

Doorstep

"Opening doors for homeless families"



Annual Report 2019 and Accounts 2018-2019

Director's Report

Last year I opened my report by saying that 2018 was unusually busy, little did I know that 2019 would surpass it. Early in 2019 we learned that our premises would undergo fire prevention works which it was estimated would take approximately 6 weeks. However, as our premises were in need of extensive damp proofing, repair and renewal Camden Council authorised a full refurbishment throughout. This created a big upheaval as we had to pack everything up to go into storage and vacate the premises to enable the works which actually took five months to complete.

During the summer holidays we were able to run our Summer Programme at Holy Trinity. This worked out well, as it is very close by and the staff at Holy Trinity were extremely helpful and supportive.

We returned to our lovely, redecorated and renovated premises at the end of September and we were up and running again, with our full weekly timetable of services, within two weeks. PRET Foundation kindly bought us some new furniture and we have used this opportunity to rearrange the offices and create space for our new teen service which will be starting in Spring 2020.

We've had quite a good year with our fundraising strategy. Our Patron, Victoria Coren Mitchell, hosted a Quiz Night in early 2019 raising almost 7k. Our trustees got behind our participation in the Big Summer Give campaign, again raising almost 7k. I used the closure time to write bids and was successful in securing some more of the multi year funding we need. This is being provided by BBC Children in Need who are funding both the Children's Worker posts and extra staff to run the new teen service for three years. However, funding for the Director's post and the additional full time Family Advocate post, we so desperately need, is proving elusive and bids made so far have not been successful. We will keep trying!

We have continued to benefit from the generous support of local schools, businesses, community organisations and individuals in the wider community, who volunteer, donate gifts in kind and help to raise funds.

We said goodbye to Ebani Kajue in June and Khadra Mohamed took her place. I give sincere thanks to my colleagues on the staff team, the members of the management committee, our Patron, funders and supporters for making our work possible.

All in all, it's been a year of change, renewal and real progress towards the goals in our strategic business plan. As we look forward to completing 30 years as Doorstep I'm looking forward to what the year ahead has in store.

Vicky Fox

Homelessness and Housing

The Homelessness Monitor: England 2019 is the eighth annual report of an independent study, commissioned by Crisis and funded by Crisis, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and with support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, of the homelessness impacts of recent economic and policy developments in England.

Key findings

- This year's Monitor comes at a time when there has been some of the most significant policy developments in recent times, with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April 2018, and the Rough Sleeping Strategy in Summer 2018. The findings reflect a modest – but palpable – sense of relief, amongst both local authorities and key informants at these policy developments.
- 71 per cent of local authorities participating in this year's LA survey reported that homelessness had been recently increasing – in a quarter of cases to a “significant” extent. Nationally, 2017/18 saw a small drop in the recorded statutory homelessness caseload, although it still remains 42 per cent above their 2009 low point
- The extraordinary rise since 2010 in the number of households made homeless by the ending of private tenancies seems finally to have peaked. Homelessness temporary accommodation placements, however, have continued to rise, and now stand 71 per cent higher than in 2011, with a disproportionate rise in Bed & Breakfast use also ongoing.
- After rapid growth since 2010 rough sleeping appears to have levelled off somewhat in England with official estimates recording a 2 percent decrease nationally. However, there are still rising trends in three of England's four broad regions, including core cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester, and amongst Central and Eastern European migrants.
- Very few local authority respondents believed that existing social housing provision in their area is commensurate with homelessness needs, but many were at least equally concerned about the problematic profile of the local social housing stock portfolio, mismatched to need. There were also widespread anxieties about ongoing changes to housing association tenancy allocation policies impeding local authorities' ability to resolve homelessness.
- Private rents seem to be falling in real terms across the country as a whole, but rising in London. Affordability in the sector as a whole also seems to be improving, and repossessions falling. However the growth in the private rented sector (only marginally reversed in the last year) has exposed many more low-income households to higher housing costs, a smaller proportion of which are protected through housing allowances in the benefit system.

- The safety net once provided by Housing Benefit, whereby post housing incomes were protected from erosion below basic benefit levels, has now effectively ended for the bulk of private tenants in receipt of benefit across the country, with young people under 35 particularly badly affected by reduced Local Housing Allowance rates and the working age benefit freeze.
- There is considerable concern amongst local authority respondents of the ongoing expected impact of welfare reform on homelessness in their area. The full roll out of UC is the subject of greatest concern with nearly two thirds of LAs anticipating a “significant” homelessness increase as a result. Aside from anxieties on UC, most LAs anticipated that homelessness would “significantly” increase due to then freeze in LHA rates (53%) and other working age benefits (51%), with almost as many LAs (47%) reporting likewise for the lowered benefit cap.
- This year’s Homelessness Monitor does however provide encouraging evidence that the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) is enabling councils to help more people in housing need. Most local authorities reported that the HRA has enabled a more person-centred approach to managing homelessness in their area and two-thirds of authorities saw the Act as having positive impacts for single people. While this is a positive step forward, there remain pressing structural issues that if unresolved risk reversing the positive steps achieved by the HRA so far.



Camden Newsroom reported the following in July 2019 (abridged)

National changes to the welfare benefit system, a shortage of affordable housing and increased private rents have impacted nationally, contributing to a homelessness crisis, which in the worst incidences can result in rough sleeping.

Camden Council will implement a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, following approval at the cabinet meeting held on 17 July.

We are already building much-needed new homes under the Community Investment Programme (CIP). Key new initiatives include redeveloping hostel provision to respond to the needs of some of our borough's most vulnerable people, purchasing 58 former Right to Buy properties for use as temporary accommodation for homeless families and working closely with our partners in order to provide greater support and work opportunities for the homeless.

Camden has a proud track record of reducing the number of households having to live in temporary accommodation through its focus on prevention and supporting households to move on as quickly as possible to more settled housing. In 2004 there were 2,000 households in our temporary accommodation, today there are 515 but we want to do even better.

Camden has also increased its investment in specialist services to tackle rough sleeping and related street activity in the borough, which has increased significantly over the last five years. New teams and services are being delivered under the rough sleeping strategy Routes off The Street (RTS). Under RTS, Camden has developed new specialist teams with its partners to tackle high-risk hotspots in the borough and commissioned a new re-connection service enabling those rough sleepers arriving from different parts of the UK to safely access housing and support in their home area.

In 2018 Camden was awarded £870,000 under the Government's Rough Sleeping Initiative, which was the single largest award made to any Local Authority in the UK, endorsing the innovative approaches made by services in Camden. These new funds have enabled Camden to expand its outreach services and reach out to the most vulnerable at risk on our streets including female rough sleepers, those who are new to the streets and those with no recourse to public funds.

Camden was the first local authority in England to launch a Housing First service. The service provides independent accommodation with floating support for single homeless people with complex needs. Last year, the service successfully found tenancies for 12 people and this year, thanks to the RSI funding, they will be able to help even more vulnerable people, with the total number housed expanding to 44.

Camden is determined to go further to ensure no one in the borough gets left behind. Its new strategy seeks to address these challenges and identifies four priorities.

Prevention: we want to stop people from becoming homeless.

The council will ensure that information on housing options is easily accessible, support residents facing eviction and use its resources to target support at those at highest risk of homelessness.

Supporting: we will support those experiencing homelessness and help them to regain their independence.

The council will continue to provide rough sleepers with a “route off the street”, through accessing affordable accommodation, and where appropriate, supporting recovery and independence through a personalised approach, whilst working in partnership with Housing Associations, voluntary and community partners to make the best use of available resources.

Tackling causes of homelessness: we will address the long-term root causes of homelessness.

The council and partners will address this by continuing to build more homes and using its existing social housing more effectively, supporting others to build more and working with landlords to find more affordable homes, whilst removing barriers to employment through training and education opportunities. One of the ways the council are working to combat a shortage of affordable housing is through its Community Investment Programme (CIP).

Campaigning: using our voice to fight for a national response to the challenges of chronic housing shortage, instability and homelessness.

The council will urge the government for further freedom and funding to be able to build more homes and also to implement changes in the welfare system, alongside the creation of a more functional and accessible private rented sector

“We currently have the lowest number of households in temporary accommodation in inner London and have invested in preventative services that seek to support people to remain in their existing home.

“Moving forward, we have just agreed to invest £22m in buying back former right to buy properties in Camden for use as temporary housing which will keep those families in Camden close to their support networks, jobs and schools. We are also embarking on a £16m redevelopment programme of two of our existing hostels.

“A combination of the growing housing crisis and fewer social homes, combined with benefit and welfare reform and newly emerging changes in legislation are impacting our ability to effectively address these issues.”

Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member for Better Homes

On January 28th 2020 the Guardian newspaper reported the following:

Growing numbers of homeless families and the increasing cost of putting them up in bed and breakfast hotels caused two-thirds of English local authorities to break their homelessness budgets last year, say councils.

Analysis by the Local Government Association (LGA) found that councils collectively spent £663m on homelessness services in 2018-19 – a 28% overspend amounting to a £140m excess budget.

It warned that local homelessness services were being pushed to “breaking point” by rising demand caused by a shortage of social housing and the gap between rents and housing benefit, which made housing unaffordable for low-income families.

Cllr David Renard, the LGA’s housing spokesman, said homelessness was one of the most pressing issues facing councils. “To reverse rising levels of homelessness, which represents huge human consequences and financial costs, the government needs to invest in homelessness prevention.”

Cllr Kieron Williams, cabinet member for housing management and modernisation at Southwark council which overspent by £4m in 2018-19 said councils would continue to struggle without government action to fix the broken housing market and reforms to the benefits system to ensure it covers the cost of renting locally.

He added: “Last year we received 3,054 homelessness applications, up from 2,685. History tells us to expect that kind of surge in a recession but it’s over a decade since the last crash and nationally the numbers are still going up.”

The LGA said councils needed desperately to be allowed to build more social housing and called on the government to boost local housing allowance (LHA) benefit rates to protect families at risk of becoming homeless.

Housing charity Shelter estimates that around 370,000 low income households renting privately in England struggle to bridge an average £113 a month gap between their rent and their LHA benefit payments.

Official government figures highlighted by Shelter show that there was a net loss of 17,000 social homes in England in 2019. Some 23,740 were sold under right to buy or demolished, while just 6,287 new homes for social rent came on stream.

The LGA analysis found that English councils had collectively increased and overspent their homelessness budgets in each of the last four years. Budgets had risen from £306m in 2015-16 to £503m in 2018-19, while the percentage annual overspend had climbed from 16% to 28% over the same period.

A chunk of the overspending has gone on putting homeless families up in bed and breakfast accommodation, up a fifth to £115m in 2018-19. There are currently 7,110 homeless households in B&Bs – a 15-year high, according to the LGA.

The growing cost of housing homeless families has alarmed local authorities, which spent nearly £1bn in England alone on temporary accommodation in 2018-19, up 71% from the £584m spent in 2012-13. More than 86,000 households are currently in temporary accommodation, including 127,000 children.

Our Services

Our services have been developed over the years in direct response to the needs that families have expressed:

- * 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.

Our work with children

Children’s workers complete observations of all the children every 4-6 weeks to measure their progress in the areas of individual developmental need identified when originally assessed and the specific differences we aim to achieve. Time-Sampled and narrative observations, as well as the summary observation sheets Children’s Workers completed for each child every half term clearly show the improvements children have experienced throughout the year.

Case Studies

Case Study 1

Two year old Boy U had started to use Doorstep’s creche for 2 years, but living further away meant his attendance was inconsistent. He found it difficult to walk, since his family’s accommodation didn’t have space for him to move around. When the family were moved

nearer to Doorstep, U was able to attend creche every day. He rapidly improved his physical development. Walking confidently, and starting to climb and jump off of the soft play shapes.

His speech and language skills developed as he joined in playing with other children his age, and with adult support has started to be able to share resources. Staff worked with him in a small group through the summer holiday programme, to help U's social skills and language development. U started by repeating words and phrases that he heard from members of staff 'toast', 'drink', 'my turn'. By the end of the 4 week summer programme, U was starting to join 2-3 words together to say sentences like 'I Want That', 'More Toast'. As the year ends Staff have observed U playing alongside his peers for 5-10 minutes without any adult intervention needed. U is still being supported to play in a group with his peers and share resources to make sure he's able to meet the social development predicted for his age-group in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Working with his Health Visitor has meant that U is now being referred to a Speech and Language Therapist to help with his communication which should enable him to improve his social skills.

Case study 2

At the start of the year, 9 year-old Z's family moved into temporary accommodation and started using Doorstep's services. Moving from another town, helping to care for her Dad, who became blind after an accident, and having to help her Mum look after her younger siblings left Z feeling similar age and interests who made her feel welcome. They completed homework together and played games in a small group with other girls of the same age. Thanks to her buddy at After School Club, Z got to know her neighbours and soon became friends with people living near her, who she would see at Doorstep and in the hostel. Reducing isolation helped to boost Z's self-confidence and she soon began to join-in feedback sessions and asking members of staff for resources she would like to use with her friends or her sister. Z's Mum said that she would often ask to play with her new friends from Doorstep, something she couldn't do with her school friends who all lived too far away. Z said that she liked being able to play with children her age at Doorstep, and having a safe space to relax and play, and not having to look after her siblings or help her parents!

Case Study 3

A 12 year old boy (B) moved into the hostel at the beginning of the year, he already knew a few of the children from playing in the hostel garden while Doorstep was closed. His neighbours' children told him about Doorstep and he started attending AfterSchool Club just in time to receive his personalised birthday cake and gift. Being one of the oldest using AfterSchool Club meant that B was asked by members of staff to help with making snacks for everyone to share and help to run games at the end of each session. Already being a confident and resilient boy, B hadn't found moving to a new town and starting a new secondary school too difficult but said it was nice to have space to play football with his new friends and somewhere safe to stay and chat when he wanted to. B offered to help younger children with their homework, but had to develop the communication and social skills necessary to support the younger children without being tricked into telling them all the answers. He likes to help 'the small kids' to find the resources they want to use, as well as checking on them throughout the session to ensure they

are happy and confident at the After School Club. During the Autumn term B was supporting the younger children to develop their football skills, teaching them how to successfully tackle him, and take penalty kicks. B's communication skills have improved a lot in the last 12 months, he is now confident communicating with adults on behalf of the younger children, as well as for himself and his peers.

Case Study 4

An 11 year-old girl (D) moved into the hostel just before Christmas last year, she was persuaded to attend the Christmas party for her age-group but felt awkward as she didn't know anyone else there. When the new year started D was encouraged to work in a small group with volunteers and girls of a similar age. She enjoyed arts and crafts as well as using the trampoline. These activities became the tools to reduce her isolation and interact with her peers. After attending a few sessions D commented that there were quite a few younger children from her school who used the After School Club - even though her school was an hour's journey from Doorstep. This helped her feel more settled and with support from the volunteers she started to talk to staff and older girls about moving to secondary school after the summer holidays. Throughout the Summer Programme, D was placed in a group with 3 other girls, already at secondary schools in the area, and allowed to choose other people to work with on art, crafts and science activities. Each group had adult support to complete the activities and make sure the friendship groups worked well together. By the end of the 4 week summer programme D was suggesting games that could be played at the end of each session and leading a couple herself. She was confident in her friendship group and helped to make snacks for everyone to share with her 2 new best friends, and helped adults with tidying away at the end of each session. She complained that she had missed Doorstep while it was shut for refurbishment, but had managed to stay in touch with one of her best friends and had used the hostel garden, and visited each other's homes after the summer. Starting secondary had not been the stressful experience she had feared, talking to the older girls had helped to allay her fears as they discussed what it was like for them in Year 7.



Treasurer's Report

The financial statements for Doorstep (or 'the charity') cover the fiscal year ending 31 March 2019.

The fiscal year 2019 ended in a secure position, with the reserve (£35,033) carried forward being sufficient to support the running of the charity for a minimum of three months. However, the management committee and director recognise the need, and remain committed to pursuing multi-year funding to minimise the risk of disruption to the charity's services in e.g. the event of a temporary decrease in external funding.

Careful financial and operating records have been kept throughout the financial year ending on 31 March 2019. The accounts for the fiscal year ending 31 March 2019 have been examined by an independent accountancy firm. Detailed records of financial documents are available and may be requested 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 in accordance with 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 the charity as at the end of the financial year 2019 and of its profit or loss for the aforementioned 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 the charity.

These financial statements were approved by the members of the committee on 23rd September 2019 and are signed on their behalf by the chair Alpona Banerji.

Dr. Ellen Murphy



Chair's Report

Doorstep has had an exciting and fruitful year. Newly refurbished facility, successful converting funding opportunities and service levels that have continued to the highest levels possible are some of the milestones for the past year. As usual, Doorstep continues to quietly and very effectively help, support and bolster vulnerable families in our local community.

Early this year, Doorstep's premises went through an overall refurbishment. This included but not limited to painting, fire retardation, damp proofing, a new storage space in the garden, and a new kitchen. I would like to thank Camden Council for undertaking the refurbishment and giving Doorstep a new look and our families are incredibly thrilled to return to a clean and safer location.

Doorstep's service levels on the whole was maintained despite the renovation which meant that users did not have access to the premises for a long period. When the delays in the renovation works threatened the much awaited childrens' summer programme, Vicky Fox, who is Doorstep's only full-time worker along with her staff found off-site facilities to run a full and exciting summer service for the children. As we know summer for children living in a hostel is often a time where the world shrinks, and deprivations are felt more acutely. No longer able to participate in the social and developmental opportunities enabled by school, a child living in a hostel is confined to a solitary room for much of the day. So, it was critical for Doorstep to provide appropriate educational and play activities for children and day trips to locations both in and out of London.

This would not have been possible without the considerable commitment and passion of Vicky, and her small and incredibly efficient team of three part-time staff members: childcare workers Sara and Khadra and Kiki. The Management Committee joins me in thanking and acknowledging them and their continued commitment to Doorstep.

A number of funding initiatives which included focussing on applying and securing multi-year funding and leveraging various online funding resources, such as Facebook, Amazon etc, bore fruit this year. Our loyal donors were joined by BBC Children in Need and Temasek. Additionally, the Pret Foundation funded some new furniture for the renovated premises. Doorstep also successfully participated for the first time in the "Summer Big Give", which is an online match funding campaign run by Big Give and The Childhood Trust. This helped raise funding for the summer programme for the childrens' activities. Doorstep also continued to receive strong support from the local community, especially from nearby schools and businesses. Although Doorstep received adequate funding over the past year, the organisation continues to face resource constraints, especially in the context of increasing demands on Doorstep's services. Doorstep's financial independence is an important strategic objective, so that the organisation can build and develop services to meet the users and community's needs.

Doorstep's Patron, Victoria Coren Mitchell, remains a generous supporter of the organisation. She actively advocates on behalf of Doorstep, spreading the work of Doorstep which is incredibly important because it helps increase the profile of the organisation within the wider local community. The Management Committee thanks Victoria for all her support and generosity.

The Management Committee is made up of a group of dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers which continues to meet every 6 to 8 weeks, with several ad hoc meetings during the year to further the work of sub-committees. I would like to thank you all for your continued support.

Finally, thank you to all our supporters: individuals, trusts, charities, companies and schools that help us in a plethora of ways, and that allows us to continue to positively impact our community year after year.

I would like to wish all friends of Doorstep Homeless Families Project all the best for 2020.

Alpona Banerji

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

AJG Charities
AKO Foundation
BBC Children in Need
Camden Council
Challah for Hunger
Emmanuel Church & School
First Give
Fitzdale Trust
Free Cakes for Kids Camden
Hampstead Wells & Campden Trust
Holy Trinity
Jack Petchey Foundation
London Community Foundation
Parliament Hill School
Reel Fund
Shapesmith & Well
South Hampstead Junior School
St Christina's School
St John's Women's Club
St Mary's School
St Pauls Girl's School
StreetSmart
Temasek International
The American School in London
The Barnett & Sylvia Shine No2 Charitable Trust
The Childhood Trust
Voluntary Action Camden
Waitrose & Partners
Wednesday's Child
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

Alpona Banerji - Chair

Swetha Ramachandran

Phoebe Stamford-Kamps - Vice Chair

David Hightower

Gabriel Brooks -Treasurer to 5/8/19

Leanne Dimant

Jo Cunningham - Secretary

Sara Katchi

Ellen Murphy -Treasurer from 5/8/19

Alexa Brummer

Kate Gaertner

Lesley Adams

The Staff Team

Vicky Fox - Director

Sarah Lough, Ebanie Kajue (left June 2019) **& Khadra Mohamed** - Children's Workers (part time)

Belkize Banjica - Housekeeping & sessional play support (part time)

Volunteers

Teachers and students from ASL

Kiki

Dana

Patron

Victoria Coren-Mitchell

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

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