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Mayor's Charity 2020-21 + 2021-22



Dear Naomi and the Trustees of the Beer-Harris Memorial Trust,

8th November 2022

For 25 years Off The Fence has been working in the Brighton and Hove area with the area's most vulnerable people, tackling social and emotional poverty and helping members of the community who are facing crisis situations with little or no support. Our priority is to provide a practical, emotional and psychological haven for the socially excluded in Brighton & Hove. To this end Off The Fence operates three projects: Antifreeze, a day centre for the homeless - part of an emergency Outreach to rough sleepers; a schools programme for 6-18 year olds; and Gateway, a women's centre supporting women in crisis.

Antifreeze: The Off the Fence Homeless Project that you so generously support, covers short-term emergency support, medium term care and long term solutions. This not only ensures rough sleepers survive nights on the streets but have access to basic needs, such as food, clothing, good hygiene. Plus, of course, ongoing support into permanent accommodation and employment with the opportunity of becoming active members of the community. A major underlying factor is a sense of isolation. We are their community. This, below, is a photograph of Louis in our Centre.

Short term emergency care consists of food, clothing, sleeping bags and other essential which are provided through our day centre on Portland Road and through Outreach on the streets in the evening.



Medium term care is addressing access to good hygiene through newly installed shower and laundry facilities within the Antifreeze Centre. This enables us to provide focused, solid recovery advice and information for clients whilst they wait for their washing cycle to finish. The approach has been re-directed towards self-determination and empowerment, working more deeply with each individual than before.

Long term solutions look at each individual complex situation. Key workers guide clients through the options available and signpost to the appropriate support in the local area. A specially designated Key worker supports clients after they have moved into accommodation to enable them to avoid returning to the streets.

We run a daily timetable that gives access to varying levels of support but that also contains drop-in sessions where people can just be and be safe, warm and valued even if they are far from wanting to make changes. Our timetable includes many new activities such as a benefits drop-in, a women's only group, general drop-ins, computer access, a health drop-in, a time to run empower courses and access to the shower and laundry facilities. One of the empower courses, was an art course with an

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external tutor, who did various projects with some of our clients. This included trips to the Royal Pavilion, local parks and the beach to do photography and artwork, some of which is now proudly displayed in our centre.

Your financial support has enabled us to support all of those who come to our Centre, and who we meet on Outreach. These are a few of their stories:

Stuart's story:

Stuart came to us for help after a relationship breakdown meant he was living on the streets, and feeling very depressed. We were able to help him into Emergency accommodation. Initially, this was helpful to him and we continued to support him while he was there with benefits, practical provisions and emotional support regarding drug addiction and family issues. However, due to close contacts with other people there struggling with addictions, he relapsed and drew away from support. When he was eventually evicted from that accommodation through his behaviour, he was back sleeping in a car park but he knew that Antifreeze is a place where we don't give up on people, where he could come and not be judged and people would love and care for him. His situation had helped him to realise that he no longer wanted to be homeless and live controlled by his drug use. We supported him as he tackled that and rough slept and by a local contact, were able to eventually move him into his own flat and give tenancy support to get this up and running well. Stuart is now living there, working full time and has built back his confidence and self-esteem.

Zac's story:

We met Zac on Outreach, sleeping in the doorway of a shop. He had never been homeless before, but due to a loophole in the system, as he had been out of the country for a period of time, he had no access to benefits and therefore no access to emergency accommodation. We supported him every evening on outreach and at the Centre during the days. We worked with another local agency with joint meetings to be able to move things forward as quickly as possible. We were able to get him onto benefits, and after one month on the streets, into temporary accommodation. He has been helped with getting ID, working with the job centre, enrolling on courses to be able to get back into work and looking into long term housing options for him. He has attended community meals at a local church and made a few friends there. Thankfully, his days of rough sleeping were short lived and protected, where he came to no harm before he was able to be housed inside.

Dave's story:

Dave has been a regular since the beginning of restarting outreach. He has some extreme difficulties, from medical to addictions. Since I have met him, I have seen the damage to his body from sleeping rough, the effect alcohol has had on him e.g. not able to talk, etc, and even his cat being taken away for a period. I along with other people who have been on outreach with me have always tried to build a relationship with him but have been met with difficulty and anger on occasion, especially when we had to call the police after suicidal words were mentioned over the loss of his cat. This is a success story because over the last month we have been able to finally get through to him and have had some deep conversations and we found that we have a mutual interest of reading fantasy and historical fiction books. I got to spend a good amount of time having a productive conversation and even gave him a spare fantasy book that I had which he really appreciated. He is finally in accommodation and wants to make sure he has somewhere his cat will be safe, my hope is that this will encourage him as well and that not only will he want to look after his cat but also himself. If you

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had seen the change from the discussions we had before until now, you would realise just how much this is a great success and I am encouraged to see how things can keep progressing.



This is a photograph of dear, dear Olive, who regularly comes to our Centre. Thank you so, so much for your amazing support of our work.

*Very best wishes,
Felicity*