. Within my role I get time to understand each of them as individuals so we can work together to ensure they maintain their tenancies and have a place to call home.

I started at The Bridge in 2019, having worked in a homeless hostel before; I worked initially in Leicestershire then changed role in 2020 to work in Rutland. The past year has been challenging for everyone during the pandemic but I have still been able to maintain contact through visits as necessary as well as being at the other end of the phone for my clients. This has been vital to the people I support, as it has been such an isolating time. Sometimes just having a chat over the phone, taking time to listen and having someone just to ask how things are, has made a huge difference to them.

Despite not being in our office over the last year, all of us have adjusted to working from home. We still have our team meetings via our laptops, we extended the number of staff being able to take general phone enquiries and continued to fundraise – many of us got more active with our December fitness challenge!

All the staff are so passionate about their jobs and want to achieve the best outcomes for all the people we support. We have continued to work with many agencies and charities to ensure our service has been consistent and we have still provided the best opportunities and support for all our clients. The Bridge supports us to attend regular training so we develop our skills and knowledge.

Reaching out and asking for help can be a difficult first step, however, once clients do, we allow them to feel listened to and never judged.

I am just about to start my new job, joining the Senior Leadership Team as the Trainee Prevention & Wellbeing Services Manager. I look forward to the new challenge- and hopefully a year ahead where we can all start to return to seeing each other face to face, both staff and clients!

Mary Bullivant
Complex Needs Support Worker



OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Thank You



- Action Homeless
- Advice Quality Standard
- AGE UK Leicestershire & Rutland
- Alex's Wish
- All Saints Thorpe Acre
- Alpkit
- Amazon Smile
- Asda Feeding Communities
- Big Lottery Fund
- Blaby District Council
- Blackbaud
- Broomfield School
- Central Seafoods Fish Shop Supplies
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Charnwood Community Lottery
- Charnwood Food Poverty Group
- Children in Need
- Citizens Advice Charnwood
- Citizens Advice Leicestershire
- Citizens Advice Rutland
- De Lisle College
- Department for Work and Pensions
- EASE
- European Social Fund
- Fairfield Prep School
- Falcon Support Services
- Florence Turner Trust
- Fundraising Regulator
- G. Gamble & Sons
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- George's Traditional Fish & Chips
- Glasspool
- Halifax Bank
- Harborough District Council
- Harbour Housing
- Hardwick House School
- Hinckley & Bosworth District Council
- HM Probation Service
- Intelligent Energy Charitable Trust
- Iveshead School
- Job Centre Plus Loughborough
- John Storer House
- Julian House
- JustGiving
- Kirby Muxloe Women's Institute
- Leicester Adult Learning College
- Leicester CharityLink
- Leicester City Council
- Leicester City Football Club
- Leicestershire Cares
- Leicestershire County Council
- Living Without Abuse
- LLR Community Foundation
- Longhurst Group
- Loughborough Churches Partnership
- Loughborough College
- Loughborough Grammar School
- Loughborough Hospital
- Loughborough University & Students Union
- Loughborough Welfare Trust
- Markfield Benefice
- Markfield Churches Together
- Maud Elkington Charitable Trust
- Melton Borough Council
- Mountsorrel United Charities
- Neighbourly Community Fund
- Newtown Linford Primary School
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Nottingham Community Housing Association

- Oadby & Wigston Borough Council
- PACE
- PayPal
- Perdiem Limited
- Public Health Leicestershire
- Reaching People Consortium
- Redefine Living
- Rev'd Lisa & St Paul's Church Woodhouse Eaves
- Rutland County Council
- Schroder Charity Trust
- Seagrave Village Primary School
- Soft Touch Arts
- Spire Homes
- St Andrew's Church Foxton
- St Bartholemew's United Church
- St Pauls C of E Primary School
- Stonebow Primary School
- Stonewater Housing Association
- Straw and Pearce Solicitors
- Tesco Bags For Life - Groundwork
- Tesco Ltd
- The 29th May 1961 Charity
- The 7 Stars Foundation

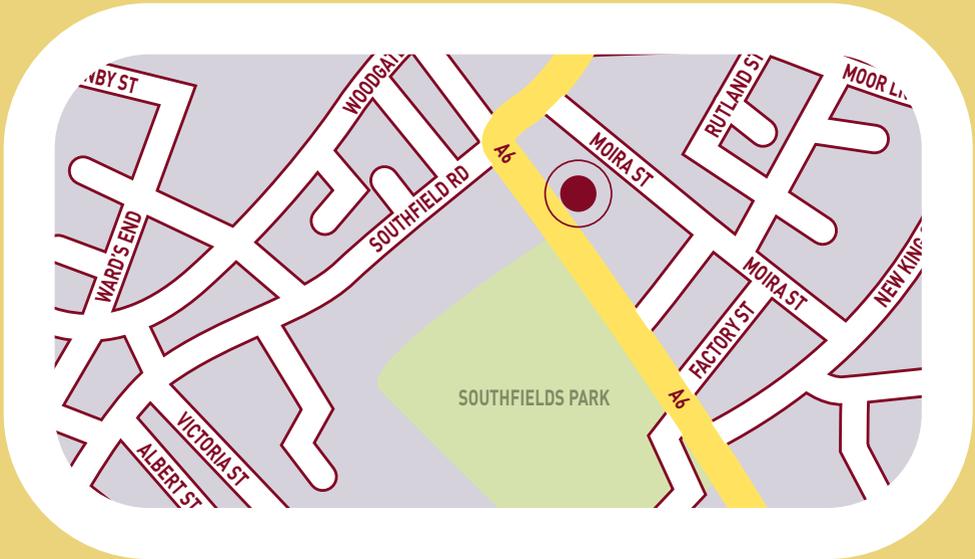
- The Blakemore Foundation
- The Helen Jean Cope Charity
- The Henry Smith Charity
- The John Salmon Trust
- The Leathersellers Company
- The Loughborough Lions
- The Loughborough Welfare Trust
- The Needle & Pin Pub
- The Y
- Thomas Estley Community College
- Thornton, Bagworth & Stanton Parochial Church Council

- TK Maxx Loughborough
- Trinity Reformed Church
- TwentyTwenty
- Uppingham Town Council
- The Vicar's Relief Fund
- VISTA
- Voluntary Action Leicestershire
- Waitrose Mountsorrel



THANK YOU AGAIN TO ALL INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS ALSO, WHO HAVE DONATED FOOD AND TOILETRIES, OR THROUGH OUR WEBSITE, CHEQUES, JUSTGIVING, PAYPAL & VIRGIN MONEY. YOUR SUPPORT HELPS US CHANGE LIVES!





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