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Subject: Housing Justice Winter News
Date: 23 December 2024 12:28:51



Housing Justice News

From homelessness to belonging

Housing Justice Winter Newsletter

Welcome to the latest Housing Justice Update!

Since our last newsletter, the teams have been busy as ever supporting people experiencing homelessness across England and Wales, and we were delighted to be awarded first prize at the London Homelessness Awards for our work to build the Night Shelter Lettings Network. You can read all about it below!

We were also pleased to launch our report into housing solutions for those with no recourse to public funds 'We can't be a Nation of Sanctuary without Housing' at the CHC Annual Conference on 19th November.

We worked with consultant Joy Kent to learn that without the engagement of social housing providers, Welsh Government won't achieve its goal of becoming the first Nation of Sanctuary. Similarly, we believe that without addressing the housing needs of people seeking sanctuary, Welsh Government won't achieve its aim of making homelessness rare, brief and unrepeated. Our report makes a number of recommendations which we believe would support Welsh Government's pursuit of both these policy objectives. You can find out more [here](#).

And we have launched our Christmas Appeal which you can read all about [here](#). We know that times are hard and are very grateful for any donations that

you feel able to make. Thank you.

I hope you and your families have a wonderful Christmas!

With all best wishes,
Bonnie Williams, CEO



London Lettings Network

We are delighted that the London Lettings Network was awarded first prize at this year's London Homelessness Awards. The team, led by our Special Projects Co-ordinator, Lucien, received a specially designed trophy and a cheque for £30,000 from Baroness Louise Casey at a high-profile ceremony at St Martins-in-the Fields attended by more than 120 people from across the homelessness sector in London.

We created the London Lettings Network, which lists all rental properties in London with rents at Housing Benefit levels, to give agency to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness by enabling them to find their own home in the capital, without having to rely on a case worker or third party.

Lucien said: "Night Shelters are an important element of support for people rough sleeping, accommodating approximately 1,200 people during the winter. But using private sector properties to help people move on is an option that could be very helpful and should be used more. We list the properties, carry out checks, offer a referral service and pay upfront costs to secure the property. So far 75 people have been accommodated through the project in just one year."

You can read all about Mara, who found her new home through the London Lettings Network, [here](#).



Citadel England

In response to the rising number of people being forced into homelessness and rough sleeping across England, we launched our innovative homelessness prevention programme, Citadel, in Bristol, Cornwall, London, Sheffield and Hastings in August.

Since our last update we have completed training and onboarding for 12 fantastic new staff across the five new areas. They have been out meeting with other local charities and local authority staff, and diligently recruiting and training volunteers.

We are delighted that we have reached the milestone of recruiting our first 100 volunteers in England, most of whom are going through training and onboarding. Most importantly, we have begun to provide the community support that Citadel is all about, and our very first matching meetings with volunteers and the people we support took place in the first week of December.

In Sheffield, we are planning to raise money through a skydive on 16th May! If you are interested email citadel/sheffield@housingjustice.org.uk, and if you want to donate you can do so here [Olivia Dunphy is fundraising for Housing Justice](#)

We've also been out and about at volunteers and careers fairs, at craft fairs,

and celebrating Christmas across England and Wales with our volunteers and the people we support, sharing a meal and some good conversation to bring in the festive season.

Finally, a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us across England and Wales this year, most importantly our volunteers, without whom we would not be able to run. Thank you to everyone who has supported us with your time, support or funding. We look forward to continuing to work with you all in the new year, and a special festive thank you to our wonderful volunteers in Hastings for supporting us with their time and effort at a local craft fair.



Citadel Wales

Across the border in Wales, the team has been invaluable in supporting the new England team members to settle in and get up to speed whilst continuing to provide excellent support to the 42 volunteers and 59 individuals we were supporting at the end of the last quarter.

Citadel Swansea and Neath Port Talbot hosted a wonderful Christmas party for those we support and our volunteers at the Waterfront Community Church. We were joined by guests from the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the Centre for Homelessness Impact, who were on a fact finding visit to understand

Citadel's success and the impact volunteers have on supporting those that experience homelessness. Some of the volunteers and supported individuals shared their experiences of how they had enabled and been supported.

We decorated the venue and had a delicious two course Christmas dinner. There were 38 in attendance, and everyone had wonderful time socialising and singing carols.



Our Citadel Wrexham Co-ordinator Jo was interviewed about our work for the BBC's 'All Things Considered' programme which you can listen to [here](#) (you can hear her from 11.15 onwards).

Hope Street Church has once again provided 'bags of kindness' to people supported by Citadel in Wrexham, as part of the national 'Love Christmas' initiative. Each bag contains a mug, snacks, socks, and a Christmas card. Jo will be distributing the bags in time for Christmas, and Citadel volunteers and those they support will also gather for a Festive Breakfast at the Wrexham Miners Project.



Jo recently supported 'John' to move into a property on his 60th birthday. He was helped to apply for white goods and was provided with pre-loved furniture which had been donated by the local community. He is delighted to have a place to call home, and even more delighted to have his own coffee table! He is looking forward to drinking plenty of tea and coffee in the warmth of his own home over winter.

Below you can read all about Enid and George, a lovely couple supported by our Citadel Neath Port Talbot Co-ordinator, Mandy:

Enid and George are a happily married couple (George is 90 years old and Enid is 76), who were referred to us after they received a no-fault eviction notice from their landlord as he wanted to sell the home they had been living in for many years.

Given their advanced years and lack of family support, being forced to move from their home was a particularly alarming prospect for the couple and their beloved old cat. As George is an army veteran, we contacted a number of veterans organisations to find out what extra support they were entitled to, and arranged much-needed mobility aids as George had taken a fall in the bathroom. We also introduced George to a local veterans group which he began attending twice a week for a coffee and a chat.

Our volunteer met with them regularly and supported them as we tried to find alternative private rentals (which were all too expensive), social housing (there was nothing suitable available), and helped them to de-clutter their home ahead of the move. She also helped them to resolve issues with their bank and

manage difficult telephone calls.

As time went on, George's health deteriorated and moving house became less and less practical, and it became apparent that the landlord may be prepared to let them stay if they could pay more rent. We arranged for a welfare rights officer to attend their home to go through their finances and ensure they were claiming the benefits they were entitled to, and we were delighted to find that they were able to afford the increased rent.

Enid, George and their old cat have been able to stay in their own home and are very much looking forward to being able to have Christmas together.



London Migrant Homelessness Projects

Our Hosting and Refugee Lodgings teams have been hard at work alleviating homelessness for destitute individuals in and around London.

On 6th November we launched 'Shared Goals', our football project for anyone involved in Housing Justice projects and the wider Winter Night Shelter Network. We had a fantastic first game with HJ staff members and guests from the Refugee Lodgings Programme. We are so excited for the project to develop week by week and for us to bring people together from a range of different backgrounds and organisations to have a fun kickaround! If you would like to get involved, or know anyone who would, please email sharedgoals@housingjustice.org.uk or phone Ella on 07514720712.



London Hosting Project

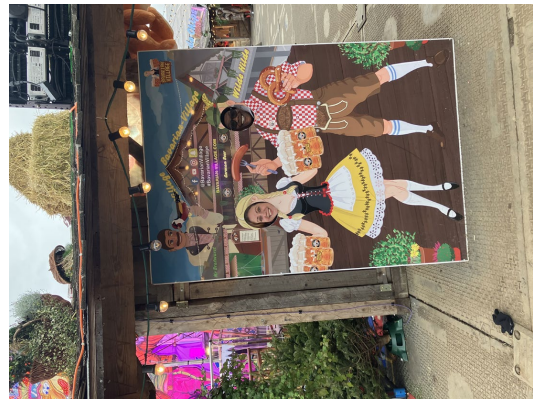
In the last three months we have welcomed five new guests to the London Hosting Project and are delighted to have supported four guests to move on into long term, independent accommodation.

Refugee Lodgings

We are pleased to have provided over 800 nights of safe and affordable accommodation to newly granted refugees in London, with 100% of our lodgers engaged in education, employment and training, and 100% placement sustainment. You can watch our new Refugee Lodgings video [here](#).

Find out more about becoming a Resident Landlord [here](#) and about becoming a host in the London Hosting Project [here](#).

The team has been enjoying the festive spirit with those we support in the Hosting and Lodgings projects with a trip to Winter Wonderland in London, a host and landlord catch up, and a Christmas party in our offices.



Hosting in Wales

We have been visiting Ukraine Hubs to discuss accommodation options and wraparound support, and continue to assist individuals and families to secure rented accommodation and sustain their tenancies.

Two new guests are settling into our Hosting Project and enjoying the warmth of the hosts and their homes. One of them said: "I was evicted by the Home Office a few months ago and subsequently became homeless which greatly caused my mental health to deteriorate. However, I was fortunate that Housing Justice helped me find the best accommodation and it has contributed to improving my mental health and overall well-being. I now feel much better and have even been able to resume counselling sessions. Thank you Housing Justice - you have positively impacted my life."

Winter Night Shelters

The team has been supporting the winter night shelters across our Network with planning and delivering their shelter provision for this winter. We have been focusing on the following areas:

- Bringing projects together in Forums and Communities of Practice as an opportunity to share practice and learning
- Night Shelter Transformation Fund monitoring and planning
- Reflections and learning from organisations in our Network, about what

they need and how we can represent their voice

- Planning and delivery of webinars and resources, with a large focus on the HJ annual night shelter conference held in October
- Developing and delivering webinar and surgeries in partnership with Homeless Link.

Quality Mark

The Quality Mark is a unique service development tool designed specifically for non-commissioned, faith and community night shelters and emergency accommodation providers. As the only framework tailored to this part of the sector, the Quality Mark is an invaluable tool to help organisations develop and enhance their services, ensuring they meet evolving best practices while supporting positive outcomes for guests, staff, and volunteers.

We have been busy supporting emergency accommodation providers through the Quality Mark assessment process, and the follow up work that organisations need to undertake to implement the recommendations.

Below you can read comments from some of the winter night shelters that have undergone our Quality Mark assessment process:

- “Self-assessment is a great way to evaluate your service and the standards you are working toward. I found it straightforward and the team very helpful if there were any queries or things to be clarified in terms of evidence.”
 - “The personal visit from assessors gave us a chance to showcase our services and what we offer.”
 - “I have learned what we are good at and what we need to improve which has influenced the forward strategy one example is that of a coproduction strategy while we feel we engage well with our guests and partners writing a Co-production strategy formalised it and has given a better commitment from our trustees.”
 - “Our guests and volunteers (and staff) are all very proud of what is done in the shelter and therefore very keen to be part of the visit. The assessors handled all the interviews very informally and sensitively. Guests were very pleased to have an opportunity to talk about the impact the project had for them - they see that it operates in a way that partners with them and being interviewed was part of that empowerment.”
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Faith in Affordable Housing

Our work with Churches to release surplus land and redundant buildings for the development of new social and genuinely affordable homes continues across Wales, and we were delighted to see our evidence and recommendations cited in the recent Local Government and Housing Committee's report on [Social Housing Supply](#) in Wales.

This recognition underscores our role in championing land justice and promoting social and affordable housing as vital solutions to Wales's housing crisis. You can find out more [here](#).

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



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