

WYCOMBE HOMELESS CONNECTION

UPDATE: 3RD JUNE 2020



Hello

We all hope this message continues to find you, your loved ones and your fellowship well.

This week, we're focusing on our work to stop anyone becoming homeless. At the end of June, the restrictions put in place to prevent evictions during the coronavirus pandemic are due to be lifted.

We are greatly concerned that we will see many people at risk of losing their homes and we would value your prayers and support to help prevent and tackle this.

J's story:

The bedroom tax is still blighting the lives of people who struggle to pay rent in a home they are told is too big for them yet are unable to move to somewhere smaller.

J was sharing her home with her son and caring for her daughter's child who spent time living with his mum and J, his grandmother. Only one of them was allowed to get support for a bedroom for the child so even though her grandson stayed with her a lot, J's housing benefit was reduced and her rental debt started to mount up.

Then, the tragic death of her son left her caring her grandchild alone and living in what was cruelly deemed 'oversized accommodation'.

J and her grandchild were at risk of being evicted from their home when she got in touch with us.

She came to our housing legal advice drop-in clinic. We introduced her the housing benefit expert we work with. With their help, J applied for a grant to

cover her rent shortfall to stop the debt building up in the short term. And the expert worked with J and the local authority applying for a one-off payment and cover her rent arrears. The authority agreed to consider the payment but only if J could find a smaller home.

We spent many, many hours talking helping J find a smaller home. It is hard because there is a severe lack of suitable social housing. But in the end we were able to help J find a new, affordable home. The local authority then agreed to clear her debt and she is no longer getting into any more debt.

J and her grandchild moved into her new home a week before the coronavirus lockdown began and they are so happy – as are we!

Job advert: Advocacy Worker

Title: Advocacy Worker

Location: Office-based in High Wycombe and involving work across Bucks.

Hours: Full time, 37.5 hours a week.

Salary range: £23,976 to £25,868*.

Homelessness isn't just an unavoidable part of life; people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness have rights.

And in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, and the impact on jobs and wages, we are anticipating a huge increase in the amount of people who need help to keep a roof over their head. It is estimated 150,000 people may face eviction in the short-term.

*Crisis, the national homelessness charity, have awarded us a grant to employ a new Advocacy Worker to join our team to prevent homelessness.

We are looking for a person who would love to work within our non-judgemental, rights-based approach to tackle homelessness in Buckinghamshire.

Further details are on our website www.wyhoc.org.uk/vacancies

Please do share this opportunity with anyone you think might be interested!

'Everyone in for good' campaign

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, everyone found to be rough sleeping is being given accommodation and in our community we had already offered everyone found to be rough sleeping a bed from back in November last year.

Treating homelessness as a public health emergency has effectively ended rough sleeping. We believe this should always be how we view homelessness.

We are asking people to ask our government to make three commitments to support organisations like ours in our work to ensure:

- Nobody returns or is new to the street
- Everybody receives support to keep their accommodation
- No return to business as usual

We were pleased to hear funding announced for more supported accommodation for ex-rough sleepers in the UK. **Unfortunately, the 3,000 beds announced to be provided within the next 12 months will simply not be enough when we know there are already around 15,000 people who were sleeping rough but have been offered safe places to stay during the coronavirus pandemic.**

So we've joined with Homeless Link's [#EveryoneInForGood](#) campaign.

On our website www.wyhoc.org.uk/everyone-in-for-good-campaign you'll find template letters and social media posts that you can send to your MP. Or get in touch and we can send the details on.

Join us and Homeless Link in trying to end homelessness for good!

A message from Helen, our Service Manager

"I have been working at Wycombe Homeless Connection for nearly a year - so I know first-hand how hard our frontline team works to help the most vulnerable rough sleepers and those who are at risk of eviction.

"It has been a very tough few months with the coronavirus pandemic and we have worked tirelessly to get everyone accommodated and to prevent anyone else losing their home. This has come at a cost to us as a charity and so on the 25th July I will be attempting a virtual Everest cycling climb. I have been training

hard on my bike using an indoor trainer and expect the 210km and 8850m of ascent to take 15 hrs!

“If you would like to support me in this challenge and raise money for this great local charity - I would be very grateful.”

You donate to Helen online or contact the office.

<https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/HelenBiggerstaff1>

Prayer requests

- For the government, nationally and locally, that together we will find the solutions and resources we need to end homelessness for good.
- That no one would lose their home, now during the coronavirus pandemic, or at any other time.
- For peace, energy and good health for staff and the group of volunteers who have been able to take on some small, socially distanced tasks, helping people in a housing crisis.
- Thanks for the continued generosity of our community. Please pray that we will survive the difficult times ahead.
- For stability and security for people we have managed to help move into secure accommodation in the last few months.

Keeping in touch

We will be keeping you up to date on how everything is going.
Do also keep an eye on our website and social media.

Website: www.wyhoc.org.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/WycombeHomelessConnection/

Twitter: www.twitter.com/wycombehomesless

Instagram: www.instagram.com/wycombehomeslessconnection/



Contact us

For more information on anything in this update please contact our Church Link, Ali Preston, at ali.preston@wyhoc.org.uk.

www.wyhoc.org.uk

01494 447699

Registered charity: 1156211