

THE VOLUNCHEER

Crisis Skylight Coventry and Warwickshire's
Volunteer Newsletter

NEW THIS ISSUE:

Letter from the Editor
From Our Director
Member Success Stories
LGBTQ+ History Month
Eleanor Sits Up for Crisis
Learning and Progression News
Q&A: Meet Jen Mason
City of Culture 2021: City Hosts
Tree of the Week
Volunteer Wellbeing Week
The Puzzle Pages

Letter from the Editor

March is a month of thresholds; with winter over but spring not yet hatched, no major holidays, and businesses often choosing this month to end their financial year. But March can be expectant, too, and full of potential – blooming snow drops, bluebells and crocuses with many folks using this hiatus to plan their next moves in life with work, family or home. For our Skylight, March looks quietly promising; meet our new Progression Manager, Jen (page 5), read about Eleanor's fund raising sit ups (page 3), and how our members celebrated LGBTQ+ History Month (page 3), and of course, Tree of the Week.! Most of all, our members are making steady progress with us in ending their homelessness for good. And that's something to write home about.

FROM OUR DIRECTOR...

February was full of fun and quizzes; Member volunteer, 'M', organised an exciting Friday afternoon Crisis Quiz, with help from Eleanor, for the Coventry and Birmingham Skylights. The questions were challenging and thoroughly enjoyable. I also put my Quiz Master skills to good use as the staff took part in weekly quizzes to help them get through the lockdown.

February was also LGBTQ+ History Month which saw the annual month-long observance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender history, and the history of the gay rights and related civil rights movements. Coventry, Newcastle and Birmingham Skylights celebrated together, inviting

members for a lively discussion and fun quiz on Zoom with the opportunity to create personalised rainbow keychains and discuss LGBTQ+ history and culture.

As things get back to 'normal' we look forward to opening Crisis offices two days a week. The re-entry group continue to meet fortnightly to ensure that staff, volunteers and members return to an extra safe office. A brief reminder, although our offices are not yet fully open, we continue to offer support to our members, work with our partners and volunteers and empower our staff to innovate better ways of working.

-Ruhail Rana, Director

"Without our help she would not have made the leap from shelter...to home"

SUCCESS STORIES: REACHING THOROUGH THE BARRIERS

This month we hear from Mel Goolding, one of our excellent Progression Coaches who has been supporting a member to move from overcrowded accommodation living with her parents into her own tenancy:

'After her privately rented tenancy ended, one of my members was living with her parents suffering ongoing mental health issues. After finally signing for her new tenancy, Crisis helped with the house move and a starter pack of essentials, without which she would have struggled to stay in her new accommodation. We also supported her application of a Community Support Grant, signposting to other agencies to apply for still other charity applications. I'm delighted to say that these were all successful, meaning, as well as receiving furniture and appliances, she can also carpet her home.

She shared with me that the process was stressful and difficult and without our help she would not have made the leap from basic shelter to a settled home. She didn't realise how much was involved in taking on a new tenancy, and told me how much she appreciates all the support and help she's received. She pleased with her new place. We are just as pleased for her.'

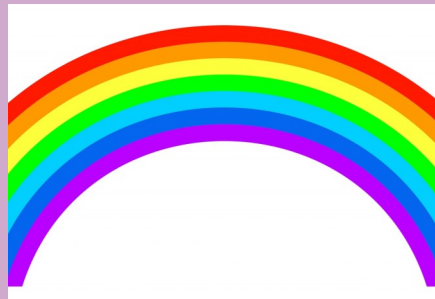
- Melanie Goolding, Progression Coach



MEMBERS CELEBRATE LGBTQ+ HISTORY

February was LGBTQ+ history month and to celebrate we held an online event making personalised rainbow keyrings. This collaborative event with Crisis Birmingham, Newcastle and Coventry and Warwickshire allowed members from across the country to connect and chat; throughout the pandemic we have realised the importance of collaborative events. For LGBTQ+ history month, it is brilliant to be able to support each other and build a strong community, regardless of geographical location. Once again, Crisis members' creativity shone through and all the keychains spoke to individual personalities. After making our keychains, we took part in a quiz to learn more about LGBTQ+ history. Crisis are allies of the LGBTQ+ community and are pleased to promote a safe space for everyone to be themselves.

-Eleanor Nunn, Christmas and Events Coordinator



CRISIS SITS UP AND TAKES NOTICE...

I have worked for Crisis Coventry and Warwickshire for over a year and a half now and I finally felt it was time to pull my socks up and really challenge myself. During the past year especially I have seen the commitment of the staff and volunteers to support our members throughout COVID-19. The resilience of people currently homeless or at risk of homelessness is something that I'm always astounded and inspired by. So I decided that I was going to do 100 sit ups a day in February (2800 total!) to raise money for Crisis. I started off the month as all fitness challenges start; motivated, excited and optimistic. As the month progressed it did get harder but changing up the ab exercises to keep things interesting definitely helped me keep going. I'm glad to say that I completed the challenge; 2800 sit ups done and just under £300 raised for Crisis! Thank you for your donations and support.

-Eleanor Nunn
Christmas and Events Coordinator



PROGRESSION: 'BETTER WHEN WE'RE TOGETHER'

Crisis Skylight are part of a newly formed working group led by Coventry City Council's Rough Sleeper Team. The **'Task and Finish Group'** will work together with partners from across the City to ensure those experiencing homelessness are placed in the right accommodation to meet their needs. The group will also support with move on routes out of homelessness for those leaving temporary accommodation, supporting them to prepare for and sustain their new homes.

NEW PROGRESSION MANAGER

Our Progression team has continued to grow over the last couple of years; it has in fact doubled! In response to this we now have two Progression Managers to support the team. Jen Mason joined us in February (Find out more on pg 5).

We are excited to be working together to best lead our team and continue to promote Crisis in the City to build partnerships.

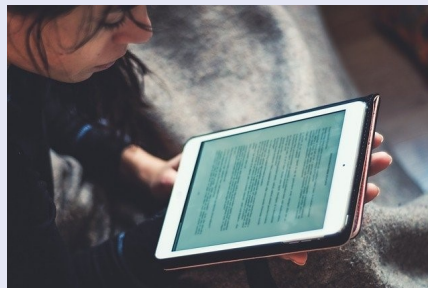
Welcome Jen 😊



LEARNING TEAM ROLL OUT VIRTUAL CLASSROOM

The learning team continue to work hard to improve the learning opportunities available to our members. This has led to a prototype of a virtual learning environment (VLE) being available for some of our members to engage with.

The team have also been continuing to develop a suite of new bespoke courses more specifically tailored to our members' needs. One of the courses which the learning team have recently offered is a Podcasting class which provided members with the opportunity to try their hand at writing, developing, editing and uploading Podcasts. The group is designed to support members with the opportunity to develop speaking, presentation and digital skills. Please note, as stated in the last Voluncheer, we are currently trialling a new way of offering the learning side of our service, as such these courses



are currently only available to members who have a Crisis lead worker that has identified a need for a particular course in line with the members wider plan to end their homelessness.

-Gareth Bunn, Learning Manager

SKYLIGHT Q & A: MEET JEN MASON, PROGRESSION MANAGER

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

I joined Crisis Skylight Coventry & Warwickshire team on 1st February as a Progression Manager.

Q.: What did you do before?

I've been working in housing and homelessness for around 10 years, I've worked for local authorities and prior to joining Crisis I was working at Shelter, most recently as part of the Housing First management team. I have two girls who take up most of my free time outside of working!

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

My days at Crisis are varied, I could be attending meetings with partner agencies, supporting staff with queries, or looking at reports. I'm looking forward to getting to meet members, volunteers, and staff in 'real life' in the not to distant future as currently lots of my time is spent on Zoom!

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

I used to volunteer at a drama group for children with Downs Syndrome, it was great fun and seeing the children flourish and perform was amazing.

Q...: Cats or dogs?

Dogs all the way, although my children are trying to persuade me to adopt a cat.



Volunteering Opportunities

Coventry City of Culture 2021 are recruiting 5,000 local 'City Hosts' to help visitors to the city access arts events and historical tours and sign-post to local amenities

If you love local history, championing our city or celebrating the arts and have a little time (or a lot!) you can apply here:

<https://coventry2021.co.uk/get-involved/>



Tree of the Week:



This tall field sentry of a tree was snapped and sent to me by Lucky Lowe, one of our stalwart volunteers who lives out in a rural area where trees like this one can really breathe and reach up to the sky without restrictions.

March is a time for trees to begin to wake up from the winter and start to grow again, and this tree is showing tiny buds which will be flowers

and then leaves. If anyone can identify this amazing fellow, please give me shout as I'd love to know.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Volunteer Wellbeing Week 1-7 March

This week we've been celebrating and promoting our volunteer community by promoting wellbeing events and activities designed to connect volunteers to one another and creative, practical and fun sessions to try out. Our Skylight sent out additional wellbeing packs to all our volunteers with colourful postcards and bookmarks with positive wellbeing messages.



We think these were appreciated as one of our member volunteers got in touch to say:

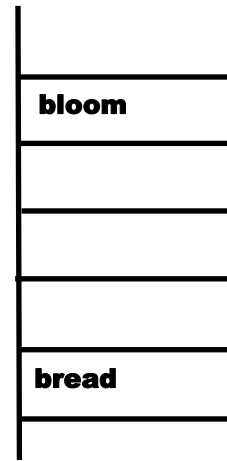
'Thank you so much I feel really blessed, it was real nice to get the little package that you sent me, thank you so much. Your organisation makes me feel so special. I haven't done much to deserve all the things Crisis Coventry Skylight has done and is still doing in my life.'

I am forever grateful...Coventry Skylight are the Stars...for dedicating your life to help end homelessness.'





GAMES AND PUZZLES



Starting at either end, change one word into another by only changing one letter on each rung of the word ladder

What number should replace the “?”

10	6	7	4
5	1	6	3
4	3	2	5
9	8	1	?

Fill in the missing numbers on the grid.

2	?	6	?
?	3	?	9
5	?	15	?
?	17	?	37



Need answers? Just email the editor!