

Doorstep

“Opening doors for homeless families“



Annual Report 2016 and Accounts 2015-2016

Director's Report

Looking back over the achievements and highlights of last year, many were made possible through our partnerships and supporters. Children went on an exciting riverboat trip and enjoyed courses of confidence building and music workshops. One of the playrooms was completely refurbished, at the children's request, through gifts and volunteers from Teacher Stern LLP undertaking the work. Similarly, they provided a huge outdoor trampoline for the garden which children so wanted.

Four schools have given their time to undertake gift and food drives and organised events to raise funds. JW3 and Waitrose also collected food and toiletries, donated by generous shoppers, for Doorstep's families. 'Free cakes for kids Camden' have provided a personalised birthday cake for every child.

Writer and TV presenter Victoria Coren -Mitchell first visited Doorstep with some gently used items for our weekly bazaar. Since then she has been what can only be described as a "fairy godmother" throughout the year. She has bought items in bulk, for distribution to our families almost every month, providing food, toiletries, nappies, baby clothes, warm hats, books, fruit, Christmas treats and gifts. In the summer Victoria negotiated free entry into London Zoo and Thorpe Park and helped with the cost of coach hire and even provided each family with some spending money for drinks and ice cream. We are immensely grateful for her understanding of the plight families find themselves in; the kindness and generosity she has shown have been exceptional.

In recognition of our work Waitrose provided the staff team with tickets for Her Majesty's 90th birthday celebrations at Windsor Castle. What an honour, it was a truly spectacular evening, a once in a lifetime event we will always remember.

Since losing local government funding and making the shift to financial independence a very high percentage of my time is spent writing funding bids and reporting on grants when they are successful. Despite this, funding for the additional full time post of Family Advocate we so need remains elusive. With an increase of 30% in the numbers of people accessing our services over the last two years not only is the post needed to support families in the current climate of benefit cuts and shrinking housing options, but also to improve our infrastructure and therefore our ability to fully utilise opportunities for growth. We will continue to strive to achieve this goal.

I give my sincere thanks to my colleagues, and members of the management committee without whom none of this would be possible. With an outstanding amount of support from the wider community we have become a conduit for the flow of kindness and generosity from businesses, schools, organisations and individuals. I look forward to the year ahead and the opportunities it brings.

Vicky Fox

Our Services

- * Opportunities for children to play, learn and develop at our after school club, crèches and drop-ins.
- * Joint activities with the partner organisations.
- * Regular creative & educational activities for adults.
- * A weekly exercise class such as Yoga.
- * A programme of special activities and outings during the summer and school holidays.
- * A weekly 'bazaar' giving access to free essential goods donated by the wider community.
- * Free daily access to laundry facilities.
- * Healthy snacks and meals.



River Boat Trip

What people say about Doorstep.....

"I am going through a very difficult time of my life and am not good at making sensible wishes, but you should know that I am very, very grateful for your support and I very much appreciate all that Doorstep has to offer. "

BM (current service user)

"Thank you for everything you done for my family. Doorstep was home for us. My family benefit a lot. I was homeless; my income was not enough to buy many things. But Doorstep show my family love and help us. Me and my children benefit with food, clothes, trips to the zoo, coast, park. We have a lot of souvenir we can't forget. It was hard to leave that place, it was my home. "

NB (ex- service user)

"Just one thanks is not enough. I wish the God they give you back everything. Many thanks and respect. "

ST (current service user)

"I was bowled over by Doorstep when I first walked in. It's an organization that obviously has a huge and transformative effect on the lives of the people it serves – there is a community of lonely mothers, unlucky children and stigmatised families who might otherwise be sitting in tiny rooms feeling hopeless, but instead can find light and space and colour and laughter and play – and help, and kindness and company – and this is surely the road back to pride and confidence, getting back into the workplace and the regular world. I think it's really wonderful. I'm sorry I can't do more to help. The idea of how much worse those families' lives would be without Doorstep (and what it IS like, for those in temporary accommodation blocks that don't have a Vicky Fox to look after them) is just heart-breaking."

Victoria Coren-Mitchell (supporter)



Getting ready for a Christmas Party

A Story

I was at the point of thinking this report was finished and ready to be proof read when I received a phone call and heard a story that should be told. The caller was a woman and at first she stumbled as if trying to decide how to start the conversation. She then told me that her 17 year old son had died and that instead of sending flowers, she and her family had decided to ask people to make a donation to Doorstep.

In the late nineties she had fled an abusive relationship with her children and found herself accommodated in a hostel and became a user of Doorstep's support services. Although she was only with us for eight weeks, before being moved on, she said that Doorstep had made a massive difference, at what she described as a terribly difficult time in her life. She told me that she had met some lovely people and she and her children had enjoyed some great days out with us. She remembered that on one occasion her dad had brought her children to play because she had an appointment and that he was very impressed by Doorstep.

When she left we had given her a bed and a washing machine which worked but had a broken handle. Apparently, the machine went on to give her good service for another five years.

She rebuilt her life, went on to university and is now in a senior management role within a prestigious company. She said she feels like she has come full circle.

I was deeply saddened to hear her story while also being uplifted that Doorstep had made such a positive impact. Despite the devastating loss of her child she wants to acknowledge the support she received and bring benefit to Doorstep.

In the spring we will plant something in the garden in memory of her son and to give our heartfelt thanks for her kindness in sorrow.



Housing

Extracts from Homeless Monitor 2016

The vast bulk of the recorded increase in statutory homelessness in the past five years has been attributable to the sharply rising numbers made homeless from the private rented sector; relevant cases have almost quadrupled from 4,600 to 16,000. As a proportion of all statutory homelessness acceptances, loss of a private tenancy therefore increased from 11 per cent in 2009/10 to 29 per cent in 2014/15. In London, the upward trend was even starker, with loss of a private tenancy accounting for 39 per cent of all homelessness acceptances by 2014/15. The annual number of London acceptances resulting from private tenancy termination therefore rose from 925 to 6,790 over the relevant period.

Since bottoming out in 2010/11, homeless placements in temporary accommodation have risen sharply, with the overall national total rising by 12 per cent in the year to 30 June 2015; up by 40 per cent since its low point four years earlier. The bulk of temporary accommodation placements are in self-contained housing (both publicly and privately owned). However, although accounting for only eight per cent of the national temporary accommodation total as at 30 June 2015, B&B placements rose sharply in the most recent year. Totalling 5,630, the number of placements was 23 per cent higher than a year previously and no less than 200 per cent higher than in 2009.

'Out of district' placements are also increasing, linked closely with the broader 'displacement' effects of welfare reform, discussed in last year's Monitor. As at 30 June 2015, they accounted for 17,640 placements – 26 per cent of the national total, up from only 11 per cent in 2010/11.²⁸ Such arrangements mainly involve London boroughs. Cross-boundary placements create difficulties for 'receiving authorities' in meeting their own homelessness demands, as they often struggle to compete with the incentives offered to private landlords by London boroughs to accommodate their homeless households. In recognition of this, a deal has recently been struck between some London boroughs and councils in the West Midlands to agree on fixed maximum incentive payments.

Meanwhile, a whole gamut of welfare restrictions has made access to the private rented sector increasingly difficult for low income households in many areas. The Shared Accommodation Rate limits for single people aged under- 35 have already had a marked impact in reducing their access to the private rented sector. The Local Housing Allowance caps have also seen a similar reduction in the capacity of all low income households to secure, or maintain, private rented sector tenancies in the high value areas of inner London. The impact of the overall benefit cap is set to increase fivefold with the advent of the lowered caps as noted above.

The 2015 local authority survey was conducted after the Summer Budget but ahead of the Autumn Statement. We asked local authorities how they expected Summer Budget changes to impact on homelessness amongst a range of household types in their area. With respect to almost all household types, most respondents anticipated that these welfare changes would further exacerbate homelessness pressures. Concerns were particularly widely shared in relation to the impacts on large families. 93 per cent of local authorities thought homelessness would increase amongst this group as a direct result of the reforms. 86 per cent of local authorities believed that single 18- 21s would face increased homelessness. In light of all this, respondents largely viewed expanded Discretionary Housing Payment budgets, while welcome and necessary, as an inadequate

'sticking plaster', that cannot in any case be used to assist under-22s who will no longer have any level of entitlement to help with housing costs.

A specific concern of many key informants this year related to the impact of the one per cent cut in social rents on supported accommodation, and also the extension of the Local Housing Allowance Rate caps to the social rented sector; both moves, and especially the latter, have been argued as calling into question the viability of many supported accommodation services if this subsector is not excluded. The Autumn Statement further heralded a significant change in the way that temporary accommodation for homeless people will be funded, with an upfront allocation given to all councils rather than an additional 'management fee' recouped via Housing Benefit. While the details of this had not been spelled out at the time of writing, moving from a demand-led system to a fixed-budget one may have implications for local authorities' ability to respond to fluctuating requirements for temporary accommodation.

Conclusion

The UK economy has now regained prerecession output levels, but as we have argued in previous Monitors, policy factors – especially with regard to social security – have a more direct bearing on the incidence of homelessness than the economy in and of itself. Thus, with recent policy decisions leaving major question marks hanging over the future supply of, and access to, social and affordable rented housing, coupled with deep cuts in welfare that are making access to both rental sectors increasingly difficult for low income households, the question "who will house the poorest?" is becoming an increasingly urgent one. Massive reductions in 'Supporting People' and other relevant sources of revenue funding at local level also casts a long shadow over future prospects for homelessness amongst those with additional support needs.

The evidence provided by the homelessness monitor over the coming years will provide a powerful platform for assessing the impact of economic and policy change on some of the most vulnerable people in England. As well as continuing to track the headline trends in both visible and hidden forms of homelessness, we will provide an overview of the profile of those affected, and the changing geography of homelessness in England, and how this evolves over the course of the time in office of the current Conservative Government till 2020.

Housing & Homelessness in Camden

There were 422 households in temporary accommodation in September 2016 which although is a reduction from the previous year (447 in September 2015), represents a slowing in the rate of reduction. It coincides with the introduction of the new allocations scheme which has resulted in fewer TA households being able to bid successfully mainly because they no longer qualify for so many waiting time points. At the same time there has been a small increase in the number of TA placements per month which is likely to continue to increase as the availability of private sector accommodation is increasingly limited.

A significant challenge in reducing the number housed in temporary accommodation is the position of many households that applied as homeless prior to April 2013 when the Localism Act power to discharge duty into the private sector was implemented. These households are able to refuse offers of private rented accommodation from the council and whilst their circumstances vary, the majority are understandably waiting for a council accommodation. There are 292 such households and they are unlikely to bid successfully and the only option remaining to the council to resolve their permanent housing needs is to consider direct offers of social housing.

- Affordability: LHA rates have not kept abreast with rent increases in London, and the four year freeze on increases in benefit rates exacerbates this situation. The total benefit cap from November will make London unaffordable for larger families so procurement effort will have to be focussed in more affordable areas. Many landlords are asking for the two bedroom LHA rate for one bed properties
- over the last two years the Buy to Let market has dried up affecting supply
- landlord incentives have been cut back e.g. stamp duty is now payable on second homes; the 10% tax allowance for wear and tear has been removed as well as the ability to offset mortgage interest payments against taxation.
- There is substantial competition for suitable properties

As rents continue to rise, the impact of freezing of LHA rates for four years will make more and more areas of London unaffordable as time goes on. These pressures mean that the council is having to look further outside the borough and for larger families very few properties are affordable in London.

(Extracts from the Report of Director of Housing Support Services to Housing Scrutiny Panel 13/10/16)

At Doorstep we are seeing families moving out of hostels into private sector housing and losing tenancies through no fault of their own. They face the prospect of becoming homeless again and returning to temporary accommodation, sometimes in the same hostel they left.

Treasurer's Report

The financial statements, including the Trustees Annual Report, for Doorstep (or 'the charity') cover the year ended 31st March, 2016.

Fiscal year 2016 ended in a stable position. However, it is important for Doorstep to prioritise fundraising to maintain services for children and to increase staffing levels to meet our service users' growing needs.

Careful financial and operating records have been kept throughout this financial year. If further clarification of any financial matter is required, copies of any bank statements, receipts, invoices, etc. may be obtained from Doorstep Homeless Families Project, 13A Broadhurst Gardens, London NW6 3QX.

The Management Committee members are satisfied that **Doorstep** is entitled to exemption from the provisions of the Companies Act 2006 (the Act) relating to the audit of the financial statements for the year by virtue of section 477, and that no member or members have requested an audit pursuant to section 476 of the Act.

The Management Committee members acknowledge their responsibilities for:

1. Ensuring that the charity keeps adequate accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act, and
 2. Preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of Doorstep as at the end of the financial year and of its profit or loss for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of section 393, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Act relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to **Doorstep**.
- These financial statements were approved by the members of the committee on the 10th of November, 2016 and are signed on their behalf by:

David Hightower

The refurbished playroom



and Doorstep. Since seeing first-hand how the project's services touched so many users I wanted to join the organisation and help increase our impact on the community.

Progress is not always a smooth or continuous process and it helps to take a step back every so often and have a look. Since joining Doorstep's Management Committee as Secretary in 2015 I have seen a number of positive changes including a revitalised playroom, an updated website which promotes our cause, and the addition of several new Management Committee members.

The Management Committee meets every 6 to 8 weeks to discuss operating items in addition to working towards longer term goals. The vision we share for Doorstep is for it to become a self-funding organisation able to provide services to its users without constantly having to source donations. This ambitious goal will take time to realize but we feel that this is the best way to ensure continuity of services in the face of continued government austerity.

Smaller objectives for the coming year which will help us achieve our vision are: increase the number and diversity of Management Committee members, strengthen our engagement with supporters and wider community via social media, and look for opportunities to increase fundraising proceeds.

Despite its modest size, Doorstep requires the commitment of a vast number of supporters to function smoothly, and the first group I would like to recognise are the staff (Sarah, Ebanie, Belkize) and our many volunteers. Vicky Fox deserves a special mention for her work with our service users as well as securing the day to day funding for Doorstep. Thank you all for your tireless help and support.

I would also like to thank our current Management Committee for all their hard work and dedication throughout the year. A special thank you to Sara Katchi, our previous Chair, for showing me the ropes and lending a guiding hand.

Lastly, I would like to recognise all our financial supporters: countless individuals, trusts, charities, and schools. Your donations are the reason we are still able to help our community years after losing council funding. For this we are extremely grateful; thank you.

In closing I would like to wish everyone who is in any way touched by the Doorstep Homeless Families Project all the best for 2017 and beyond.

Stuart Wollach

We give our most sincere and grateful thanks to the following organisations for their support of Doorstep and our families:

Abercorn School
Action4London
BBC Children in Need
Broadhurst School
CARIS Camden
Challah forHunger
DACbeachcroft
Emmanuel Church & School
Fitzdale Trust
Free Cakes forKids Camden
Hampstead Wells & Campden Trust
JW3
London Community Foundation
Maida vale Mums
Margaret Cropper Trust
Merlin's Magic Wand
Mitzvah Day UK
Nationwide Building Citizenship Team
Reel Fund
Simon Dodds Trust
St Mary's School
Sarum Hall School
South Hampstead JuniorSchool
South Hampstead Synagogue
Sports Relief-Evening Standard Dispossessed Fund
StreetSmart
Teacher Stern LLP
The American School in London
The Childhood Trust
The Liberal Jewish Synagogue
University College School
Voluntary Action Camden
Waitrose
Xander Lily Fund

Also, to the very many kind and generous individuals who donated money, food, toys, clothes, books, and their time.

The Management Committee

Sara Katchi - Chair until March 2016

Francoise Wagneur- Secretary *until June 2015*

Stuart Wollach-Secretary June 2015 & Chair from April2016

David Hightower- Treasurer-

Caroline Garkisch

Swetha Ramachandran

Jo Cunningham

Sharon Henry

Amit Unadkat

Leanne Dimant

The Staff Team

Vicky Fox- Director

Sarah Lough & Ebanie Kajue-Children's Workers

The Volunteers

Belkize Banjica

Valbona Haxholli

Mel Murly

Zoe Fox



A glass of bubbles at Windsor

Not forgetting the hundreds of other individuals who took part in occasional projects to help Doorstep and our families- we give our sincere thanks to each and every one!

Doorstep Homeless Families Project

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