

St Martin's News

St Martins Housing Trust

Addressing the needs of homeless people in Norwich and Norfolk since 1972

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Christmas 2008



Recession linked to homelessness levels?

Will the economic recession impact on the demand for the services that local charities provide? Derek Player, General Manager of the Trust writes:

“Most homeless people that we see in St. Martins haven't had a job for some time. This double handicap is often further compounded by health problems and addictions. The recession probably doesn't mean very much to them as they struggle on

day to day. Building people up to the point that they feel in control of their lives can be a difficult, slow process at the best of times. That's the job that we do at St. Martins - in good times and bad.

Having your house re-possessed or being evicted from a tenancy is a personal disaster for all involved. We must re-double our efforts here in Norwich to avoid the level of rough sleeping creeping back up to the levels of the early 1990's. This means continuing to make best use of all the assets at our disposal - Bishopbridge House, all the hostels in and around the city, our shared houses, the Salvation Army day centre and all the goodwill of church congregations, schools, community associations and individuals who support us in our work. Only by all working together can we get through these difficult economic times”.



If you are considering amendments to your will why not request a copy of our simple brochure - **Your legacy counts**. The Trust has benefited from the bequests of several of our long-term supporters over the years - many of whom have lived in Norwich all their lives and understand the work that we do.

Your legacy counts



The Trust is grateful to an anonymous benefactor for funding the cost of this newsletter.

A registered charity for single homeless people in Norwich and Norfolk. Charity No. 802013

Positively homeless

Twenty three residents at Bishopbridge House have participated in a film making project called "Positively Homeless".

The project was split into different stages to encourage maximum participation. The first stage involved the film-makers thinking about their experiences.

The next stage involved a group discussion about film making and putting forward ideas.

The core group really took ownership of the film at this stage, taking the ideas in the discussion group and representing them on film.

Finally the film-makers decided they wanted to record their voices for the film and tell their story over the images.

We hope that you will be able to view the video via our website at some stage in the near future.



Two of the core people who participated in the film-making project, Peter and Marcus

Donors and donations 1 February 2008 to 31 October 2008

The Trust is delighted to announce that during this period £34,162.45 was donated by 111 donors to help us with our work with homeless people.

All the funds raised from our 2007 Xmas Appeal and other non-designated donations received by the Trust until 31 October 2008 have gone towards the cost of furniture and equipment for Highwater House. The largest single donation was £11,640 from the Lord Mayors Charity Appeal 2007/8 (the Trust was one of the two chosen beneficiaries last year). There were 33 donations over £100. Our Christmas 2008 Appeal begins on 6 December. ***Watch out for our street collectors out in Norwich right up until Christmas Eve.**

We also received non-cash donations from 79 donors. The majority of these donations were harvest gifts from schools and congregations. We are very grateful for these gifts from thousands of Norwich and Norfolk families. Some of the tins were kept back for later distribution but everything else was quickly distributed to people either living in our properties or re-establishing themselves in their own homes after a period of homelessness. Other non-cash donations include toiletries, duvets, computers, televisions and everyday household goods.

New government goal to end rough sleeping by 2012



A major new drive to end rough sleeping by Olympic year 2012 was announced by the Government on 18 November 2008. Apart from the 2005 Change-up programme - designed to help organisations such as St. Martins replace dormitory-style Night Shelters with hostel accommodation - this is the first significant government announcement on single person homelessness for some time. It is most welcome!

Rough sleeping numbers have been driven down over the last decade and have stayed down due to the efforts by organisations such as St. Martins, supported by the policy frameworks and programmes of government. The aim now is to call for an even greater effort and end rough sleeping for good. New measures will include:

- Increasing the options available to single people at risk of rough sleeping, including help with rent deposits, and more supported lodgings
- Expanding street rescue support teams (such as the St. Martins CAPS team) and encouraging greater use of 24 hour phone lines
- Putting together achievable action plans to help those coming off the streets back into housing and employment
- More joined-up thinking across government departments to make sure people don't fall between different aspects of the support network.

Housing Minister Margaret Beckett said: "We have achieved much in tackling rough sleeping and homelessness over the last ten years, but it's time for us all to say rough sleeping in 21st century Britain is unacceptable".

A sixty page report entitled "**No One Left Out: communities ending rough sleeping**" is published by the Department for Communities and Local Government and is available on: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/roughsleepingstrategy

New letting arrangements for social housing tenants in Greater Norwich benefit our service users

Norwich City Council, working with Broadland and South Norfolk councils and 13 housing associations, introduced new lettings arrangements for applicants on social housing waiting lists in November 2007.

The key elements of "choice-based lettings" (CBL) are Choice, Control and Transparency.

Choice - the applicant is given a range of properties to apply for weekly. Most applicants choose to make their "bids" for their eligible properties on-line.

Control - instead of waiting for an offer from a housing officer the applicant actively trawls his or her eligible properties.

Transparency - the bids for social housing tenancies made by applicants give an accurate figure for the number of people interested in a particular property and the applicant's position in that queue.

On the first birthday of the choice-based lettings we are pleased to say that our experience of the system has been very positive. Our statistics show that nearly twice the number of people have been re-housed from our shared houses in 2008 (28 to date) to social housing tenancies than in any other year since 1998.

The CBL system has created a much easier framework for St Martins to work with local social housing providers. Our service users really appreciate being actively involved in the process that will hopefully lead to a new social housing tenancy.

"St Martins was good news for me"

Says Ray who became homeless in May 2008 and moved into Bishopbridge House as a result.



"It's been a whirlwind ride for me since becoming homeless in January 2008 - 10 months ago. I received a lot of help from the Trust but none the less homelessness was hell and not something I would want anyone to have to go through.

After 3 months in Bishopbridge House I then moved into Temporary Accommodation.

With the help of Maria at Bishopbridge House I filled in my application form to be re-housed and started bidding for a social housing tenancy whilst still at Bishopbridge House and then continued to bid via the facility in the main foyer at City Hall whilst I was in Temporary Accommodation. I was awarded Gold Banding and within two weeks had been offered a flat. I had to wait another 5 weeks for repairs to the flat before I was finally able to move in.

My flat is absolutely lovely - it's a palace, quiet and secluded. I'm now acquainted with the neighbour below, a woman in her seventies and my neighbour above, a single man like myself.

Every face has a story to tell and it's usually full of ups and downs - I'm not on my own in that. Looking back I feel lucky - although I've had a hard time I've also had a second chance".



Ffai cycles to Paris ...and demonstrates her commitment to help the homeless

"Hello everyone! I did it! I cycled from London all the way to Paris on a 4 day journey I won't forget in a hurry. I have never really been one for cycling, having fallen off my bike at 14 and never got back on until inspired to do this fundraiser recently! Committing myself to raise £1100 was as hard work as the cycle ride, but so many friends and family helped

me to reach my target. I wanted all money raised to go to a local charity here in Norwich and as I have helped at the 'Open Christmas' event in Norwich and Great Yarmouth for 7 years now, joining in by providing a cheery smile, conversation and a Christmas Day meal to lonely, needy and elderly people, I decided my efforts should benefit St Martins.

311 miles! Through rain, wind and sunshine. I met some amazing people along the way. Riding on the long, endless roads in France is something I will never forget nor the continuous fields of corn and sun flowers. I want to say thank you to those of you who helped by sponsoring me for St Martin's Housing Trust. I'm still taking donations and I have raised £1,125.50 so far. I am contactable on www.justgiving.com/ffaigritten or from a link via St Martins website and will look forward to hearing from you. Many thanks again, **Ffai.**"

Eddie's story

"I became homeless in October 2007. Prior to this I worked for a Mental Health Care Trust for 28 years as a psychiatric nurse. The on-set of my illness started when my place of work closed down.

When I first became homeless I slept in my car from October to December in different places in the City each night. The police were aware of me and their philosophy was as long as I was not causing any harm or breaking any rules I was left alone. I was then picked up by the CAPS outreach team who took my registration number and from there on kept an eye on me. I joined the waiting list for a place at Bishopbridge House and in May 2008 got a bed there. From Bishopbridge House I moved into one of the Trust's Group Homes. I was assessed by Housing Officer, Angie Rennie, my support worker.

I can't praise Angie enough, the Trust and all the team for all their help. If ever Olympic medals were due then they should be handed out to them. I enjoyed my experience in Temporary Accommodation, despite noise from neighbours not associated with the Trust.

My paperwork was forwarded to Norwich City Council and within four days, on the 15 September, I was Gold Banded. I could then start bidding for properties in the choice-based letting system. On 15 October I was offered a flat.

For me life has a fresh start now. I have to deal with my mental illness, but getting my flat has made me feel more positive and given me something to live for.

I think people should be made more aware of mental illness, without the stigma that is attached to it. Unlike a broken leg you can't see mental illness, but there is far more of it in the community than people are aware of".



Homeless World Cup

In our last newsletter we reported on Lee Thompson's trial for the England football team to play in the Homeless World Cup in Australia. Although Lee got through to the last trial, he didn't make the final squad. But the good news is he is still playing football and has now got his own brand new Orbit Housing Association flat in Norwich.

Ways you can help St Martins Housing Trust

There are many ways you can donate to St Martins Housing Trust. Donations and legacies are a vital resource which can help us plan for our future and help the homeless.

- **Make a regular donation**
Set up a regular donation by Standing Order. A gift of £2 per month can help us plan our long-term objectives.
- **Make a single donation**
You can donate online - our website makes it a simple and sure way to help the homeless.
- **You can also send us a cheque donation** - simply fill in the form opposite and send it together with your cheque to:
**St Martins Housing Trust,
35 Bishopgate, Norwich.
NR1 4AA.**
- **Gift in your Will**
Consider leaving a gift in your will to St Martins Housing Trust. To find out more go to our website to download a Legacy Brochure or phone (01603) 667706.
- **Donate in Memory**
Family and friends can remember a loved one by making a donation in memory.

Thank you so much for your commitment to homeless people

Title	Name
Address	
	Postcode
Please specify the amount you donated today £.....	
Use Gift Aid and you can make your donation worth more. For every pound you give to us, we get an extra 28 pence from the Inland Revenue. So just tick here. It's that simple. <input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please tick the box if you would like to contribute regularly by standing order
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please tick the box if you would like to receive our periodic newsletter
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please tick the box if you would like to receive our legacy brochure

St Martins Housing Trust strives to address the needs of single homeless people in Norwich and Norfolk. We offer emergency direct access accommodation, residential care, support and development to enable everyone to achieve their full potential and a greater level of independence.

St Martins Housing Trust is a registered charity helping single homeless people in Norwich and Norfolk since 1972. Registered charity number: 802013

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