

From: [Housing Justice](#)
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Housing Justice News

Mobilising Christian action on homelessness and housing need through love, justice, advocacy and nurture

Housing Justice Spring Newsletter

Welcome to the latest Housing Justice Update!

We hope you had a joyful, relaxing Easter spent with family and friends. Thank you very much to those of you who have so generously donated to our Lent Appeal – we are very grateful for your support, without which we would not be able to do the invaluable work that we do across England and Wales. If you have not yet had the chance to make a donation and would like to do so, please click [here](#). Thank you.

I am delighted to be writing to you in my new role as Chief Executive of Housing Justice, and very much looking forward to taking our wonderful charity into its next phase.

We said ‘goodbye’ to Kathy at a lovely ‘leaving do’ at St Martin-in-the-Fields and wish her all the best for her retirement.

I hope you enjoy reading all about what the team has been up to below!

With all best wishes,

Bonnie Williams



Retirement of CEO Kathy Mohan OBE

On Tuesday 2nd April we bade farewell to our beloved CEO Kathy Mohan OBE at a lovely retirement celebration in St Martin-in-the-Fields.

A plethora of colleagues, friends, family and homelessness sector partners joined us for a very special service, led by Rev Dr Sam Wells, the Rt Rev Bishop Rob Wickham and the Most Rev Bishop John Davies. Everyone gathered for drinks and nibbles after the service to wish Kathy well in her retirement.

We will miss Kathy very much but are delighted that the brilliant Bonnie Williams, our former Director for Wales, is taking the reins!

You can see lots more photos [here](#).



Spring Transitions Fund

For the third successive year, our Emergency Accommodation Team has partnered with the Greater London Authority (GLA) to provide a Spring Transitions Fund for providers of non-commissioned, emergency accommodation (night shelters).

Applications were open to organisations that are providing this type of accommodation between October 2023 and March 2024 to fund either a phased 'wind down' of their projects, or proactive move-on support for guests, or a combination of both. Essentially, this grant fund is about preventing a return to rough sleeping for any shelter guests in our network when projects close in the spring after the winter season.

We received applications from 15 projects totalling over £450,000, competing for a total grant pot available of £180,000. Ultimately nine of the 15 projects were successful with their bids exhausting the grant pot, which proved to be the most challenging panel review process to date. The London Emergency Accommodation Team continue to monitor and support these projects in achieving their aims to secure move-on options for a total of 88 shelter network guests thanks to this funding.



Night Shelter Lettings Network

In late 2022 we sought to substantially improve access to Private Rented Sector accommodation for guests staying at Winter Night Shelters in our network. One of the main barriers to access was that there had never been a consistently reliable single source of real-time information listing properties for rent where the landlord would accept housing benefit, accessible to both caseworkers in the sector and their clients.

This information has historically been difficult to obtain, coming from disparate sources and not shared widely across the sector. There has also been no ability for homeless people to view this information themselves. We have sought to address this need through the creation of the [Night Shelter Lettings Network](#), made possible with the support of the GLA.

The NSLN lists in real time property that accepts housing benefit. It is designed to make it easy for sector partners and their clients to search for property in specific areas and according to different benefit entitlements. It also links them directly with the property agents/landlords, enabling them to request viewings, as well as to apply for the upfront costs required to obtain the property.

Our team at Housing Justice then facilitates the sign-up process, using their expert knowledge of housing legislation to ensure that the property abides by all statutory minimum standards.

This has proven to be a popular website with estate agents and landlords, and we have been able to add more agents and landlords as time goes on. We are also particularly proud to have created a tool that gives agency to homeless people, allowing them to search and arrange viewings rather than relying on their caseworker.

We are very pleased to announce that we have now passed a significant milestone, facilitating the resettlement of a 50th guest from the network through the NSLN.



Refugee Lodgings

We are actively recruiting Resident Landlords for our new Refugee Lodgings Project. We are calling on anyone with a spare room in London to welcome a newly granted refugee into their home for six months.

You will receive a full package of support from Housing Justice plus a substantial monthly rental income to help with cost-of-living increases. Refugees are offered safety and stability to adjust to life in the UK, build skills for employment, and improve their English. Welcoming a lodger is a mutually beneficial and culturally enriching experience for everyone involved.

Register your interest on our website [Refugee Lodgings – Housing Justice](#) to join our growing community of Londoners making a meaningful difference to the capital's housing crisis. Even if you don't have a spare room, you can still help by spreading the word with your friends, family and church networks.



Hosting

Hosting in London

Our growing London Hosting team has welcomed five new guests to the Project since our last update and is delighted to have supported four guests to move on from hosting into more permanent accommodation. We are also thrilled to have signed up two new hosts thanks to our partnerships with Migrants Organise and St James' Piccadilly! We are always looking for more hosts so if you would like to find out more, please click [here](#).

The team has been busy supporting guests to prepare for appeal hearings and continues to work on sustainable move-on plans for guests who have received their leave to remain, and we have had lots of good news. Due to the support of the hosting project, one of our guests was finally able to get new teeth and new glasses! Another guest secured a job at Network Rail through the amazing support of [Standing Tall | Ending Homelessness, One Person at a Time](#), and our Hosting Project officer supported one of our long-term guests to reunite with his family after nine years. They can now start to build a safe and stable life together in the UK.

Hosting in Wales

The Hosting team in Wales has been busy as always. Many people in Cardiff and beyond are finding themselves destitute. The people we support have no right to work, no benefits and no right to shelter, so they are reliant on the kindness of strangers.

We held an event on 31st January at the Senedd Pierhead building, supported by a cross-party partnership of Members of the Senedd with a commitment to social justice. Over 100 people gathered, including Welsh Government Ministers and civil servants, sector partners, hosts and guests, local authority colleagues, housing association colleagues, and members of the community. It was great to see that households who welcomed people displaced by the war in Ukraine are now interested to explore hosting people from other countries too.

The keynote address was given by Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip, who said: “Hosting is a vital act of common humanity ... a pragmatic and empathetic response ... preventing a spiral of destitution and worsening outcomes ... I want to thank everyone who has acted as a Host and all the organisations that support this.”

There were powerful words from hosts and guests who spoke about the wonderfully positive impact that hosting has had on their lives. Hosts often say that they gain as much as they give, from welcoming such resilient people into their homes and sharing culture, experience ... and delicious meals from other parts of the world!

Bridget Young, Director of [NACCOM](#) spoke about the future of Hosting across the UK and how much need there is. We appealed to everyone to spread the word about Hosting as we urgently need more people to come forward and welcome those in need.

Hannah Woods, independent evaluator, presented her report from in-depth qualitative and quantitative research, celebrating the successes of the first stage of the project and looking to the future with hope and recommendations.

We have welcomed more guests into the project in the last few months, in partnership with a Cardiff charity which has some spare rooms in shared houses. For example, a mother and daughter who had claimed asylum found themselves destitute on the streets in the rain and walked all day before being signposted to a drop-in at a church hall, who contacted us. Within three hours, they were safe and dry. They are able to store their few belongings in

bedrooms, keep warm and clean, and make themselves food. This means that they are able to work on gathering the evidence they need to apply for Home Office accommodation, having been asked to collect lots of complex evidence.

Another example is a lady in her eighties who had been travelling on buses all day to keep dry and safe. She too has been welcomed and settled in. She has found dignity and is able to relax, read her bible and connect with drop-ins where she can be a part of the community.

We are looking forward to the [Nation of Sanctuary Awards](#) ceremony this year, which is a highlight of the calendar in Wales. Our hosts and guests certainly deserve some of these awards and we hope that they will be recognised for their contribution and achievements.

You can find out more about hosting in Wales [here](#).

Re-settling in a Nation of Sanctuary

The team has been helping Ukrainian refugees to find homes following the end of their hosting placements. We have helped a seven-person household to relocate to Newport from North Wales and given them a great deal of support. Due to their levels of English, they have needed help to set up household bills, to register in a local college and to begin their job search.

The team has also been attending the Ukraine Hub in Cardiff - this is a volunteer-led drop-in where we spoke to many Ukrainians who needed support with housing issues. We plan to attend regularly to reach more hosted guests.

Here is a message we received from a family that the team has been supporting: "Good day. My name is P, I am a refugee from Ukraine. On behalf of our family I want to express my deep gratitude to your team for helping us get a chance to start life over again. I would like to express special gratitude to Victoria, who, thanks to her persistence and determination, did not leave us with our problems in finding housing and from the moment we met, continued to overcome difficulties with us step-by-step on the way to our main goal. Even now, she has not left us, but continues to help so that our adaptation goes as well as possible. It's difficult to put into words how it feels to feel to be at home again after such a long time since the start of the war in Ukraine. So thank you again for your work! You make people happy!"



Faith in Affordable Housing (FiAH)

In February, Beki from our FiAH England Team presented to the National Community Land Trust Network on working with churches.

Community Land Trusts (CLTs) are democratic, non-profit organisations that own and develop land for the benefit of the community. CLTs and churches have collaborated on a number of incredible affordable housing schemes across England, and we are also seeing church groups set up CLTs as a way to preserve their land or assets for community benefit. CLTs are usually formed in areas where there is an acute need for affordable, secure accommodation, but also where land is hard to obtain.

Beki's webinar with the CLT Network offered site finding strategies as well as tips for developing links with the churches. The webinar was delivered in partnership with Wrigley's Solicitors who produced our guide for church trustees interested in disposing of land for affordable housing which can be found [here](#).

If you'd like to have a copy of Beki's presentation to the Network, please email b.winter@ousingjustice.org.uk

In December, two FiAH sites in Cardiff exchanged to Housing Association Cadwyn - St Timothy's and Christ Church - one a United Reformed Church

building and one a Church in Wales building. Construction has not started yet but when it does, we are expecting them to result in 34 new units of affordable social housing in total.

FiAH in Wales has been approached by the Senedd for evidence regarding what more needs to be done to ensure that Welsh Government social housing targets are met. The FiAH Project Manager, Bex, also recently presented on housing and homelessness at a 'Transatlantic Good Practice' conversations event, hosted by Audit Wales with partners in Nova Scotia, Canada.

Bex has also been attending the Wales Places of Worship Forum, to identify solutions for heritage buildings and discuss with property officers across the denominations what opportunities FiAH may be able to offer.

The Citadel Project

As always, our Citadel teams in Wrexham, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot have been busy supporting those at risk of homelessness in their local areas. A major highlight since our last newsletter was the launch of the Wrexham General Station Art Project on 29th February.

Our Citadel Co-ordinator, Jo, worked with local artist Sophia Leadil, 3 Counties Connected Community Rail Partnership, participants from The Wallich, and those we support, to put on this wonderful art exhibition. The participants came together to explore the theme of 'cynefin' (a sense of place) and delved into the essence of what makes Wrexham special to them through a series of drawings and paintings.

The unveiling of the artworks marked the culmination of weeks of artistic collaboration, and the waiting room at Wrexham General Station has now been transformed into an exhibition space, where passengers and the local community can appreciate the landmarks of Wrexham.

One of our project participants Carl said: "I enjoyed trying new art techniques each week and it helped me learn more about places in Wrexham that I didn't know about before. It was all very interesting and enjoyable."



Free Will-Making Service

Is making a will one of those jobs that you never get round to as you think it will be too time consuming and expensive?

Housing Justice is offering a free will-making service to supporters who would like to leave a lasting gift to Housing Justice in their will.

Find out more [here](#).

**Leaving a gift in your will to
Housing Justice
costs nothing in your lifetime, but
the impact of your legacy on those
experiencing homelessness will
endure for years to come.**

To find out more about Housing Justice's work, please click [here](#).



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