

Winter Newsletter

December 2022



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What happens now?

Back in September, Church Homeless Trust took the unusual step of openly opposing the disastrous mini-budget. As a small, independent charity with no political affiliations, we do not generally campaign in this way. However, there was such a pressing danger to the people we support that we were moved to use some of our small advertising budget to call for action.

Since then, and due to the similar calls of so many, much of the mini-budget has been overturned, and we have a new Prime Minister.

Unfortunately however, there are still far too many people living in poverty and uncertainty. As winter begins, a catastrophic number of people are worried about how they will possibly make ends meet in the months ahead. An even greater number worry about what will happen to them and their families come April, when much of the support around utility bills is due to be further reduced.

In recent weeks there has also been much talk of a coming recession. Some economists predict that this will be the longest recession on record, with the Bank of England predicting that times ahead will be “very challenging”. Although how deep this recession will be compared to previous recessions is currently a matter of contention, it is true that many more people are living in precarious situations and on the poverty line than they were prior to the 2008 crisis. It is therefore a very scary time for people who are poor, for people who do not have secure work, and for those who are at risk of homelessness.

From our end, we have seen a massive increase in the number of grant applications for gas and electricity, with many people being forced to choose between heating and eating. We have also seen a stark continuation of a trend that began during the pandemic; people you would not expect ending up homeless, or even rough sleeping.



Those with jobs and stable home lives finding themselves suddenly unable to afford their rent or to feed themselves in an ever shifting landscape.

So what can you do?

There are many ways you can keep making a difference as times get harder for so many. Over the winter months, many choose to **volunteer at food banks or night shelters**. Many such services are struggling this year as those who would ordinarily donate may be unable to afford to do so, and night shelters are struggling to pay their heating bills. Your help could make a big difference.

Another option is to **hold a charity fundraiser**. Throughout the year people run, swim and cycle in order to raise money for homeless individuals. At this time of year, some prefer to hold a raffle, a concert, or even host an Afternoon CHTea (check our website for more information). Alternatively, you may wish to simply **donate to a homeless charity** like ourselves who will ensure that your support goes towards those who need it the most.

The option we ask all readers to do, regardless of their circumstances, is to **keep those who are homeless or in danger of homelessness in their thoughts and prayers this Christmas**. We also ask you to keep telling friends and families about their stories, so no one is forgotten this winter.

Spotlight on: Domestic Violence



Behind closed doors across the country, thousands upon thousands of women and girls experience domestic violence every day. Of those who find the courage and are able to leave, a shocking number will end up homeless and relying on emergency provision.

Over 65% of homeless women have been victims of violence in the home. Many are young women, many are mothers or grandmothers, and Church Homeless Trust are proud to support them however they need on their journey to rebuilding their lives.

Maggie had faced years of mental and physical abuse from her ex-partner, leaving her feeling isolated and scared. Despite wanting to leave, she was afraid of the consequences, and she still had two children living at home to think about. After a particularly traumatic incident, Maggie was eventually forced to flee her home and seek refuge in a shelter. Now after months of waiting, she's finally in a position to move into a flat of her own. However, having no savings to fall back on, struggled to pay for the most basic comforts like duvet covers and curtains. Church Homeless Trust supported Maggie with her journey, and she couldn't be more pleased.

"Thank you, it was good to know that someone out there cared."

Alice was forced to flee her partner of several years after he became physically violent towards her and threatening towards their children. She was homeless and relied on emergency accommodation for over a year, and is now moving into a flat with her kids. The grant she received for decoration meant that she could make her new house a home, and the children were especially pleased with their new bedrooms.

"My life is finally starting to change for the better and I am excited for the future."

When Janet fell pregnant at the age of seventeen, her mother became increasingly abusive before eventually kicking her out. With no other family to turn to and no means to support herself and her unborn child, she quickly found herself homeless and desperate. She relied on borrowing money from friends just to make ends meet, but it wasn't until she found a place in supported accommodation that she could truly relax.

Janet now has a job working as a receptionist for a local building company, but having only just started she has little money to spend on things for the baby. Church Homeless Trust gave Janet a grant for baby clothes, a cot, and a pram. For Janet, this is now one less thing to worry about as she prepares for the birth.

Often, homelessness is associated with men of a certain age, partly because there are fewer women who openly sleep rough; they are more likely to sleep away from public view for their own safety. However, homelessness is an issue that affects people from all walks of life, regardless of their age or gender. Whether homelessness is a result of poverty, lack of affordable housing, or indeed domestic violence - it can affect people of all ages and genders. Young mothers are often particularly vulnerable, as they may lack the resources and support networks necessary to find help. With your help, we can keep helping these women to rebuild their lives.



This time last year, Church Homeless Trust helped support over 3,000 individuals through what is often a very difficult time of year. With small gifts, decorations and delicious Christmas dinners, we did what we could to bring the spirit of Christmas to people who had nothing.

Here are some highlights from Christmas 2021 from services across England:

One service used the £500 they received to cook a full Christmas lunch for their service users, many of which would not otherwise have had one. One of the people they support is a DJ, and provided the festive music they needed to get into the holiday spirit. **"Overall, it was a wonderful day!"**

Elsewhere, young mums put their creativity to the test at a wreath making workshop. They also took part in a Christmas craft session with plenty of sparkle, glitter and laughter from all. The fabulous Christmas cookie houses were a particular success amongst the children.

A service in Cambridge used their funding to make a special holiday goody bag, which included things like chocolates, a diary, a pen and a few other bits. For the young people that remained on the day itself, they cooked a proper Christmas dinner, which was really appreciated by all.



Every person is an individual, and one service consulted each of their 50 service users before purchasing their £10 Christmas gift. Some had a sweet tooth, some preferred savoury, and some wanted to spend their gift on essentials like socks, toiletries etc. **"Primark expressed surprise after one early shopping swoop by selling out of all their most popular socks before 9am!"**

The presents were then wrapped and put under the tree for Christmas morning. Any funds left over were combined with food donations, and they managed to have another hot meal of turkey and all the trimmings at New Years, cooked by staff.

At a service in Kent, every resident had their own Christmas pudding themed bag filled with chocolates, snacks and even their own pizza. Inside every bag was a Christmas cracker too. Despite many having to isolate during this time, the gifts bags allowed each person a little piece of Christmas spirit. **"A lot of residents expressed genuine appreciation at such an unexpected gift."**

Church Homeless Trust are proud to have brought some happiness and joy to those who have often had little kindness in their lives by providing Christmas gifts in recent years. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that this year we will be able to do so. The rising cost of living, along with falling charitable donations, mean we must prioritise our most essential support. However, we deeply hope that with your support, next year we will bring people some love at Christmas once more.

Everyone experiencing homelessness has a unique story, and many benefit from the tailored support our grants provide. Here are just a few of their stories, and what a big difference your support has made to their lives.



Simon had spent over two decades living and working in France and Spain. His plans for the future were disrupted when Britain left the EU. Although concerned, Simon managed to maintain his job for some time. When the pandemic began in 2020 however, there was nothing he could do but return home to Britain where he soon found he had nowhere to go.

It had been over twenty years since he had last lived in the UK, and due to having no address he was told he was ineligible for benefits. He found himself on the streets in the middle of winter, and he spent many months sleeping rough.

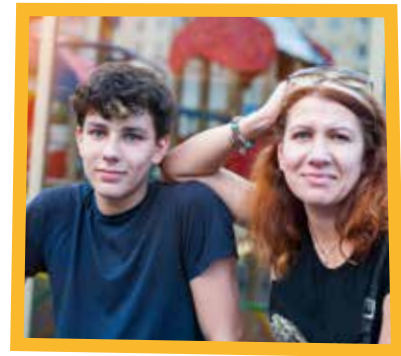
After getting some vital help, Simon is now settling into a flat of his own. With no savings to help with the move, Simon was forced to wash all his clothes by hand, which was exhausting and painful for his arthritic wrists. CHT purchased Simon a washing machine, which has made a big difference to his day-to-day life and helped to give him some of his old independence back.



After the tragic loss of his young daughter to cancer, Christopher developed an addiction to alcohol. Unable to cope with his grief, his drinking grew more and more out of control. Eventually, he was asked to leave the home he shared with his step-brother and had been homeless ever since. Christopher was homeless for over a year, surviving from the support given to him by the local community.

Now Christopher is beginning to rebuild his life. He has moved into a supported service, and has been sober for over two months. In order to access his support network, including those vital to him remaining sober and well, CHT provided Christopher with a new tablet. It also helps fill the time spent alone in his room, preventing him from lingering too long on dark thoughts that have previously caused him to drink.

Things are still very tough for Christopher, but thanks to his new tablet, it's that little bit easier for him to keep going.



Teenagers Jordan and Zoe were left alone when their mother disappeared. After months of worry and heartbreak, they discovered that she had passed away from a sudden stroke while far away from home. To make matters worse, the young siblings were told shortly afterwards that they were being evicted. Their grandparents were too old to take care of them full time, and so they had to move into flats of their own.

Having never lived away from home, the pair had very little by way of furniture or essentials to begin their adult lives. The landlord gave them just one week to sort everything and move out of their mother's home. CHT supported the pair with bedding, kitchenware, cleaning supplies and lots of other things every young person should have when starting out.

"My main thing I wanted was to have a chair for my granddad to sit on when he comes to visit, so I bought a nice velvet one from B&Q and I love it."

Reasons to be cheerful

There's almost always a reason to be cheerful, especially when so many people are willing to work hard to help homeless individuals rebuild their lives.



A few months ago, Church Homeless Trust supported eighteen homeless women and six members of staff from a women's shelter to visit the seaside. The trip was inspired by one of the women, who admitted that she had "never seen the sea" and would very much like to.

The group had a wonderful day. From singing on the coach on the way there to competing over who would spot the coast first out of the window, it was clear from the outset that this trip was going to make a huge difference to a group of women who had been through so much.

Once they arrived, they spent the afternoon playing football on the beach, swimming and paddling, collecting pebbles and they had as much chips, ice cream and doughnuts as they could eat. There were plenty of sleepy heads and sun-kissed faces on the journey home.

"A huge thanks from us to CHT for making this memorable trip happen."



As part of World Homeless Week this year, Church Homeless Trust attended the Christian Resources Exhibition in Surrey. We were pleased to have so many amazing conversations with people from across the church community, and did our bit to raise awareness of homelessness in England and donations towards our work.

Our game 'home-opoly' was particularly popular, with hundreds of people taking part across the three day exhibition and many winning a CHTea cup. The game, which uses real scenarios and true statistics, lets the player see if they could survive with the odds stacked against them or if they too would end up without a home. The game is unfair, with some players starting with more coins than others, because life for those living on the poverty line is unfair.

By Lent, we will have a special school and youth group activity pack which will include a playable version of "home-opoly". Church Homeless Trust would like to say a big thank you to those who took part and to our first winner (above)!



Jamaica Street, a service in Bristol that provides support to homeless individuals or those at risk of homelessness, have been making waves yet again in their local community with a new beautiful mural (pictured above).

The building is one of the largest in the area, and is part of a community that is famous for its artists and creatives including having various Banksy pieces.

We featured Jamaica street earlier this year for its incredible graffiti art wall, which served to brighten up the building along with reducing the amount of tagging occurring in the area, and now they have taken their creative flare a step further with the above.

The artwork - done once again in conjunction with local art groups and after consultation - has been so well received that the church who own two nearby buildings are considering continuing the work onto their own walls.

1 A Warm Welcome



Felix had no support and struggled to access food banks whilst sleeping rough. Now he's off the streets and has support, CHT purchased food and essentials for his first week.

After losing his job, Aaron fell behind with his rent and became homeless. CHT cleared his arrears for gas and electricity which made it possible for him to move into a new home.

2 Building Confidence



After rough sleeping for years, Wayne's clothes were barely rags. Now he is rebuilding his life, CHT purchased brand new clothes and Wayne is feeling far more confident.

Alison needed a little help getting back on her feet with a bus pass and new clothes. "This has changed my life. I look and feel better and can surround myself with my loved ones."

3 Developing Skills



At one service, some got out into the garden to improve their skills and had a great harvest. "I love to participate and show of my life skill, and supporting other tenants."

At another service, IT training has made a big difference. "I am happy to have been involved in the sessions as it has opened my eyes to a whole

4 Establishing a Home



Kevin needed help topping up his electricity and gas; with few savings, only just keeping on top of the meter made him very anxious. "I do not have to worry about darkness in my home."

Annie was living with family when they were evicted. She is now moving into a home of her own, and needed support purchasing essential

Christmas Appeal

This Christmas, we need your help more than ever to keep supporting homeless individuals to rebuild their lives.

Whether it's by holding a special service about homelessness at your local church, having a fancy dress day at the office, or having your own Afternoon CHTea and donating the proceeds, you can make a big difference this winter.

As more and more people fall below the poverty line, and almost everyone is worried about how they will pay their bills this winter, £9 a month means we can give one more grant each year.

Whether it's a set of bedding for a first home, brand new clothes for someone fresh off the streets or an educational course for someone keen to get back into work; for a charity as small as ours, your kindness can change lives this Christmas.



Patrons The Rt Revd Dr David Walker; Sir Martin Berthoud KCVO, CMG; Susie Briscoe; David P G Cade; W Peter Cooke CBE; Ian Hay Davison CBE; William Guthrie; Rt Revd Michael Turnbull CBE; The Ven. David Woodhouse

Trustees Elizabeth Wilson (Chair); Ven Simon Baker; Christopher Daws; Andrew Deutsch; John Glenton; Trevor Morris; Sally Nicholson; Elizabeth Toher

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Address _____ Expiry date Issue no. (Maestro only)

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I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer. I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Signed _____ Date _____

Please return your completed form to: Church Homeless Trust, Can Mezzanine, 7 – 14 Great Dover Street, London, SE1 4YR