



## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2022

### A word from our CEO, Rob Saggs

As the curtains draw to a close to on what has been an extremely challenging 2022. We look back and reflect upon some amazing successes on the achievements of the clients, team, volunteers and trustees. During the last financial year CHESS Homeless helped over 180 people through the support and accommodation service we offer. There were also over 200 people that we relieved of potential homelessness with our partners.

Some really exciting news is in relation to one of the newest team members who is delivering Wellbeing sessions that include emotional, physical and practical sessions. These can vary from haircuts to sailing trips and computer classes to cooking skills. We are also proud to mention that CHESS was part of the team that won the 'Essex Housing Awards 2022' Working in Partnership' category.

This partnership was a joint effort between Essex County Council, Chelmsford, Epping, Maldon, Braintree, Rochford, Castlepoint, Brentwood and Uttlesford council with the 'Mid-Essex Rough Sleeper Initiative Outreach Service'.

[chesshomeless.org](https://chesshomeless.org)



*Christmas card hand-drawn by CHESS Service User and on sale via chess website*

I'd really like to draw readers attention to the new mini movies that have been produced and show the amazing work that CHESS is doing across the County, as well as listen to some of the incredible life-changing stories from some of our clients.

Due to the cost-of-living crisis we are looking at significant uplifts to our costs of running the service and we would ask that our friends and supporters do all they can to help us during these challenging times so that we can continue our mission **'to ensure that people who find themselves homeless are supported in ways that enable them to move on purposefully and in good health'**.

Thankyou for all the support you have continued to offer to CHESS during the past year, we wish everyone a peace and joy-filled Christmas and a healthy and happy 2023.

No-one should be sleeping out at Christmas (or any other time of year) but they are. Our bed spaces have increased over the past 2 years from 32 to 60, and from 6 properties to 13, but CHESs are seeing a continual need for further provision. High energy and cost of living prices only look to make the situation worse and as a Charity this impacts us heavily. We need your help to ensure that we can assist more individuals currently homeless into independent living situations, supporting them to address issues which have contributed to them being homeless.

We care for the homeless and vulnerable in our community, respecting their need for safety and dignity and working with them to help re-build their lives from a positive foundation.

## CHESs can offer each of its service users:

- a warm bed in their own room,
- access to hygiene facilities,
- regular meals,
- one to one support and counselling for their physical and mental wellbeing,
- certificated training courses which could lead to future employment
- assistance with external agencies (permanent housing, GP services, optical and dental care)

With the closure of our Winter Project which offered bedspaces from December through to March, we looked at other ways to engage with these individuals increasing our Outreach service from covering 5 districts to 8. These are now: Chelmsford, Brentwood, Rochford, Maldon, Epping, Castle Point, Uttlesford and Braintree.

With the significant uplift in our property portfolio comes the need to ensure we have the skilled and experienced staff to support the needs of our clients and manage our increased capacity. Through virtual support and mental wellbeing sessions we can build a relationship of trust with the individuals we are supporting. Dedicated support allows our clients to address the root causes of their mental health issues, helping them to find a path to recovery and change. Evidence shows that having processed trauma, increased self-confidence and making positive steps towards employment, people can cement a positive future, maintain accommodation, and find a long-term route away from homelessness.

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'I have seen CHESs support staff turn peoples lives around. Some just need a simple hand up - others sadly have more complex issues to address.'

Val (CHESs Volunteer)



## 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS 2022



### CHESs Summer Fun Day at Woodend Farm



# STEPHEN'S STORY

Steven is a 70-year old man who was found by CHESSE staff on a mattress at the back of a dumpster under a blanket - they actually thought he was dead! He was soaked through and had only one carrier bag with a few items, no clothes and nothing else. He was taken into the CHESSE property at Stock firstly for 2 months and then moved into our property at Milburn for few months before CHESSE secured him a place in retirement housing in Chelmsford.



'I actually chose to make myself homeless when I lost my job as a graphic designer, illustrator and cartoonist. I was living alone and thought how can I provide for my daughter to have the things I want for her such as go to the theatre, pay for school and other things? So I decided to give up my home. My daughter getting things was more important to me than that.'

So he took up residence outside CAB in Witham. Steven says 'I actually enjoyed living rough – it sounds stupid by I was accepted by the rats and they became my friends. I would share any food I got with them and they knew it'. In all the 17 years he was homeless time he has never been scared – although he has had almost everything he owned stolen. 'I did have a laptop and had actually written two books, but they are gone now. They were science fiction about the Scots and other planets!. If I'm not writing now I am drawing – I love wildlife and always wanted to be a wildlife artist.'

He got moved on from outside CAB but really wanted to be somewhere where there was some countryside so he could enjoy his love of wildlife and nature.

When Steven met CHESSE he was at the point where he didn't need to be homeless as his daughter was grown and has her own job and money now. 'The worst thing about being homeless is the cold and wind. I've never had a problem with drugs or alcohol, I've had no health issues and haven't actually seen a doctor in 20 years.'

He had been sleeping rough for around 15 years and thought that perhaps the council may help him to get a more permanent home. Steven is originally from Braintree so although he did get offered help in getting accommodation from the council he was told it would be a two year wait.

'Being older I thought maybe it was time to get out of the cold, so I agreed to go to the CHESSE property at Stock and I was given a room. I used to sit and talk about art with the other residents cos that's my passion.'

CHESSE then moved him into another property before securing him a place through the Genesys scheme in retirement housing in Chelmsford. 'This place is perfect for me. There is a woodland area at the back where I can walk and draw the wildlife I see. The help I have received from CHESSE has been overwhelming.' Genesys also offered a grant to pay the first months rent.

Steven was not our normal resident. He is much older, with a different type of attitude to homelessness – he views things differently to the younger generation. 'If I don't like something I need to either change it or adapt. My 5-year plan is to just live that long to be honest. I just got on with life – I wasn't ashamed to be homeless, I simply behaved like everyone else. I had nothing to hide from and just lived life. Only about 3 people actually knew of my situation.'

Steven is a gifted artist and avid reader – he will read a newspaper each day from cover to cover. He still loves drawing and said he may possibly write another book if he can get a laptop.

None of his family have ever known about him being homeless. His daughter now knows he is in retirement accommodation – and on the day of speaking to Steven he had been to the theatre with her the previous night to see one of the latest shows.

Since settling into his new accommodation he has now started art classes for the other residents and no longer travels into town to spend the day in Wetherspoons, but is making use of his amazing talents in the comfort of his new home.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

**Stephen is just one of many who pass through CHESSE and has a happy ending to his story. Please help us to help the many others who are waiting for a chance to have a home of their own again, but need a little support to get them on their way.**

Any donation you give helps us fulfil our mission to seek to ensure that people who find themselves homeless are supported in ways that enable them to move forward purposefully and in good health.

To give you some idea of how your donation is used

**£10** goes towards hot meals and drinks

**£20** towards one night stay in our night shelter

**£30** provides an Essentials Box for those moving onto own accommodation

**£50** helps with Welfare & Support Assistance

25 March

**CHES** Fundraiser at The Hotbox, Chelmsford

24 June

**ROCK CHOIR** at Chelmsford Cathedral

July (tba)

**Summer Fun Day**

**SleepOut 2022** was postponed but the new date for 2023 will be released soon.

**WATCH THIS SPACE!**

# 2023 EVENTS

Find all our events online  
at [chesshomeless.org](https://chesshomeless.org)



Watch the NEW 2023 CHES Film online or  
at Youtube <https://youtu.be/0K75IIAEs7k>

Stay up to date with our work via  
[www.chesshomeless.org](http://www.chesshomeless.org) or follow us on  
social media @chesshomeless.

Donations can be made online at  
[www.chesshomeless.org/donate](http://www.chesshomeless.org/donate) or by  
texting HEART to 70085 to donate £10



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