



JUNE 2018

# CHAT NEWS

*CHAT believes that everyone is entitled to decent, secure and affordable accommodation - somewhere to call 'home'*

## New Facilities

Our computers are up and running in the hub area and being well used by our clients for job and house searches – they are a great resource to have available.

For most of us showers and putting on clean clothes are part of our daily routine and we don't even consider starting the day without being clean. For some of our clients, this is just not possible. Thanks to generous donations, CHAT has been able to install a washing machine, a shower room and a disabled toilet with a baby-

change unit in our new premises. These new amenities will make a significant difference to our clients who can now book in for a shower - for example before a job interview, or going to look at a potential new home, or even just to restore a sense of normality and dignity. We're also very grateful to Castle View Dental Practice in Tiverton for providing toothpaste samples for the shower room – a great addition to the body wash/ shampoo and the soap that we provide.



## Welcome to the team

New advisors Lucy and Adam started at CHAT in February and are currently completing training.

Lucy brings a wealth of experience, having previously worked for mental health, disability and carer charities ensuring clients obtain their rights in accessing health and social care. She has been a programme coordinator for a volunteer project supporting former carers of those with life-limiting illnesses in North Devon. She also worked within the multi-disciplinary hub at Freedom Centre in Barnstaple which has a similar focus to the CHAT Hub.

Adam has worked for Age UK, Addaction and Coldharbour Mill. He is currently busy redeveloping our website and will be adding a number of new features such as slideshows, a 'latest news' page, a navigation bar that supports dropdowns and a donate button. He's in the process of developing a Work Club at the Hub for CHAT clients, which we've recently started.



## Save the date... CHAT AGM

**Monday 2 July at 7pm**  
**St James', Tiverton**

All are welcome at the AGM but only CHAT Members can vote. Membership costs just £20 a year for an organisation (e.g. Church) or £10 for an individual. Please contact the office if you are interested in becoming a member.



## Free Energy Saving Advice

Our fuel poverty scheme offers help for people using a 'key' system for their gas or electricity and is a much-needed 'sticking plaster' approach to fuel poverty, which is a growing problem. However it is not a long-term solution, so we're thrilled that our new hub premises have enabled us to provide a new service with a weekly drop-in Energy Clinic here at the CHAT offices.

Home Visits are also available for those who are eligible, provided via LEAP (Local Energy Advice Programme) and their fully trained home energy advisors can provide:

- Energy and water saving tips
- Help with changing supplier or tariff
- Applying for discounts
- Referral for help with benefits and energy debt

- Information about grants availability for insulation and heating upgrades
- Signing up for priority services register
- Free energy saving measures (eg LED light bulbs, draught-proofing, TV standby plugs)
- Advice and help with smart meters and meter exchanges/faults

In the first month of this new service, people have already started to see the benefits of the home visit service. Free lightbulbs, radiator reflector panels and draught excluders have been fitted in several local homes. Savings have been made by switching supplier, referrals have been made to a benefits and debt charity and

one resident is also being helped with grants to improve her home heating system. *To find out if you are eligible for a free home visit, or for general energy saving advice (even if you are not a CHAT client), come along to our offices on Tuesday afternoons between 2pm and 4.30pm when Tara is on hand to help and advice.*



## Helping Hands - A Volunteer's View

I heard about CHAT at a Quaker meeting a while back, but just started volunteering when the new premises opened in September. I look after the reception area one morning a week, welcoming callers, making tea/coffee for them and generally passing them to the advisers who deal directly with clients or asking them to complete a housing enquiry form. Other tasks are bagging up food from the food bank for eligible clients, receiving donations of food or cash or other items, looking out tents and bedding for issue, and other little jobs like checking client post, booking and admitting people to the shower and keeping the area looking clean and attractive.

Once I'd mastered the coffee machine I settled into enjoying my morning. It's interesting, good to meet all sorts of people and there is a real feel of mutual support between volunteers and staff.

*Pat Robertson*

## In brief...

Work here is varied and there is no such thing as a typical day! These are some of the things that have happened recently - we've worked to rescue a client from sexual exploitation, we helped to secure long term re-hab (9 months plus) for an alcoholic client which is known to have great lasting results, our Advisers have attended court on 8 occasions to help prevent eviction and advocate on a client's behalf. In the last quarter we gave out 263 emergency food parcels feeding 508 people who have found themselves in short-term need. Staff have attended training on identifying trauma and the effects of it on our clients, the new Homeless Reduction Act, which was introduced in April this year, and mortgage possessions. We have liaised with new agencies enabling better care for our clients and been able to refer 2 young people to a supported housing project which helps them to thrive and teaches life skills. Alongside these we have negotiated with landlords to keep clients in a tenancy and provided tenancy support to 25 clients on an ongoing basis.

## Accountants choose CHAT

CHAT was the charity chosen by President John Ashley of the Institute of Chartered Accountants England & Wales (ICAEW), South West Region for their annual dinner. The event was held at Sandy Park, Exeter, and the guest speaker was well-known author, broadcaster and entertainer, Giles Brandreth.

Our fundraiser, Alan Bartle, gave a presentation on the work of CHAT and around £700 was raised. Thank you.



Alan Bartle and Giles Brandreth

How great to be able to send out speakers to eight services this year! We were able to update about CHAT's work, giving examples of how clients have been helped. The Bible passage on which the talks were based was James 2: 14 - 17. As individuals, congregations or communities, James calls us to look at how we live out our faith. Without the works that demonstrate our faith, it is lifeless. But 'works' is not just about 'doing good' to those less fortunate; as a key part of the faithful life, our works lead us to change our attitudes.



We were pleased to visit:

- St Peter's, Tiverton
- St Boniface and St James, Tiverton & Cullompton,
- St John the Baptist, Sampford Peverell
- West Down Evangelical Chapel, Cheriton Bishop
- St Andrew's, Tiverton
- Bradninch Baptist Church
- Hebron Evangelical Church, Cullompton
- St Mary the Virgin, Rewe

Please do get in touch if you would like us to visit your church or community group - it doesn't have to be Homeless Sunday!

## Matt's 24 Hour Race

On the 16th and 17th June Matt Melksham, who used to be CHAT's Treasurer, is taking part in the Hope24 Race at Newham Park, Plymouth. He's aiming to run at least 100K in 24 hours by running loops of a 4.4 mile trail and raising money for CHAT as he does this.



Here's why Matt is choosing to support CHAT:

*"I have had the pleasure of being involved with CHAT in the past and seeing what a transformative impact they have on people's lives. The recent move into the new building and the creation of The Hub is excellent news as it gives the charity more space to be able to help more people and unfortunately there are many more people who need CHAT's help. So please donate any amount to CHAT to help them continue to support vulnerable people in our community. Thank you, and I suppose I'd better get training!!"*

To sponsor Matt: <https://localgiving.org/fundraising/24hr4chat/>



## The Measure of Success

Success is hard to measure at times and comes in all shapes and sizes. Success is relative and means different things for different people. At CHAT we record success in the form of outcomes which can be easily monitored and are often used as a basis when it comes to funding applications.

**Life can be challenging but even a little difference can be considered a great achievement.**

In the Tenancy Support department Angela and Helen work with vulnerable clients. Success means clients find greater independence and maintain successful tenancies – sometimes against all the odds!!

- Clearing rent arrears in full following a refund of Council Tax
- Receiving assistance with completing a form that they would otherwise have struggled with

Success comes at a price and we certainly do not find success with every client that we work with. Life can be very challenging both for client and support worker but we consider that even if we make a little difference and establish a degree of progress with clients this can be considered a great achievement.



Recent successes for some of our clients:

- Moving to a new, more affordable home to be nearer to a close relative
- Taking delivery of a new washing machine after funding was obtained to replace their old broken one

## Out & About

It was a real privilege to be part of Tiverton's Clare House Surgery's coffee morning. Our picture shows volunteer, Margaret, ready to talk about CHAT.

*to visitors – badges, balloons and wristbands – and enthusiastic staff and volunteers to talk to.*

We've also been to Petroc College's Open Day where staff kindly held a cake stall to raise funds for us. Crediton's Health and Well-Being Open Day has had a visit from Ruth (Community Development) and Lucy (Housing Advisor).

*Please get in touch if you're planning a community event and would like us to be there. We have a bright and colourful stall, CHAT goodies to give out*



## Support from a Local Business

Devon Surface Care supported us when we moved to the Hub last September by generously cleaning our outside area, ensuring the best possible welcome for our clients. We were thrilled to hear that they have supported us again by donating a proportion of the value of all projects completed in January.

***Supporting and providing for those who need it most is central.***

*"Supporting and providing opportunities for those who need it most is central to our business and this is just a little way we can help the CHAT team to help those in Mid Devon experiencing housing difficulties. We are delighted that together with our customers we are able to make a difference to so many people"* Jonny Hardy, owner of Devon Surface Care

This gift will fund 37 hours of advice and support for clients at risk of homelessness or already homeless - invaluable work bringing hope and turning lives around. We're very grateful to Devon Surface Care and their customers for this support.



Jonny Hardy and Alan Bartle

## Green Pastures

A new face has appeared on the ground floor of Coggan's Well House! Martin Howe arrived in Tiverton last October to be better placed for his regional role with Green Pastures, where Martin supports the establishment of church-led supported housing projects for formerly homeless or vulnerably-housed people.



Martin and Liz Howe

Green Pastures buys property for churches and Christian charities so that they can reach out and house the homeless in their area, with the aim of releasing the church to end homelessness. In addition they provide all the paperwork, expertise and ongoing

support to operate a successful supported housing project. Through their network of over 55 partners, they house and care for 919 people in the UK.

Martin said, "I am so grateful for the opportunity to rent a Hotdesk at CHAT where I have received a very warm welcome from a kindred organisation".

Martin is also a candidate for the Professional Doctorate in Theology and Practice (DTh) at Winchester University, where he is exploring the impact of Christian spirituality on addiction relapse prevention.

Martin's wife Liz used her years of experience at Winchester Churches Nightshelter to set up a Winter Nightshelter for Basingstoke and establish the town's new Assertive Outreach Rough Sleepers Support Team. Together, they set up The Dwelling Place residential community for men in addiction recovery. They share their home near Huntsham with a Border Collie, Bengal cat, ducks, chickens and two pygmy goats!

For more information visit the Green Pastures Website or email: [martin@greenpastures.net](mailto:martin@greenpastures.net)





# The Big Sleep-Out <sup>ZZ</sup>

## SLEEP OUT SO THAT OTHERS DON'T HAVE TO

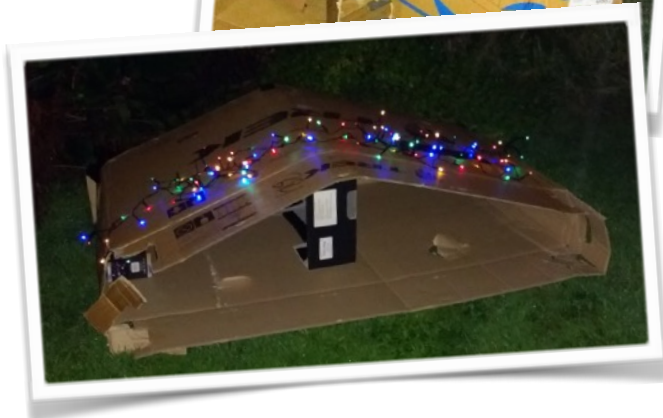
# UPDATE

CHAT's Big Sleep-Outs have raised almost £25,000 since the first one in May 2012!

We're very grateful to the groups of young people who slept out for CHAT last year and thrilled that all three main towns in Mid Devon took part.

The Crediton Sleep-Out had to be postponed from last September, so the group, led by Lauren Strand, Youth Worker at Crediton Methodist Church, slept out on a very chilly night in February. The young people watched 'A Street Cat named Bob' and learnt a bit more about CHAT before constructing their shelters and taking them outside to the Methodist Church garden.

Big thanks to you all.



## GDPR

We're guessing you have all heard about the data protection changes coming and like other organisations we are having to look at what information we keep and how we use it. As you can imagine this has implications for our client work - but also for how we communicate with you. If you have received a form from us we would be grateful if you could fill it out and return it. If you would like to receive our newsletter please email [theoffice@chatmid.co.uk](mailto:theoffice@chatmid.co.uk) with NEWSLETTER in the subject line or call the office with your details.



We hold a weekly staff prayer meeting on a Tuesday

morning at 8:45am. We value the many people who pray for us regularly and if you would be interested in joining our prayer chain, please email [theoffice@chatmid.co.uk](mailto:theoffice@chatmid.co.uk) and we can send you more information.



Become a **Giver of Hope**  
just £10 a month could **change**  
a vulnerable person's life



£30 enables an expert  
**housing advice session**  
for somebody in **crisis**



£100 will enable us to provide  
a client with three hours of  
**debt/money advice**

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