

Homeless Oxfordshire

Housing today, hope for tomorrow



*"It was time to change.
There's a moment when
you've just had enough."*

Laura, former client



IMPACT REPORT

2019-20

#weloveyourKINDNESS



A message from Claire...

As the CEO of the largest provider of supported accommodation for single homeless people in Oxfordshire, I am immensely proud of the work we do and am delighted to introduce our 2019–2020 Impact Report.

Homelessness is a 'wicked problem'. In other words, it is a problem that does not have one simple solution. A wicked problem can't be solved by using standard techniques, in fact doing things 'the old way' can make things worse. We apply this thinking to the way we operate within our charity; the circumstances around why a person might become homeless are varied with each challenge needing specialist advice and support.

These circumstances are not cut and dry, a person might become homeless due to economic reasons



such as falling into rent arrears due to unaffordable housing, compounded by years of national austerity and funding cuts. Or there might be social issues to consider – relationship breakdowns, ill mental health, addiction,

physical health problems or criminal history – to name but a few. There is, however, usually a common denominator among the people who come to us, a lack of support networks meaning that personal crisis has escalated to homelessness.

Within this report we have highlighted a few examples of the people who make Homeless Oxfordshire the organisation it is today. Solving homelessness is everyone's responsibility and I would like to thank our staff and supporters for everything they do. It is through collaboration, bravery and resilience that we can continue our life-altering work.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Claire Dowan".

Claire Dowan
CEO, Homeless Oxfordshire

ABOUT US



We are the largest supported accommodation provider for homeless people in the county. We have been supporting people across the county for over 30 years providing meals, accommodation, training and education, welfare support and helping individuals to develop skills so that they can run their own homes.

Housing-led approaches

We are proud that we were the first organisation to develop a Housing First project in Oxfordshire.

However, we know that to successfully tackle homelessness in Oxfordshire will require a number of housing-led approaches. Housing First itself might not be an appropriate response for every person experiencing homelessness, but there are principles which underpin Housing First that can be applied to a whole-system approach. These include:

- Increasing affordable housing options
- Seeing housing as a human right (rather than having to 'prove' or 'earn' a home)
- Offering flexibility in support
- Offering choices
- Adopting a strengths-based approach (celebrating what people can, rather than can't do)
- Ensuring that staff proactively help clients access the services they need
- Developing strategies to manage harmful behaviours

Ultimately, changing our system is the solution to ending homelessness and there is not a 'one-size fits all' way of doing things. Through multi-agency action and by adopting housing-led approaches, informed by Housing First principles, change can and will happen in Oxfordshire.

OUR VALUES



WE STRIVE TO BE **EFFECTIVE**, APPROPRIATELY
CHALLENGE PERCEPTIONS AND SYSTEMS,
INSPIRE CLIENTS, OUR PARTNERS AND
EACH OTHER. WE ARE **RESPONSIVE**
TO NEED AND **COMPASSIONATE**.
ABOVE ALL WE ARE **BRAVE** AND
WILL NOT GIVE UP ON PEOPLE THAT
SOCIETY MAY HAVE LEFT BEHIND.



Facts and stats 2019-20

22



CLIENTS MOVED OUT OF THE HOSTEL EITHER ON TO INDEPENDENT LIVING OR INTO FURTHER SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION



40

VOLUNTEERS PROVIDED 1,068 HOURS OF SUPPORT

56

Bed spaces for our O'Hanlon House hostel residents. Our hostel offers bedrooms for clients who might otherwise be on the streets. Here, they are allocated a support worker who will help them to begin their recovery from homelessness.

129



Community bed spaces across Oxfordshire. We have over **27** properties, offering **188** bed spaces. Our community projects offer specialist tailored support to help residents move on from our services to live independently.

7



DOGS ACCOMMODATED

We know that clients' relationships with their dogs is important to their wellbeing. This is why we do all we can to accommodate canine companions.

0



VINEYARD PROJECT CLIENTS RETURNED TO ROUGH SLEEPING

The average length of stay before clients move on to their own accommodation is 1 year.



186

Individual clients stayed within O'Hanlon House.

60%

**OF OUR HOSTEL CLIENTS
AGED BETWEEN 35-54**



Women and homelessness

Before becoming homeless, Lucy* had been to university and since graduating had been doing well in her career as a recruitment consultant.

She suffered from mental health issues and eating disorders, interrelated with alcohol abuse. She was fired from the same job three times. It was when she was sleeping behind the Magistrate's Court in Oxford that she decided something had to change.

Through our Women's Project, we were able to put the mechanisms in place that Lucy needed to receive mental health and addiction support. In doing so, she has been able to move on from the project and is now working towards independent living.

* Lucy is one of our brave clients who shared her experiences of homelessness and substance misuse.

"It was at the Women's Project that I first made baby steps towards freedom from addictions. The Women's Project gives you some individuality, it's a place we came to call home. We could pause, take a breath...

As a group, our key workers Jenny and Kelly would pop round with biscuits and we would all sit and have weekly catch up chats. Their positivity was infectious, their creative ways to encourage us to express our feelings and open up, to each other was brilliant. Slowly but surely, I also began to trust the ladies I was living with. I hadn't trusted myself in a very long time, let alone trusted myself to get vulnerable with others.





As a group, our key workers Jenny and Kelly would pop round with biscuits and we would all sit and have weekly catch up chats. Their positivity was infectious, their creative ways to encourage us to express our feelings and open up, to each other was brilliant.

Lucy, former Women's Project client

As my body was so dependent on alcohol, any attempt at cutting down would typically end with me in hospital. I had fits and seizures in the street, in the house, at the supermarket...the head of the Women's Project, worked tirelessly with Turning Point to secure me a place at a women's rehab.

I still have a note that my key worker Tamsin left in my journal, as throughout a particularly trying time, three very simple but poignant questions that made me think:

***“Why am I here?
What do I want?
What have I felt?”***

I still text her regularly, just with updates. As someone who has been through addiction, I must remind myself daily, hourly on tough days, of where I am going.

I now have a part-time job in a hospital and next year, I am hoping to apply to do a postgraduate degree in mental health nursing in 2021. I want to work in homeless/addiction services to help people who are in similar positions to those I've been in myself.

I'm putting the things in place so that I can move on into my own space. 'Moving on' to me is independent living, something which I haven't done in years."

“The things I'm not quite there with? The people that addiction has taken from this life, way too soon.”

Client stories

LAURA

IN RETROSPECT

Laura's story shows that with the correct support and resilience, it is possible to recover from homelessness. Through her self-will and our support, Laura was able to get sober and she is now living independently.

What were the most helpful aspects of the support you've received?

Keeping me motivated. If I hadn't had a worker to help me, I probably would have failed. That support is needed. Having key worker sessions, house groups and being involved in the house is what did it.

What changes did you feel like you needed to make before you came to us and how has the Women's Project helped you to make these changes happen?

This is the third step of my journey with Homeless Oxfordshire. I knew I needed to make a change by going to Howard House, doing the detox and giving myself time. I was in a private rental before and I knew I had to do it a different way. I'd already given up the street drugs but I was still drinking because I couldn't be without a substance. It had reached the point I was dependent on it and I couldn't be without something. It was time to change. There's a moment when you've just had enough.

I'm now just experiencing living on my own. I'm finding it tough, but I'm adjusting...having that time at Sapling really helped. I developed the skills I needed through volunteering.

If I hadn't had the support of a worker and my peers, it wouldn't have worked. I found it tough but I'm glad I persevered.

Moving from Howard House to Sapling I had some really tough times, but with the help of everyone around me, I kept with it.

Is there any support in particular that you received that prepared you for independent living?

In those first three months I knew I had support and that I could always ring up and get the help I needed, like taking Mike to an assessment with me.

A big skill I've learned is budgeting, I learned that in the Sapling project. Tolerance as well, just to get on with people on a daily basis. This something that's really evolved, learning to live alongside other people.

A woman with long, curly brown hair is seen from behind, writing on a whiteboard. She is holding a white marker with a black tip. The whiteboard is mounted on a wall and has a piece of clear tape on it. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image is framed by a teal border on the left and right sides.

I'd already given up the street drugs but I was still drinking because I couldn't be without a substance...

Laura, former client

MARIE

CURRENT CLIENT

Marie one of our hostel clients came to us after 20 years of living on the street. Her story just shows that it's never too late to seek support. For some people, it can just be a case of not even knowing where to start.

How did you first become homeless?

Years ago, I had a place. My partner at the time, broke in trashed the place. I came back from my sister's wedding and the tenancy was gone. That was it. And in the end, here I am.

What have been the most helpful aspects of the support you've received?

I'm scared of talking on the phone. I've got a thing about telephones and get very anxious about communicating with people outside of my sphere. Especially official things. My key worker Fran is very good at doing that for me. She's very good at sorting the stuff that needs to be accessed for me, my support benefits and things like that. Fran, knows my things that hold me back a bit...she's very good at helping me with them.

What motivated you to seek support when you decided to?

It's a couple of things. I was getting stalked by my ex. So, I went to the police and my outreach worker suggested I come here. My ex was also targeting my friend so we both moved in at the same time. It's a safe place here. Whereas when we were in a tent out there, he stabbed the tent and everything. Anything could have happened. This was a way for us not to be losing sleep, basically being aware of every sound about you and everything. I've been here for about a year now.

How have you changed in the year you've spent with us?

I'm healthier because I eat more regularly and I take my medication regularly, it's given me stability...

Marie, current client

What are the next steps for you?

I'm going into my own place. That's that...everything's going at the speed it should be going. Fran's doing her best for me and I feel good.



Staff spotlight

Lucy Flanagan,
Head of Property and Facilities,
Homeless Oxfordshire



Our staff are what make it possible to do the challenging work we do day-in, day-out. We spoke to Lucy Flanagan, Head of Property and Facilities, who has worked with us for 15 years about her role and to gain her wider perspective on issues facing the sector.

What are your key responsibilities?

To oversee all building-related activities and ensure we have a high-quality and responsive facilities service. I make sure we have effective procurement and I also provide strategic and operational Health, Safety and leadership across all areas of the organisation.

Why have you stayed with Homeless Oxfordshire for so long?

I really believe that having a roof over your head is a right not a luxury. Homeless Oxfordshire helps people that society has forgotten or that don't have the skills to support.

What makes Homeless Oxfordshire different to other charities?

We provide much needed support to people who find themselves homeless. We also give people a safe place to stay via our comprehensive range of accommodation. As the largest accommodation provider across the county, we were the first organisation to develop a Housing First project in Oxfordshire.

I really believe that having a roof over your head is a right not a luxury. Homeless Oxfordshire helps people that society has forgotten or that don't have the skills to support.

Lucy Flanagan, Head of Property and Facilities

How has your role developed over time?

In my role there is a great deal of legislation that comes with providing accommodation and this has certainly increased over time! It's important to ensure that our properties are safe, but we must also keep our clients and staff safe too. Maintenance is extremely important and costly to an organisation like Homeless Oxfordshire – it's continuous... a bit like painting the Forth Bridge!

How has the charity changed over recent years?

Over the years, the needs of the people using our service have changed dramatically and therefore we've

had to adapt and change in order to meet these needs. O'Hanlon House is now a complex needs hostel and the community projects are more diverse.

What has been your biggest achievement working here?

I feel very proud of my team and the sometimes challenging environment we work in. The biggest achievements for me are always ensuring that all our accommodation is ready and at a high-spec turnaround. There can sometimes only be a matter of hours for people to move in and start their recovery. I'm also proud of being part of the SMT and contributing to securing the organisation's future.

What challenges are homeless charities facing now?

The rising costs of providing the specialist support and accommodation needed to help someone to recover from homelessness. Statutory funding has decreased massively and continues to do so, which leaves it down to organisations to increase their fundraising capacity and support from the communities to plug the gap.



With the effect of COVID-19, homeless services will be in greater demand.

Homeless Oxfordshire is the only inclusive accommodation provider which means that people can access services without having a recovery plan in place to address mental health, drugs or alcohol issues. As with all frontline services, homeless services are under pressure and so there needs to be more provision – this is the main challenge people face.



PROJECT FOCUS –

SAPLING

Interview with Mike Jackson

Mike Jackson has been the Housing and Resettlement Worker on our Sapling Project since December 2019, we spoke to him about the project and asked him for an overview of the support it provides.

What is the Sapling Project?

The Sapling Project is supported accommodation in a community of seven residents who have come from detox units or residential rehab; we provide two-hour groups twice a week, typically on a Monday and Wednesday. We also provide one-to-one support with a Housing Support worker and weekly random drug and alcohol testing in accordance with the Dry Licence agreement. The emphasis of the project is to support clients to maintain abstinence, achieve their goals and help empower them onto independent living in the community.

What sort of challenges do our clients face when it comes to their move on?

The biggest challenges that our clients face is the readiness to change, gaining the practical life skills to manage a tenancy, budget, manage their finances, changing over benefits, going from a busy house where they are supported by their peers to independent living.

And how do we support these clients so that they thrive when they move on from the project?

All clients receive three months of aftercare support once they have moved on to independent living which consists of one-to-one meetings, telephone interventions, most of the former residents are still invited to Sapling activities in the community.



12

CLIENTS SUPPORTED BY THE SAPLING PROJECT THIS YEAR



mid
30s

IS THE AVERAGE AGE OF THE CLIENT GROUP IN SAPLING



13

MONTHS IS THE AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY IN SAPLING



100%

OF THE CLIENTS THAT MOVED ON NOW HAVE THEIR OWN PLACE

Why you are important to us



Each year approximately **200,000** single people experience homelessness in England¹



Locally, rough sleeping in Oxford has risen by **400%** since 2012²



Over **100** households a month now approach Oxford City Council identifying as homeless²



CLIENT UPDATE – FREDDIE

Recovering from homelessness can feel insurmountable at first.

At Homeless Oxfordshire, we try to display bravery and resilience, whatever life throws at us, which in turn hopefully inspires our clients that moving on is possible.

Let us tell you a little about Freddie, one of our clients who also volunteered during his time at our Sapling Project. Freddie had struggled with alcohol addiction but through our support and his sheer self-will, became entirely abstinent which led to him becoming a peer mentor to help others facing similar challenges. This included him successfully completing an 8-module accredited training programme!

Through his own lived experience, Freddie was able to promote wellbeing and recovery from addiction, as well as being a positive role model for those at an earlier stage in their journeys. Through his openness to learn new skills, he was able to show others who were first entering treatment that recovery is achievable.

The most inspiring thing of all? Freddie has moved on and is now in full-time employment.

FUNDRAISING UPDATE



£16k
RAISED

£16,000 raised through our October Jack FM campaign.

24 hour Radiothon with **Jack FM** live from our hostel.

£23,688 We entered a partnership with **Blake Morgan** who secured this amazing total.

£4,000 was raised by **Oodle Car Finance** who also designed our '12 Days of Giftmas' campaign.

£100,000 was raised through our **Christmas Campaign.**



£4k+
RAISED

£4,938 raised by Saïd Business School – we also launched our partnership live on air!



Cycling challenges

Partner, **William Downing** (pictured above at the Eiffel Tower) participated in the London to Paris cycling challenge.

Paul Thomas raised **£702** (excluding Gift Aid) through Bike Oxford.

Thank you



WHAT UNITES

OUR SUPPORTERS



The belief that no one should be homeless.

From our youngest supporters running marathons, to our corporate partners holding fundraisers and donating to our emergency appeal

– we're thankful to them all and for being advocates of the work we do. Funding cuts, austerity and macro-economic uncertainties have a direct impact on charities. However, our supporters believe in what we do and without them, we wouldn't be able to do the work that we do. From councils, individual supporters, volunteers our staff and our trustees,

we want to thank everyone who makes our work possible. **With your help we continue to change and save people's lives.**

We are also so much more than a 'quick fix'. We can help people, once referred to us, who might not suit a hostel environment, but who need help with other areas to stabilise themselves.



RECEPTION



 **Homeless
Oxfordshire**

Housing today, hope for tomorrow

O'Hanlon House



View our financial statement for the year on the Charity Commission website:

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/297806/charity-overview>

Connect with us

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- 1 Crisis (2017), Moving On: Improving access to housing for single homeless people
- 2 Oxford City Council, Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021

I was at rock bottom and the Vineyard gave me a place in the world. It helped me out 100% and gave me time and support to rebuild my life. I now have my own flat and I intend to go back to work in the near future.

Jake, former client

