



**Together**  
we will end  
homelessness

ISSUE 12: April 2021

# THE VOLUNCHEER

Crisis Skylight Coventry & Warwickshire's Volunteer Newsletter

## OUR *1st* ANNIVERSARY ISSUE:

Letter from the Editor  
From Our Director  
Our Member Success Stories  
Progression & Learning News  
Volunteer Opportunity: Chat Central  
Meet Ben, Arts Coordinator  
Meet The Newsletter Team  
Tree of the Week: Magnolia  
The New Puzzle Pages



## Letter from the Editor

This debut anniversary issue, we reminisce about a year of global upheaval celebrating where staff, volunteers and supporters went the extra mile for our members, and our members achieved impressive goals despite heart-stopping challenges. Over 50 volunteers delivered our *first* remote Christmas to members, and staff organised online learning, coaching and well-being sessions. Our amazing members attended or led their *first* online social events. Other members and volunteers created artwork for our *first* online gallery and continued to make music together, though miles apart. This year, more than any other, Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire proved our 100% commitment to ending homelessness for good. Here's to another year!

## FROM OUR DIRECTOR...

*Joyce West joins Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire this month as the support team Administrator. Joyce comes to us with a wealth of knowledge and experience in administration, she also has experience in the housing and learning sector.*

*At the Coventry Homelessness Forum, Progression Manager Kimberley, spoke about the tremendous work the Rapid Rehousing Workers, Janis and Paul, had done throughout the pandemic since joining Crisis last year. They worked tirelessly with local partners to*

*accommodate members that had been supported under 'Everyone In' to ensure they did not return to rough sleeping/homelessness, and instead were provided with secure and sustainable accommodation.*

*As things begin to get back to normal, the Crisis offices are now open three days a week: Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. As the restrictions from lockdown ease, we look forward to working with our members in a COVID-19 safe and secure environment.*

*– Ruhail Rana*

***"At last in her own home, waiting on a job offer...the future is brighter"***

## SUCCESS STORIES: OUR MEMBERS ARE BLOOMING!

Contrary to commonly held stereotypes, 'S' had always worked and successfully rented places to live. At the beginning of the pandemic she was delayed starting a job at an airport because of COVID. Forced to move back to her home town of Coventry, she arranged to stay with a friend, but her COVID vulnerability made that impossible, leaving 'S' with nowhere to stay. Having slept in her car before being put in a COVID hotel, and then in temporary accommodation, 'S' struggled where she was and became very unhappy. Trying to secure a property, she wrestled with her health whilst also trying to cope in shared accommodation.

Since working with Gemma at Crisis, 'S' was able to receive a laptop, allowing her to keep track of bills, benefits and household tasks and to occupy herself during her time in temporary accommodation. Now 'S' is in her own house and waiting on a job offer. She says that she is excited to start working and believes that the future is looking brighter. She praised Gemma's excellent support and Crisis' timely help to get her back on track. All year, our coaches and members have worked diligently together to end homelessness for good. Here's to more success in 2021!



## SUCCESS STORIES...CON'T...

Pete Gilbert, our Digital Inclusion Officer, is rolling out Crisis' national programme designed to connect members with vital tech devices and the internet to access work, learning and creative opportunities. To date, Crisis has distributed over 760 devices across England, Scotland and Wales meaning our members are more connected than ever before!

This week, Ash, our Work and Learning Coach, heard from a member to say they wanted to pass on their thanks for the laptop and all it has enabled them to achieve. They are well on their way to completing their English and Maths which will enable them to apply for University. They have also just completed a Level 3 qualification in Leadership and Management. Go team digital inclusion!

## PROGRESSION: A YEAR OF COURAGE, HOPE AND CARE

To celebrate the **Voluncheer's 1<sup>st</sup> birthday** we thought we'd share some 'Headlines' of our past year in ending homelessness. The team have continued to work tirelessly throughout the pandemic, supporting our members and working with our partner agencies to keep people safe and ensure that they had a place to go during lockdown.

Coventry City Council operated under 'Everyone In' and every homeless person in Coventry was offered a place to stay with support. This has enabled some of the hardest to engage, entrenched rough sleepers to have a place to stay and the ability to make use of the support and services they need to help them through their journey out of homelessness. The hotel where people were placed is beginning their closure, all of those placed there will be moving on to other accommodation.

So, how have Crisis Skylight Coventry got on over the past 12 months?

- We have relieved homelessness for 38% of our members

- We have prevented homelessness for 14% of our members

- Totalling ending homelessness for 52% of our members

- 14 members secured employment

As the country opens up and Spring arrives we have been thrilled to be able to see our members for face to face 'Wellbeing Walks' and are looking forward to a cuppa outside when meeting members now that the cafés are back open outdoors.

We anticipate a busy time coming up as 'Everyone In' ends and eviction bans are lifted. The team are ready to support these new members in their journey to prevent or end their homelessness.

-Kimberley Sysum and Jen Mason, Progression Managers

## WORK , LEARNING AND WELLBEING: ONE PANDEMIC YEAR ON

The Learning Team have been innovating and creating more of a blended learning offer over the last couple of weeks. This has included once again being able to provide some face to face tutorials. The team have also been making good progress with preparing the allotment to offer some gardening sessions soon and the recent launch of a book club this month has been fantastic! It has also been great to see that the online learning environment has been accessed by more members in recent weeks with a couple of individuals going on to complete an online course.

-Gareth Bunn, Learning Manager

## SPOTLIGHT ON CHAT CENTRAL



When Chat Central opened their doors in December 2019, they aimed to help support isolated people by hosting coffee mornings for fellowship and good conversation and signposting to activities in and around the City. With no idea what was around the corner, things were going swimmingly (though swimming was not yet an option!). Heather Parker (Chat Central's Engagement Officer) told us they were supporting around 70 people when the pandemic struck. With most activities suspended, they had to innovate by delivering activities online and reaching out to people over the phone. Yoga, art classes, dance and "Culture Club" (no, not a tribute band – it's an opportunity to chat all things cultural!) were offered to support isolated people with wonderful success. Telephoning to offer support and a kind ear became a key part of what they do. As success of the project grew, a Chat Central for Youth (16-25-year olds), and an Active Central for physical activity developed.

For some, online worked brilliantly, but for others online was harder for those with no digital access. Whilst the pandemic markedly shaped the sapling organisation from the start, they felt it was time to revisit Chat Central's original vision. Heather told us:

"With activities re-opening again across the city, we're signposting people to those as was our original plan. It's more sustainable for us than delivering everything in-house. We've already started to meet people outside again whenever possible." So, swimming may yet make it onto the list of Chat Central activities after all....

Find out more information here: <http://www.vacoventry.org.uk/page/chat-central> and if Chat Central sounds like something you might like to volunteer for, please contact Heather Parker [h.parker@vacoventry.org.uk](mailto:h.parker@vacoventry.org.uk) 07840 550801, to register your interest.



## SKYLIGHT Q & A: MEET BEN DAVENPORT, ARTS COORDINATOR

**Q.: When did you first join Crisis and what is your role?**

I joined Crisis all the way back in 2013 as a part time tutor, running a band and guitar lessons at a drop-in centre in Birmingham. I'm now the Arts Coordinator in Coventry and I'm responsible for our wellbeing, visual and performing arts programme.

**Q.: What did you do before?**

Before I started with Crisis, I studied Fine Art, specialising in printmaking, and did some work in community arts education and for Birmingham Museum.

**Q.: What's a typical day like for you at Crisis?**

No day is typical! I plan classes and courses, teach art and music lessons and seek out projects for people to get involved in. Best of all, I work with members every day, who bring their own unique perspectives and share their amazing ideas and experiences. We are a vibrant, creative community so no two days are ever the same.

**Q.: Have you ever volunteered and what was your experience of this?**

I was always interested in community arts, but I did some volunteering at a drop in in Digbeth that changed my life completely. I was amazed by the people I met; who were open, interesting and creative, so I started applying for jobs with homelessness charities right away!

**Q...: Cats or dogs?**

I think both are nice, but I've got a rescue dog called Kalinka.





## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

This month we introduce Gemma and Steve, our new Remote Administrator Volunteers who are helping out with editing and formatting our newsletter.



Hi, my name is Gemma. I am so excited to be joining the Crisis volunteer team to help bring you the monthly Voluncheer.

I'm a student at the University of Sussex and living in Brighton. I'm passionate about ending homelessness and enjoy writing for fun and study.

I'm Steve, and have a fab family with two youngish daughters. Lockdown has given me time to think how I spend my time, and made me realise I'd like to give something back to society.

Homelessness has always seemed very uncaring of society and very solvable, so I made contact with Crisis to see if I could help in any way....



## Tree of the Week: Magnolia



This is a zoomed in photo of a magnolia tree peeking over someone's garden fence. It was the tallest magnolia tree with the widest flowers that I had ever seen.

Although the magnolia is named after the French botanist Pierre Magnol, they actually originate from Southeast Asia and North America. There are around 210 different species of magnolia, so this is just one of the many types that you might see throughout your life.

-Gemma Drake





## THE PUZZLE PAGES

### SPRING 2021 WORDSEARCH

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|--|---|
| M Z<br>A X O A<br>G N Q D Z J<br>Y O F A D Y V F<br>V S A F B E O Q W G<br>S A P F D S E V A E L M<br>B E R O U J I Q F G R O G S<br>Z S I D N Q F F L O G S B Y P F<br>S A L I I H N V M N O S X B O R I Y<br>U I M L H N Z E R N R O H U Z G O Q D S<br>E X S M E P X E T I L G N K R W U H P N<br>R K U O J I R E B P N B O N H T R P<br>O Z N O H G T Y I I W V O A U W<br>Q P S L D P E T B Y A M N B<br>I D H B S Z A M U V G V<br>S R I C B T A S Y D<br>O V N Y I L T J<br>F O E E Q E<br>V Q Q Y<br>P X | APRIL<br>BANKHOLIDAY<br>BLOOM<br>BLOSSOM<br>BUNNIES<br>DAFFODILS<br>GREEN<br>GROW<br>LAMBING<br>LEAVES<br>MAY<br>SEASON<br>SPROUT<br>SPRUNG<br>SUNSHINE |
|--|---|

### DAD JOKES...

Why did the scarecrow win an award? He was outstanding in his field.

Sometimes I tuck my knees into my chest and lean forward. That's just how I roll.

Need answers? Email the editor



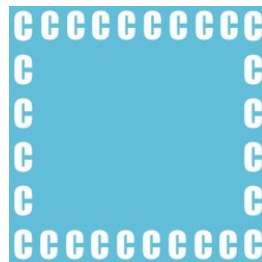


## DINGBATS

1.) Easy peasy

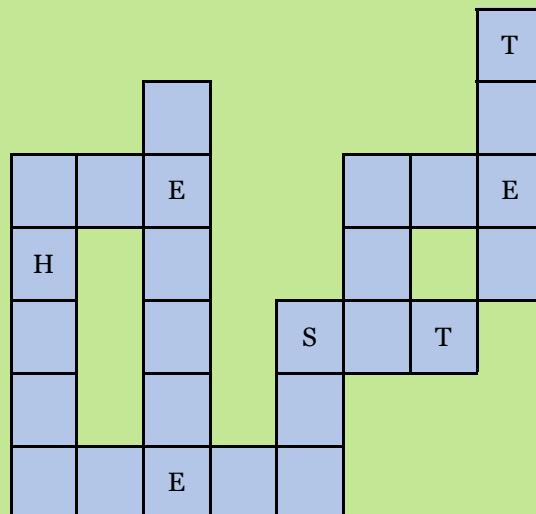
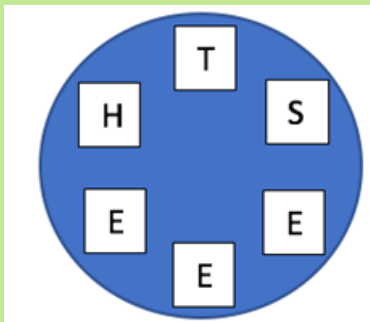
2.) Summertime means a trip to the .....?

3.) Someone's got the wrong idea



## WORDSCAPE PUZZLER

**Instructions:** Make 9 words out of the letters in the circle and write them into the grid. You must not write the same word twice.



Need answers? Email the editor