

Preventing & overcoming homelessness together



*The bridge*TM (East Midlands)

Annual Report
2023-24

Registered with



FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR



About Us

At The Bridge (East Midlands), we work **without judgement**.

Our passionate team collaborates with the community to **prevent and relieve homelessness for local people in all circumstances**.

We support people holistically and empower people to address their root causes of housing instability, to create long-lasting change.

Through providing a range of specialist housing related advice, support and assistance services, we aim to achieve our vision of resilient, compassionate communities where we all thrive **in safe and secure homes**.

We are proud to have been working in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland for 29 years: we thank John Storer House for their partnership in allowing us space for our Triage team to engage with local people.



John
Storer
Charnwood

Visit our website



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Chair's Message

What a difference a year can make in an organisation...

We started 2023 with our own challenges and delivery fears: with funding scarce but the need for our services increasing daily. Like many organisations nationally, we experienced high staff turnover. Starting the year, we were without a CEO and relied heavily on our Strategic Leadership Team to support the organisation- they rose to the occasion.

Our new CEO, **Nash Chhatralia** joined us at the beginning of August 2023 and had an immediate positive impact on the organisation. New systems and processes were introduced by the Leadership Team which have streamlined administration and enabled us to provide up to the minute statistics, as well as reversing the trend of staff turnover.

We began the year looking like we would be overspent, but with careful financial and service management together with the generous donations from our funders, we ended the year with a small surplus- the first I can ever remember in my 13 years as a Trustee.

Having read stories from our services users and knowing how bad homelessness is nationwide, our services are even more vital as people struggle to manage day to day living, debt, homelessness, and food or fuel poverty. Goodness knows how the coming months are going to impact on people's lives with taxation due to rise even further.

Raising funds for our work is vital. Several individuals have made significant contributions. We are also incredibly grateful to have been awarded funding by a number of funders, and been supported by our partners through new ways of working. We celebrate them throughout this report.

Who would have thought 30 years ago that the small acorn formed from The Bridge would have grown so much? But growth, consistent funding and positive recognition are only achieved by having dedicated and committed staff. Headed by our CEO and our Strategic Leadership and Management Teams, our staff continue to deliver amazing services. I give all of our staff mine and Trustees' heartfelt thanks for all the work that they have achieved.

With our new Business Strategy developed in consultation with staff and the Board, we aim to proactively seek opportunities that will ensure that we remain strategically relevant to meet our clients' changing needs.

My thanks also go to our hard-working Trustees, who do so much more than just turning up at a bimonthly meeting, getting involved and supporting the organisation in so many ways. Particular thanks go to our Vice Chair **David Sims**, who has steadfastly supported me as Chair, especially on the Finance Sub Committee. Thanks go to **Gary Beharrell** for his support with the Articles of Association and Business Strategy, while **Joe Warwick** and **Bhavna Patel** (one of our first Ambassadors) are a great help on the Fundraising Committee. Thanks to **Richard White** and **Ashiedu Joel** for their oversights on a number of reviews and strategic management issues. We also welcomed our new Trustee **Halinka Hepworth**, who supported the review of our HR Policies and Procedures.

Organisations such as ours, can only achieve what we do with the additional help and support of our volunteers and the partner organisations, members of the business community, schools, and the public for their generous donations. So lastly, I would like to thank them all for their help and continued support.

Jay Webb
Chair of Trustees



A Thank You from the CEO

Hello! Welcome to our 2023-2024 Annual Report.

Having started my role in August of 2023, it has been an exciting adventure thus far – but not without its challenges. Demand for our services continues to rise, and this is combined with higher expenses and tightened belts of funders and supporters, due to cost-of-living.

However, this first year in post has been made so enjoyable because of our incredible staff team; their dedication and work ethic, outstanding knowledge and in-depth understanding of the needs of local people have truly blown me away. I am proud to be leading such a team.

Similarly, the partnerships fostered with other organisations and authorities within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland have enabled even more impactful and efficient results for the people we support. Equally, I have been delighted to see the passion of our fundraisers and supporters, taking on immense challenges and creating exciting events, all to raise money for our cause. I thank our partners and supporters deeply for their continued dedication – you are changing lives.

I am happy to say that we have finished this year having recovered financial losses seen in 2022-23. And, having finalised a new Business Strategy, The Bridge is looking forward to much-needed developments and expansion, but most importantly remaining consistent, steady and reliable for the thousands of local people referred to us, every year. I look forward to another year of growth, impact and expansion.



Nash Chhatralia
CEO of The Bridge East Midlands

The National Picture

It is no secret that homelessness is rising. Recent reports by Crisis state that nationally in 2023, **rough sleeping rose by 27%**.

The cost of living is undoubtedly affecting us all, but many of us may not realise the realities of those rising homelessness numbers within our own communities: households thrust into food and fuel poverty, to the brink of housing instability, and homelessness.

The Governments Autumn Rough Sleeper snapshot 2023 suggests that the number of rough sleepers on a given night in the **East Midlands** was up to **287**, from 213 in 2022; an enormous 100 individuals more than reported in 2020.

And that is without the inclusion of all the **hidden homeless**: those sofa surfing, homeless out of sight, in cars, hotels or squatting.

While research in 2023 from Shelter showed that general homelessness was up by 14%, with 309000 people facing a Christmas without a secure home, they stated that the **East Midlands has the biggest annual increase of general homelessness** in the country, of 33% , from 5,900 people to almost 7,900.

Did you know...

279,400 people are living in temporary accommodation

+14%

17% of households experienced moderate or severe food insecurity

47%

of families who are homeless in temporary accommodation have been there for more than 2 years

2023-24 Impact

We dealt with **19% more** referrals to our services

5632



95%

said their housing conditions improved

100%



of survey responders stated they were happy with the service they received

that's +5% from 22-23!

and we prevented or relieved homelessness for **88%** of those cases!



100%

improved their financial circumstances

95%

felt more independent
up 8%

100%



felt better able to make their own choices



99%

said their physical health improved

97%

said their mental health improved



both +4% from 22-23!



67%

said they were consuming less alcohol/drugs

75%

said they reduced involvement in anti-social behaviour

94%

were making more positive life choices



93% stated their confidence and communication skills improved



knew of other services to help them

99%

statistics given reflect referrals and respondents to our feedback survey

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t
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t
s

1. We will strengthen our current offer
2. We will ensure that everyone continues to be valued, nurtured, and respected
3. We will develop a creative, sustainable, and future focused charitable organisation
4. We will be advocates of best practice with an embedded culture of continual improvement

1. Last year, our Specialist Housing Advisors saw 41 more cases. Within this increase, we are seeing more preventative cases; people coming for advice before reaching crisis point. We have also expanded services county-wide, strengthening our offer. These included: adding a second Mediator to lower county-wide talk²sort waiting lists, creating new Housing Advice Hubs to support people in new locations, and vacancies were filled, improving capacity to deal with clients,
2. We have nurtured staff ethos and successfully reversed a 2022-23 in staff turnover; vacancies have been filled and staff have been listened to in regards to feeding into Benefits Package concepts and business plan ideas.
3. We have created a new, Board approved business plan, and invested into our Fundraising team to ensure stability of income, and consequent continuation of services.
4. We have sought to develop staff with accessible training courses and support, begun evaluation processes of measuring our impact and ensuring best practice for capturing client feedback, as well as continuing our Advice Quality Standard certified status.

Our Services...

We started this year with ambitious plans to recruit into our vacancies, to fulfil our service delivery obligations and continue to extend our reach across the county and deliver support in-person...

I'm so pleased to be able to say we succeeded!

Henry Smith Charity funding has enabled us to retain a key role in the organisation: providing oversight, guidance and strategic development of our services.

And, consequently, we were proudly able to:



fully staff a
countywide Rough
Sleeper Outreach team



nearly fully staff a full
Accommodation Advice Team,
working with single homeless men
with offending histories

... in addition to 2 new Service Managers for those teams.

Thanks to funding from Melton Mowbray, Hinckley & Rugby and Harborough Building Societies (in addition to the 3-year National Lottery funding received in 22-23) we have expanded our in-person advice and support offer across Leicestershire. This allowed us to offer Specialist Housing Advice and Housing triage services in Harborough, Melton, North West Leicestershire and Oadby & Wigston, in addition to our base in Charnwood Borough, allowing us to reach an **additional 114 households this year.**

A huge thanks goes to a variety of partners for allowing us to co-locate in those areas, including: Helping Hands, Falcon Support Services, Melton Library, Melton Storehouse, Kibworth Well Café, Loughborough Wellbeing Café and Children & family services in their Family Wellbeing Service hubs. Look out for us on their Family Hubs website!

We have also successfully delivered against our Housing Support contract this year; consequently, the LLR NHS Partnership Trust awarded us continued funding for Housing Support for another year. In addition, we stepped in to offer some housing support hours for households in temporary accommodation in North West Leicestershire.

Funded by:

The
Henry Smith
Charity

As a result of the increased funding support, we were able to continue our AQS accredited advice regarding housing rights and options – including to mortgage holders and in line with updated guidance.

This year, our Triage team have:

made 825 applications to the household support fund



and distributed the local welfare fund for fuel and food to an average of 166 households per quarter in Charnwood



Because of this, Leicestershire County Council recently awarded us a 2-year contract for distributing food and fuel provision to households across the wider county.

The National Lottery Awards For All also funded us to deliver 15 hours a week of Tenancy Relations/Housing Advice across the county, including an underserved area in the city centre for 2024-25.

We also...

handed over Your Store in Mountsorrel to the Your Store Team at John Storer House: thank you Mountsorrel Community Support Fund!



and gathered evaluation from 2 Loughborough University PHD students, who assessed the need for in-person Triage



Lastly, but by no means least, we successfully bid to the Masonic Charitable Foundation: the 2-year funding agreement increased our Talk2Sort Mediation Service and directly reduced our waiting list.

Our services are now also registered with the First Contact Plus website and Joy social prescribing website which is another route for people to make contact us for our services.

We continue onwards in 2024-25, aiming to reach more communities, achieve re-accreditation with Advice Quality Standards and remain dedicated to preventing homelessness!

Anna Maudsley
Head of Programmes & Services



Advice and Homelessness



"Great staff who are incredibly supportive"

Triage

Our Triage team are the first point of contact for clients facing crisis, but also for other organisations looking to refer somebody, received via:

phone, email, website and in-person drop-ins

Our compassionate and experienced team identify the client's needs and provide support immediately where possible, or refer into one of our specialist service areas and other agencies where appropriate.

They ensure that we offer a welcoming, supportive environment and appreciate that taking a 'first step' to seek assistance can be very daunting for our clients. They offer confidential and impartial advice so that clients are able to discuss their situation with confidence.

Over the last year we have continued to provide triage drop-in services at our hubs in Loughborough, Melton and Oadby and Wigston to maximise accessibility to our services. We also have increased the number of housing advice drop ins across the county to ensure that clients who do not have access to online services or a telephone are able to speak to an adviser. We believe in meaningful support.

The team receive referrals for housing advice, they help to obtain household items and white goods; refer to ongoing floating support and advice regarding advance rent and deposit payments and assist with food and fuel provision. In fact, with Leicestershire County Council funding, they supported 552 households with food & fuel this year.

This year they
received
3299
enquiries

After triage contact **100%**
of feedback stated improved
financial circumstances

Mark Chandler
Services Manager



Paul's Story

Triage



Paul's Story

Triage

I first heard about The Bridge when I moved to a new flat. They helped me create my new home, giving me blankets, bedding, things like that.

When I found them again in John Storer House, I was so relieved- I thought they'd closed after they moved from Leicester Road! Thank God, because people need them, with the rising costs of living. As soon as you're stressed out about those things, you can't focus, especially when you have other problems or mental health issues, like me. The Triage team show you the right direction.

Over the years, Triage have supported me with the YourStore Food Bank, as well as getting me in touch with a Specialist Housing Advisor to help me assist my brother, who has a health condition.

But the biggest thing they've helped me with is the electric top-ups and bills. When prices went up, I wasn't able to pay; the companies say they'll help you but you end up paying them back even more, and I racked up a bit of debt. I didn't want to borrow from the companies anymore because I knew I couldn't keep on top of the repayments. Having The Bridge there to help me, so I could cook and have heating, took pressure off.

I've been in there so stressed out I can't think, and they've calmed me down; they've helped me and I've just felt so much better. They're giving me some actual steps forward and things to do. It just makes the impossible seem possible. There's not that much help there for people, but The Bridge are there.
If you need support, reach out to Triage.



Housing Advice

The Housing Advice Team provide specialist advice, advocacy and assistance on all housing related matters to the homeless, social tenants, private tenants and landlords over the age of 18. Demand for the service has remained consistently high over the last year and our clients circumstances have been exacerbated by economic instability and ongoing insecurity in the private rental sector.

The Housing Advice Team received 734 referrals from households in need of advice and support regarding their housing situation. The team have worked with 42 additional cases this year compared to 2022/2023. Of those clients advised by the service, 47% were either statutorily homeless or facing homelessness within 56 days and 11% had experienced rough sleeping.

During the year the primary causes of homelessness have been the end of an assured shorthold tenancy and relationship breakdown, closely followed by parental/family eviction and violence and harassment. One of our primary objectives this year has been to extend the advice service across Leicestershire.

Working closely with other agencies including the Children and Family Wellbeing Service, The Well Café in Kibworth, Melton Library, Falcon Support Services and Coalville CAN, we have established advice drop in hubs across the county. This has improved accessibility to both housing advice and a range of other support services we deliver. In feedback:

88%

stated they had avoided becoming homeless

96%

stated they were better informed about their housing options

Funded by:



Stella's Story

Housing Advice

It was a nightmare situation. I was in one room in a shared house with my one-year-old and my three-year-old who is severely autistic. We shared with two women and two men, and there were two bathrooms for us all. I was also pregnant at the time.

I'd tried with the council and made a housing application myself, but there were so many delays. Eventually I was advised to visit The Bridge by a few different organisations, and my Housing Advisor there was so incredibly helpful.

He believed our house might be overcrowded, so he was able to get in touch with the Private Sector Housing Team at the council who came out to check if the accommodation was not suitable- especially with my pregnancy and my kid's condition. The council worker had a look, did the measurements, checked around the property, then she was able to escalate things: she classed it as hazardous. From then, things were able to be prioritised by the council. I needed to leave that place.

But my priority band kept being changed, and eventually my whole application was suspended. It was very strange and through no fault of my own. I reached out again to my Housing Advisor at The Bridge, who was always kindly calling to check up on my situation as well.

I explained that I wasn't sure what was happening. He investigated and got the report re-forwarded to the council: from there, I was put back into the bidding process and into band one priority. It didn't even take very long after that before I was able to bid on a property, thankfully...

Funded by:



I managed to get a three-bedroom house- it felt amazing. But I didn't know anything about social housing and that it comes unfurnished. You must do it all yourself, so it was a big surprise when I got to the house and saw that it's completely empty. There was no flooring whatsoever, no white goods, nothing. Again, I reached out to my favourite person: my Housing Advisor.

He reached out to CharityLink, who provided me with a washing machine and gas cooker. For the flooring, I was able to sort out a payment plan. I know how financially strained I've been, I am still not in a very good shape but I have been very lucky to have been supported with household support funds too. Finally, I was also referred to the food bank, as well as the SOFA charity shop in Loughborough: its second-hand furniture and I was able to purchase some items at a very reduced rate.

The Bridge has just been a lifesaver if I'm honest. Now we're settled into our new home, it's just give me something to look forward to. I was in a very bad shape; I was pregnant, I was mentally drained, it was exhausting.

Plus, because my son is severely autistic, he has additional needs and severe behavioural challenges. He was attacking my other child, and when you put them in the confined into one bedroom... You can't imagine what the situation was like. Constant panicking: if I had to go to the bathroom I had to take them. It was a constant nightmare.

I can separate them now and do things. It just brought peace to my life and freedom for him as well; he can have a room to play and explore. It's been a very great relief. Mentally, physically, emotionally. I can't put it into words.

My advice to anyone that finds themselves in a similar situation: simply seek help.



Housing & Mental Health

Housing crisis, instability and homelessness considerably impact on mental health and wellbeing. Consequently, poor mental health can make sustaining accommodation very difficult.

As a result, in 2021, Vita Health Group agreed to fund our Specialist Housing Advisor, to provide housing advice and support with a focus on mental wellbeing.

The service is available to clients across Leicestershire, Rutland and Leicester City and has remained consistently busy, with 160 referrals last year (a rise of 14%).

The team provide advice on a wide range of matters including:

- Housing Options
- Notices and court action
- Housing Benefit queries
- Mortgage and rent arrears
- Succession
- Antisocial behaviour
- Neighbour disputes
- Property maintenance

Vita Health Group offer a range of Cognitive Behavioural Therapies to support clients experiencing mental health issues and help promote wellbeing. The partnership has enabled joint drop in sessions and community events to promote access to mental health services and identify the barriers experienced by members of the community when trying to do so. Of this years clients, main causes of homelessness were:

the end of an
assured shorthold tenancy
23%

&

relationship
breakdown
16%

We are proud that 100% of client feedback stated their homelessness issue was resolved and they had a better understanding of their options.

Funded by:



Floating Housing Support

Our Floating Housing Support service has been funded by the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland NHS Partnership Trust under their Getting Help in Neighbourhoods scheme since 2022.

The service can be accessed by families and individuals across Leicestershire and offers both ongoing floating support and one off 'drop in' options to assist with a particular issue.

Our team facilitate tenancy sustainment by supporting clients with budgeting, maximising income and ensuring appropriate benefits are in place; providing assistance to apply for funding to obtain household items; helping clients access debt management services and referring clients in financial difficulty for food and fuel provision.

In 2023, we received additional funding from North West Leicestershire District Council to provide housing support for those specifically living in temporary accommodation.

Demand for the service has remained consistently high and over the last year we have received 82 referrals requesting housing related support. It has become apparent that agencies delivering this type of service have diminished in recent months. Feedback showed:

100%

of clients who gave feedback said their mental health had improved

100%

of clients who gave feedback said their housing conditions had improved

Mark Chandler
Services Manager



Ashley's Story

Housing Support

"Being homeless, life was an uphill struggle from the jump."

Since I was little, I have suffered with ADHD. When I was at school, I really struggled with the subjects and found it hard to connect with other kids: everything made me feel like the odd one out.

My family life was horrible. With no love or support from anyone at home and my parents always arguing, it wasn't a healthy environment to grow up in. Unfortunately, not having that support stemmed a lot of my mental health problems, like EUPD (emotionally unstable personality disorder).

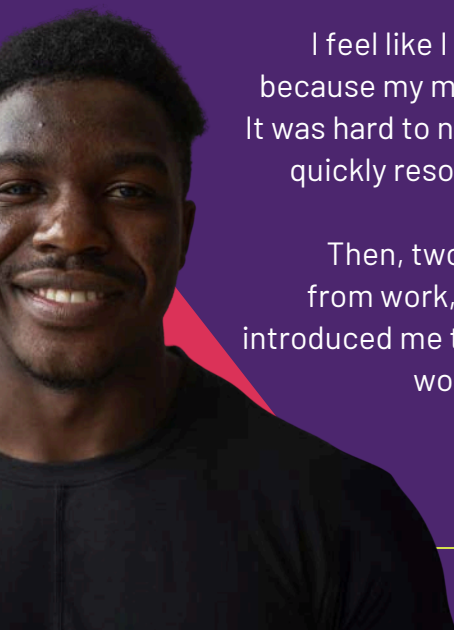
Because of this introduction into life, I've always really struggled... Making mistakes and bad decisions. As a result, my parents kicked me out at 17 and I just went from bad to worse. At 18 I was diagnosed with depression, hypertension, and anti-social behaviour syndrome.

I don't think I ever recovered from all the trauma, and as a result I've been homeless 3 times, lived in countless places and had probably 50 jobs.

I feel like I have been trapped in a horrible, toxic circle, because my mental health has been a problem for so long. It was hard to navigate, with no family support and Doctor's quickly resorting to medication... I didn't feel listened to.

Then, two years ago, my life changed. I got signed off from work, my mental health at its worst... But a friend introduced me to The Bridge and a Housing Support Officer working with clients with mental health issues.

We had a phone call to see if she could help.
Everything changed for the better.



She supported me with Universal Credit applications, the Council, paperwork and the bidding process for a flat, but also referred me to the food bank. You pay £3 for a few bags of shopping, and I couldn't have survived without it with the cost-of-living.

To help me get diagnosed and receive the correct medication, she also helped me with the doctors and my psychiatrist at the Bradgate Unit. Unfortunately, I had lots of my appointments cancelled over 9 months: if you're waiting, try and be patient. You will get there. I've also started receiving PIP financial support, after my Support Officer assisted me with the forms. It took the pressure off my shoulders.

When I was accepted into a council flat, my Support Officer applied for a grant, so that I could get a new washing machine. I couldn't afford anything, so she got me out of a mess- big time! She checks in on me and makes sure I'm ok. I'm not used to any of that... It's truly wonderful and I will remember her for the rest of my life.

Now I have a brand new flat, new medication, and I have a new chapter of my life to start afresh. With all the bad stuff in the rear-view mirror, it is going to take a long time to recover but this is the best my life has been. I can't say thanks enough.

For anyone out there with no family or support, please listen when I say there is hope and light at the end of the tunnel: it is called THE BRIDGE. I couldn't have done this without my Support Officer, and I dread to think what would have happened to me if I hadn't found this support.

My story is real life... If I can make it, you guys can too. All you have to do is find John Storer House- that is the first step to support, positivity and all the help you will need. Good luck to everyone.

Funded by:



Leicester, Leicestershire
and Rutland

Young People & Families



Youth homelessness can have an enormous affect on the rest of an individuals life. In fact, it can result in low educational attainment, substance abuse, anti-social behaviour, involvement in crime, poor physical and mental health, and risk of violence and abuse- all of which have a huge impact on life chances.

Sadly, the risk of homelessness for young people continues to be on the rise, with an estimated 136,000 nationally presenting to their council as homeless or at risk of homelessness between April 22 and March 23. Shockingly, that's **1 in 52 young people homeless or at risk**.

This shows a 5% increase on the previous year. Locally, though:

Leicestershire had
approximately
1147
young people presenting
as homeless

Leicester City had
approximately
906.

Of those, approximately
only 22%
had positive outcomes
(including supported into
accommodation)

A crucial factor within these youth homelessness statistics is that 54% of cases were caused by family being no longer willing or able to accommodate.

The need for prevention is clear. Our Young People & Families Services seek to improve familial relationships, identify support networks, signpost to further assistance around the root causes of conflict, and ensure that young people and their families are equipped with knowledge of housing options, to ultimately prevent youth homelessness.

talk²sort Mediation

Our talk²sort mediation service is a nationally commended service that supports 11-19 year olds who are at risk of homelessness through running away, or being asked to leave their family home.

It addresses the primary cause of youth homelessness: family relationship breakdown.

The mediation sessions are led by qualified mediators on a 1-1 basis or in family groups, providing a safe, confidential space for young people and families to talk about their experience and explore their conflict, improve communication and discuss perspectives, for up to 12 sessions.

Issues addressed in Mediation can include things like:

- Arguments, disagreements, and breakdowns in communication
- Anti-social behaviour
- Issues associated with a lack of income
- Managing anger and verbal or physical aggression
- Concerns around substance misuse
- Criminal or sexual exploitation
- Mental health and general emotional wellbeing
- Issues around the young person not being in education, employment, or training

We are very pleased that we received a 2 year grant from the L&R Freemasons Charity to increase the number of mediators. Thanks to them, and Charnwood Borough Council, the team have been able to work with 40 young people and their families this year through a combination of school drop in sessions, 1:1 appointments and joint sessions with family.

Funded by:

 Charnwood



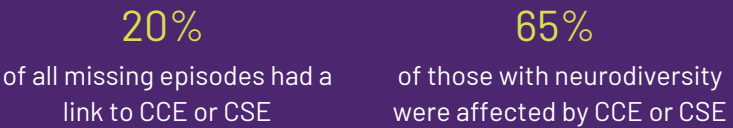
Because of this, we managed to reduce our waiting list by 42%, meaning that more young people and families can access support in a timely manner.

Out of the 40 families we have worked with this year:



Mental health concerns were a common factor for all of our families this year, and other issues include substance use, domestic abuse and excessive gaming which, for our young males in these cases was also linked with poor school attendance.

While thankfully, child criminal exploitation (CCE) and child sexual exploitation (CSE) affects a low number of our families this year, it has a very high impact:



Families are often worried that their conflicts arise as a result of poor parenting, but actually the stats above show that young people are exposed to a wide variety of external stressors that can be compounded by their own vulnerabilities. We support them to explore and discuss these stressors without conflict.

Anna Maudsley
Head of Programmes & Services



Ethyn's Story

talk²sort

My parents split up in 2022 and even before that I'd had some issues with my Dad. We were struggling and he was also having arguments and difficulties with my sister. We didn't feel like we could deal with it anymore. Lots of differing opinions on so many different things. It really affected our relationship, and I also didn't get on well with his new girlfriend.

All of it changed how much I could focus. I'd be in lessons and I would not be able to think about the work at all. Instead, I'd be replaying scenarios. If me and Dad had an argument, I'd think I'd moved on from it, but then at school I'd be thinking about the different scenarios of what could happen, how I should message him, replaying in my mind how I'd dealt with it.

My mental health got really bad. Stress made me start overeating, indulging in bad foods. I'd get through loads and loads of it without even realising the reason was stress.

I was speaking to my teacher and looking at solutions because it had been going on for a long time, and was told about talk²sort. I'm still not really the type of person to ask for support but my mum was recommending it as well: she knew I couldn't just keep living the way that I was living and finding things difficult. You have to try and find ways to move on.

talk²sort made sense to me because it was about trying to improve our family's relationship. In sessions, I would speak about my issues, my opinions or how I thought I could deal with things.

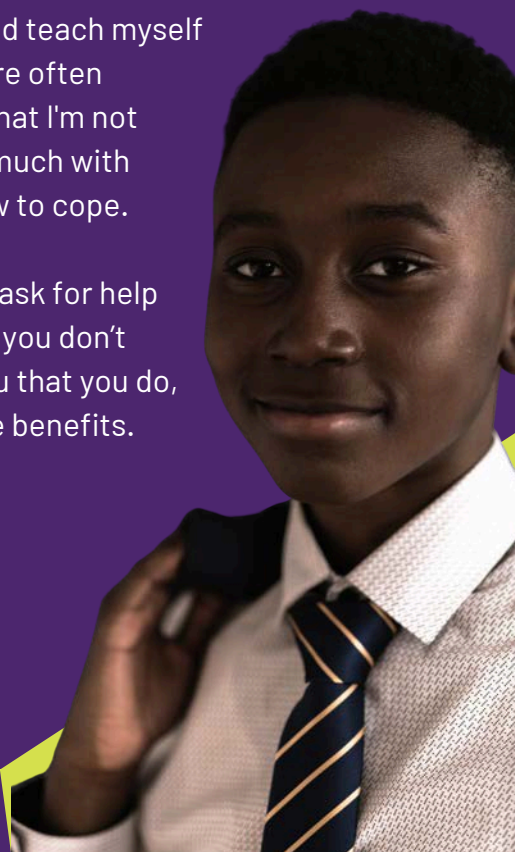
At times I would be challenged on that – not being told off, but it would help me reflect and think to myself actually I probably thought about that wrong! It made my decisions much better.

Because I was talking about issues to my Mediator, I wouldn't be stuck replaying those scenarios anymore. I was sleeping better and focusing more, even when we had arguments.

My sister and my dad both had sessions on their own too. We thought it would be good to do a joint session, but that might be something we do in the future. Dad was against it at first, but he has actually suggested we do more, because we had finished our Mediation sessions but there's been more stuff going on recently.

But now, because of what I'd learnt, I deal with it better. I've been able to learn from mistakes and teach myself how I can handle things better. There are often recurring issues, but the difference is that I'm not as angry as I was. I'm not struggling as much with my mental health because I learned how to cope.

I think it's really important to be able to ask for help when you need it. Even if you think that you don't need it, but maybe others are telling you that you do, then they're probably right! You will see benefits.



Single Access Point

Our SAP Advisor works closely with young people between the ages of 16 and 17 who are either homeless or potentially facing homelessness due to the difficulties they experience living at home.

It is one of our longest running services, and a vital element of our youth homelessness prevention work (an area for which we have been nationally recognised). Support is often in-depth and can last for weeks.

Young people needing our help are often facing difficulties due to relationship breakdown with other members of the family, where options for mediation have not been successful.

Of the young people our Advisor worked with, 67% initially reported that their family were no longer willing to accommodate them; however, as a result of working with our Advisor, the majority of young people were able to return safely to their families.



Clients who approach us directly for support or are referred by other agencies are often very vulnerable. An essential element of our work is to advise the young person of their housing options, advocate on their behalf and liaise with the family, children services, and local authorities with the aim of supporting them to find somewhere safe to live.



100% of clients who gave feedback said their independence had improved, and their life chances had increased.

Mark Chandler
Programme Manager

*SAP: inspired by a real client,
we have written this with
changes for privacy purposes*

Tori's Story*

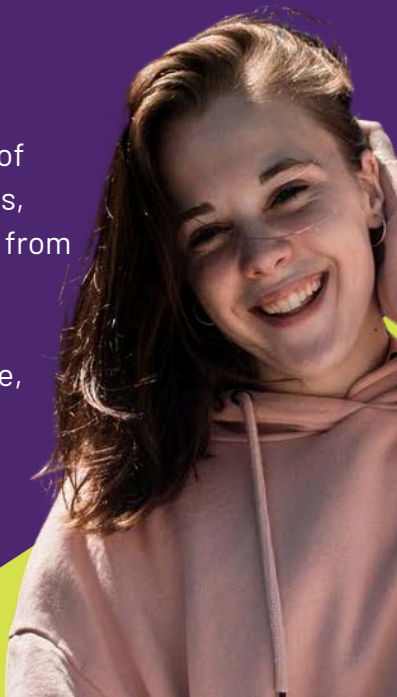
It started when I was asked to leave supported accommodation, that I had been provided by social care. I'd had lots of disagreements with other people living there... They would bully me, steal my belongings and bang on my door late at night.

For a little while I stayed with my parents, but was unable to stay long term as social care felt that I was a risk to my younger siblings after some of my behaviour.

Social Care offered me another placement, but I felt like I couldn't accept it because I was worried that I'd run into similar issues to before. I knew I wanted completely independent accommodation, but Social Care didn't have any that they could offer at the time. Because I'd refused one place, my social worker said that they would not offer any further supported accommodation, so now my only option was to stay with other family.

Finally I spoke to a SAP Housing Advisor, and he discussed things with my parents too. Because of those conversations and talking about all options, I decided I would really benefit from the support from social care, even though I'd prefer to live alone.

My SAP Advisor spoke to my social worker for me, to see if they could provide another offer, which they did. He was able to secure that alternative supported accommodation for me, so now I have somewhere safe to stay.



Street Homeless & Offenders



Dynamic Framework

Subcontracted by NACRO, as part of the Ministry of Justice Dynamic Framework, our Accommodation Advice team supports males aged 18+ in our city and county, who are under probation supervision and facing homelessness.

We operate within local prisons and probation offices providing advice and guidance, collaborating with multiple agencies to address the complex needs of our clients.

The past year has presented us with numerous challenges, including an increase in the extensive checks for staff members who are working in this team.

Because of this requirement, although crucial for ensuring safety, we saw significant delays in recruitment, leaving our team operating at less than 50% capacity for the majority of the year.

Despite these hurdles we persevered: eventually reaching a fantastic team of six and a service manager. We remained committed to providing comprehensive support to our service users, assisting many in overcoming homelessness.

758 clients received an assessment and advice within 10 working days of their referral!

We are proud to have been able to deal with so many hundreds of referrals, considering our staffing capacity for such a large part of the year.

Funded by:

Nacro >

Our team underwent additional training to establish a presence at HMP Leicester and HMP Fosse Way.



From this, we were able to ensure individuals being released there received thorough assessments before re-integrating into society.

There have indeed been other obstacles; the ongoing housing and cost of living crises have had a detrimental impact. People in all scenarios are struggling to obtain and sustain affordable housing.

This is often worse for those with criminal records: even with our support, offenders can face additional barriers to accommodation, exacerbated by the limited housing available and rising prices.

Despite this, we are proud of the success stories that have emerged from our support, with many individuals accessing accommodation and reducing their involvement in offending. This demonstrates the positive impact our service has on those we work with and how long-lasting changes can be with the right support.

Looking ahead, the demand for our service continues to increase. With a fully staffed team, we are determined to overcome barriers, empower our clients, lowering the likelihood and risk of reoffending.



Grace Gallimore
Service Manager

Byron's Story

I was referred to my Advisor and she gave me a call first, then we met at the Probation Office, and she asked where I would like to live.

At the time, I was living between my sister's and my mum's, and it was one of my biggest stressors. We just kept arguing and having to move about constantly meant that whenever I saw my kids, it was never just me and them... It was my time with the kids and everyone else.

When I started working with my Advisor, within about six weeks I had somewhere to live, in a shared house. She had found somewhere just down the road from my mum's, which was great as I can just walk there.

When I moved in, she brought me a Starter Pack with things like cutlery, cups and vouchers to get home things. I didn't have those things before, I was starting from scratch. It took a lot of stress off my shoulders.

I had been in touch with services before, but it always felt like a dead end. This time is the first time anything has come out of it; my advisor helped me with anything and always checked in with me.

I'd lost my Birth Certificate for example, and she helped me get one. I didn't know where to start with those things. And, having my own space has really helped me in not re-offending... Before, being constantly on the go, I just ended up getting in trouble. Now I've been out for 8 months.

I feel better about the future now-
it's a new start.



Rough Sleeper Support

Our Outreach and Supported Lettings Teams support people who are rough sleeping, and assist them with maintaining suitable long-term accommodation. We work in partnership with Falcon Support Services, EMH Homes and the District Housing Authorities across Leicestershire and Rutland, as part of DLUHC's Rough Sleeper Initiative.

The Outreach Team are dynamic and reactive, checking areas from 6am daily; areas where people have been seen, but also areas with no reports to find hidden rough sleepers. We support vulnerable individuals with complex needs in transitioning from rough sleeping, to thriving in safe and secure housing - it's not simply a case of identifying them. We also liaise with specialist organisations, advocating for people to achieve lasting change.

Our support is hugely varied including rapport building, referrals into temporary accommodation, assisting clients to obtain essential items, supporting access into treatment services, mental health support and/or providing sustenance such as warm drinks and food whilst awaiting access into accommodation.

In 2023-24,



99% of all rough sleeper reports were responded to within 72hrs.

204 individuals were verified sleeping rough

Funded by:

100% were engaged with and supported


**North West
Leicestershire**
District Council

2902

checks for rough sleepers were conducted by our Outreach Team across Leicestershire and Rutland.

... **Did you know?** Rough sleeping fluctuates in the year, in Summer the amount of rough sleepers on any single night doubled to 22, from 11 in Spring.

Our **Supported Lettings Team** support the progress of these same individuals from rough sleeping to helping to successfully maintaining their housing.

The intensive, person-centred support provided to clients is hugely varied and ranges from helping people to understand and manage their rights and responsibilities, exploring viable and sustainable long-term options, applying for essential household items, maximising their income and giving advice and assistance around treatment and recovery.

Individuals who suffer homelessness often have complex situations and needs. Supported Lettings allows us to support people through the root causes of their case, for long lasting impact. **In 2023-24,**

42 individuals have been intensively supported (including 5 Target Priority Group service users) in temporary accommodation and in their own tenancies

We are proud to be working with a fully staffed team, who have dedicated to achieving these fantastic outcomes this year, across the whole county.

Damien Barrow
Service Manager



Peter's Story

*RSS: inspired by a real client,
we have written this with
changes for privacy purposes*

I have known The Bridge for several years and used a few of their services. But in October 2022, I began working with the RSI Team.

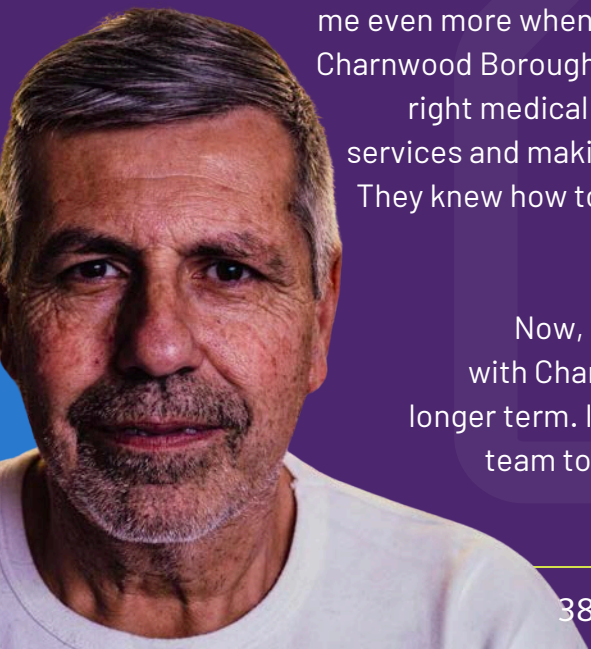
For 30 years I struggled with substance misuse, which has meant that I've experienced repeat homelessness, several prison sentences and my physical and mental health was getting worse and worse.

The RSI team gave me support to stop my rough sleeping and to start accessing different services to help me to move forward. I actually settled into temporary accommodation for a few months, but I ended up being evicted, and again I was homeless for quite a while.

But in November 2023, I accepted help from Supported Lettings, as part of The Bridge's RSI support. We built up a good level of trust and they helped develop connections with my family members and agencies.

The Supported Lettings team advocated for me, and they helped me even more when I was offered a temporary flat via Charnwood Borough Council. They helped me find the right medical care, drug and alcohol treatment services and making sure I could budget my money. They knew how to apply to charities to help furnish my flat and make it a home.

Now, I've signed up to a secure tenancy with Charnwood Borough Council, which is longer term. I'll still see the Supported Lettings team to help me maintain living there and prevent homelessness again.



Mitch's Story

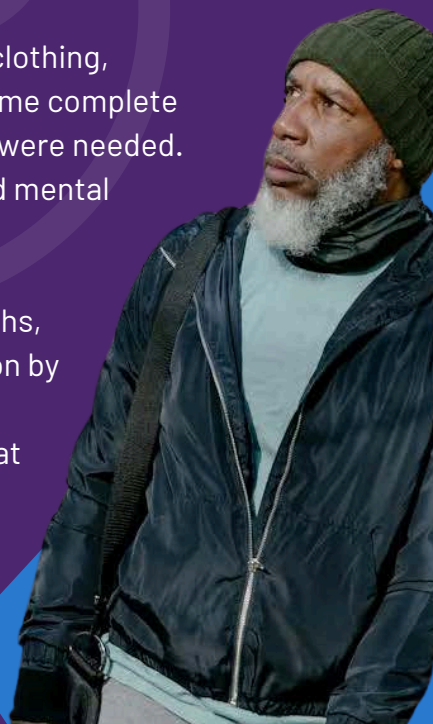
I'd been rough sleeping for a long time. Over 5 years, in and out of accommodation. I didn't really have a stable day-to-day life and I have quite a lot of health conditions. The Outreach Team saw me for the first time over a year ago, in a car park with my dog; I would stay in the car park for good shelter from the weather.

I didn't have a lot of trust in services at first. I found it difficult to accept the help offered by the Outreach Team. After a while, getting to know them, we built up more of a relationship. They got in contact with the Local Authority and spoke with different organisations to explore the housing options I might be able to have.

There didn't seem to be many options at first, because my case was seen as non-priority, but the team didn't give up and reassured me that they would continue supporting me as much as they could.

This included giving me hot food and drinks, clothing, a mobile phone to contact them, and helping me complete the different assessments and referrals that were needed. They were also sensitive to my well-being and mental health, because it was a difficult time.

They ended up supporting me for many months, before I was placed into some accommodation by the Local Authority. Thankfully, Supported Lettings are helping me while I'm there, so that I settle into long-term accommodation and I can start building my future.



Shining a light: 2023-24 supporters

It is no secret that times are tough for many of us. In a cost-of-living crisis and with many funding pots simultaneously having to tighten their belts while receiving even more applications, the money raised and donated by our supporters can make the world of difference.

Generosity of local individuals, businesses, community organisations, churches and schools has enabled us to continue our vital services- not least the **BNI Tigers** who have provided continued support. But alongside that, it helps to raise awareness that we are still here: we are still preventing and or relieving homelessness for people all over the county. Having left our long-term base in Leicester Road and moved to John Storer House, Loughborough, it is vital that we continue spreading the word that local people **can** still find and access our support.

Big or small, your support matters. Here are some April 2023 - March 24 fundraising highlights & supporters!

Navrati

Aivars

Kirby Muxloe WI

Beamex

Breathe Centurion

St Mary's Church
Nanpantan

Bulls Head Thringstone

Hastings Direct

Barratt Homes

Diwali Basket Brigade

Mark Creative62

Quorn Baptist Church

Chef & Spice Night

Curry Night

St Martins in the Fields

Bhangra Night

Trevor Parr Association

Amazon

BNI Tigers

Jungle Club

Thanks to our 2023-24 funders and partners!

- 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust
- Action Homeless
- Advice Quality Standard
- Aspen Technologies
- BBC Children in Need
- Belgrave Library
- Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre
- Blackbaud
- CAF Donate
- CFWC
- Charnwood Borough Council
- Charnwood Community Lottery
- Citizens Advice Charnwood
- Citizens Advice Leicestershire
- Citizens Advice Rutland
- Coalville CAN
- Cross Productions
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Ecco
- Exaireo
- Falcon Support Services
- Fundraising Regulator
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Glasspool
- GTS Security
- Helping Hands
- Henry Smith Charity
- Hinckley & Bosworth District Council
- Hinckley & Rugby Building Society
- HM Probation Service
- Job Centre Plus
- John Storer House
- JustGiving
- Leicester Charity Link
- Leicester City Council
- Leicestershire County Council
- Living Without Abuse
- LLR NHS Partnership Trust
- Market Harborough Building Society
- L&R Freemasons Charity
- Melton Building Society
- Melton Library
- Melton Storehouse
- NACRO
- National Lottery Awards for All
- North West Leicestershire District Council
- Peepul Centre
- Schroder Charitable Trust
- Shires Private Healthcare
- Square
- Together Against Cancer
- Venture House
- Vita Health Group
- Well Cafe Kibworth



You are
stars!

How can you help?

Whatever your interests, strengths or experiences, there are many ways to get involved and support The Bridge (East Midlands), including volunteering! If you have a passion and transferrable skills, call us! Or you could create a fundraiser...

Energetic? Why not check out our challenge events, or pick anything from a local half marathon to '100 squats a day'! Perhaps a skydive?

Feeling foody? Cake sales, Dinner Party Nights, or your very own Bake Off... why not get cooking up a storm!

Creative vibes? You could sell your homemade goods - like pottery or embroidery.

Social butterfly? Quiz nights, karaoke, raffles, BBQs - the options are endless and are fun in every season!

Community based? Advocating for our services and raising awareness can have a massive impact.

Once you've found your fundraiser, you can simply set up a JustGiving page for us and set your target. Every penny raised will go towards keeping our doors open and changing the lives of local people facing housing crisis. (www.justgiving.com/thebridgeem)

£50 could pay for 2 Mediation session each.

**£250 could cover the cover of 10 hour-long
Housing Advice sessions!**



The Money Menu...



£10

could provide a food parcel for a rough sleeper

£23

could cover the cost of a pre-paid mobile phone for a rough sleeper, so they can contact their support worker and attend meetings.

£50

could pay for 2 young people to attend an hour long Mediation session each.

£250

could cover the cost of 10 hour-long Housing Advice sessions, to help people in or nearing housing crisis, like eviction or arrears.

£1000

is the cost of a week's worth of rough sleeper outreach from one of our team, to identify people who are rough sleeping across the county.

£1500

could provide basic food supplies for 30 families for a week, offering crucial relief to those struggling to put meals on the table.

£2500

could offer fuel top-ups for 50 households, alleviating the burden of heating costs during the colder months and ensuring they can stay warm and comfortable.

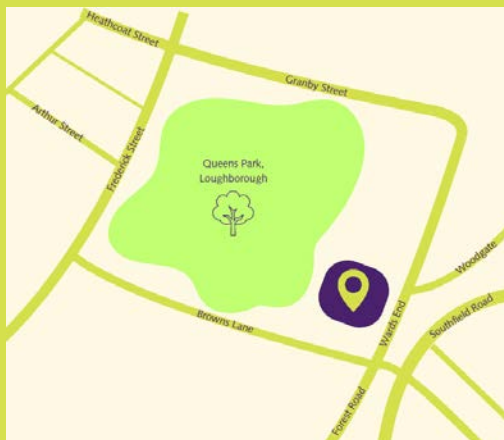


"In the future, I just look forward to settling somewhere and having my own flat, hopefully. It feels more achievable now with the support I've had"

Contact us...

Visit us...

The Bridge (East Midlands)
John Storer House
Wards End
Loughborough
LE11 3HA



Follow us...



@TheBridgeEM



@TheBridgeEastMidlands



www.thebridge-eastmidlands.org.uk

Call us...



01509 260500 or Freephone 0800 038 5964

Please prevent
homelessness
and donate
today.

