

CHES Homeless



CHES HOMELESS

OPENING DOORS TO INDEPENDENCE

NEWSLETTER 2026 EDITION

TOGETHER, WE'RE CHANGING LIVES





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As we move forward into another financial year, I'm reminded that for many this is a time of struggle. Homelessness continues to affect individuals and families in our communities, leaving people without the security and dignity of a safe place to call home. At CHES, we believe that everyone deserves hope and the chance to rebuild their lives.

This growing pressure makes multi-agency working and effective early intervention more important than ever — and this is exactly what CHES works hard to deliver. By co-ordinating support, identifying risks early, and providing practical, person-centred help, we relieve pressure on statutory services while giving people the stable foundation they need to move forward.

This year alone, we have supported over 300 individuals, providing not just shelter but pathways to independence through counselling, training, and employment support. Behind every statistic is a real person — a mother, a father, a young adult — each with a story of resilience and courage. Currently, two out of five charities are reporting significant operational challenges (Charity Times), and many local authorities are experiencing severe financial strain due to the rising number of households placed in temporary accommodation.

The reality is stark: homelessness is rising, and the cost-of-living crisis means more people are at risk than ever before. We cannot tackle this alone.

Your support truly matters. Whether through donations, volunteering, partnering with us, or simply helping to raise awareness, you play a vital role in bringing hope and stability to those who need it most.

Thank you for standing with us through another year. Your belief in our work makes a real and lasting difference.

In this newsletter you can expect:

Impact Stories

Local Government Reform (LGR)

Volunteer & Staff Spotlight

Turning Point Update

2024/25 Outcomes

Upcoming Events

Rob Saggs



BARRY'S JOURNEY: FROM HOPELESSNESS TO HOPE

Barry first came to CHES Homeless through our Winter Project, arriving after years of homelessness and severe alcoholism. Following the breakdown of his marriage, his life spiralled, and for nearly 20 years he drifted—sofa surfing, sleeping in sheds, and drinking heavily to cope. At his lowest, Barry was consuming extreme amounts of alcohol each day and was told that 73% of his liver was failing. He felt utterly hopeless.

Everything changed when a friend encouraged him to contact CHES. Barry joined the Winter Project, started attending AA, and began reconnecting with others who understood his struggle.

With continued support, he moved into CHES accommodation, gained stability, and slowly rebuilt his confidence and independence.

Today, Barry has been sober for around seven years. He has a stable home, a job, good friends, and continues to volunteer. He shares his story to inspire others, saying: "Talking about it takes the power out of the addiction. I needed CHES and Sanctus to recover—and giving back helps me feel reliable and trustworthy again."

Barry's journey is a powerful reminder that with the right support, recovery and hope are always possible.

SCOTT'S STORY

At CHES Since May 2025 Scott became homeless after a relationship breakdown. He had a history of drug misuse which he has since tackled, thanks in part to having secured accommodation at Turning Point.

Scott attended SHARP (Self Help & Recovery Programme) which he graduated from and now volunteers with SHARP to help those struggling with addiction themselves.



At present, the organisation continues to concentrate on maintaining high-quality delivery across all day-to-day operations. Alongside this, **several strategic areas are emerging that may shape future priorities:**

1

Local Government Reform (LGR)

CHESS is currently working within a rapidly changing local government landscape as Essex progresses through the Local Government Reform (LGR) process.

- The current structure of **eight local authorities** receiving CHESS outreach support has been under review, resulting in **5 new unitary authorities** across Essex, alongside the introduction of a **directly elected mayor**.
- These structural changes represent both challenges and opportunities for partnership working and commissioning services is expected to increase.

Impact on CHESS Services

- CHESS currently delivers outreach services on behalf of Essex County Council across all eight district areas.
- As new unitary authorities are formed, demand for coordinated services is expected to increase.

Despite the uncertainty, CHESS has confirmation that outreach delivery will **continue into the next financial year.**

2

Sector Context and External Pressures/Challenges

The wider homelessness and charity sectors are experiencing sustained pressure:

- **Two out of five charities** are reporting significant operational challenges, according to recent *Charity Times* insights.
- Many local authorities are facing acute financial strain due to the **rising number of households placed in temporary accommodation.**
- This pressure increases the importance of multi-agency working and effective early intervention.

CHES Service Performance (last financial year)

3

CHES continues to deliver strong outcomes across its core services:

- **127 individuals** housed through CHES accommodation services.
- **173 people prevented** from becoming homeless, achieved in collaboration with external agencies and local authority partners.

These figures demonstrate the **continued impact of CHES** in reducing homelessness and preventing crisis escalation.

Move-On Accommodation: Current Situation and Challenges

4

Access to suitable move-on accommodation remains one of the most significant barriers faced by service users.

- **Severe shortage of affordable housing** across the region.
- Limited availability of appropriate long-term accommodation options.
- **Chelmsford remains one of the top ten most expensive places to live in the UK**, intensifying affordability pressures.

These conditions restrict move-on pathways and increase time spent in supported accommodation, creating bottlenecks within the housing system.

CHES continues to deliver essential services during a time of significant change both locally and nationally. While structural reform and housing supply present ongoing challenges, the organisation remains well-positioned, with confirmed delivery for the next financial year and demonstrable impact across key service areas.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: FLICK'S STORY

"I arrive at 6pm, get things started, and aim to have dinner ready by 7. Once it's ready, I let everyone know and chat as residents come down. By the end of the shift, we're often washing up together, talking one-on-one and it feels equal, just people connecting.

One conversation that stayed with me was with a young woman who'd faced so little support in her life. At CHESS, she finally had the chance to rebuild and move forward. It really brought home how important that support is.

Volunteering helps keep the service running, even if it's in a small way. It gives you perspective and the chance to do something tangible to help. It's also a great way to meet people—I'm still friends with someone I volunteered with years ago.

You don't need to be a chef: if you can peel a potato, you're qualified. Everything is provided. It's been an incredibly rewarding experience and 14 years later, I'm still here. If you're thinking about volunteering, don't hesitate and get in touch."

HOMELESSNESS IN OUR COMMUNITY

In Chelmsford, our current rough sleeper figures stand at 25 individuals—these are people our team encountered bedded down at their sleep sites during November. However, **the true number is much higher.** Every day, we work to prevent many more from becoming homeless, including those living in unsuitable conditions or sofa surfing.

We are also seeing a growing number of people living in cars, outbuildings, or garden sheds. This group is particularly hard to identify because they often have jobs and go to great lengths to hide their situation, maintaining what appears to be a normal lifestyle. To support them, we've launched a new initiative called "**Ask Molly**", which allows individuals without access to showers or hot water to discreetly use facilities at local gyms or leisure centres before heading to work.



Across the eight districts we support, the official rough sleeper count can't be defined but as Scott's story shows, there are countless barriers to overcome before someone can even be considered for accommodation.

That's why projects like Turning Point, combined with our outreach services, are so vital. They help break down those barriers and give people the chance to rebuild their lives.



TURNING POINT UPDATE

Our 24 new modular accommodation units which opened in April 2024 are now fully occupied.

Through wellbeing activities and group support, residents are able to reconnect, rebuild confidence, and take positive steps towards independent living. For more information on this project visit chesshomeless.org/turning-point

OUTCOMES 2024/2025



172 people relieved or prevented from becoming homeless

127 people offered bed & bespoke support within CHES Homeless

20,560 Total bedspace nights generated through CHES operations

(Lower than 23/24 due to closure of Turning Point and development of the site)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Volunteer Welcome Evening – 10th June

Learn more about CHESS and how you can get involved in volunteering for a great cause. Join us for an informal evening with refreshments—everyone is welcome.

Sign up now: bit.ly/4udhCKJ

Skydive - September 2026

Ever wanted a good reason to jump out of a plane? Now's your chance. Get in touch to find out more or book a place

London to Brighton Cycle – 15th September

Join our team as they take on this epic 55 mile cycle challenge to raise funds. Contact us at: fundraising@chesshomeless.org

2027 marks 30 years of CHESS supporting people facing homelessness. We're planning a year of exciting fundraising activities and events—keep an eye out for ways to get involved!

You can find out more about all of these events at www.chesshomeless.org/events or by email at fundraising@chesshomeless.org

SEEN SOMEONE SLEEPING ROUGH?

Here's how you can help

As part of the Streetlink service we support rough sleepers with emergency supplies until a longer-term solution can be found.

Place an alert at: www.thestreetlink.org.uk or through our website <https://chesshomeless.org/get-help-for-someone-else/>

This will send an Outreach Team within **48 hours** to assess the situation, offer emergency help, and provide advice on next steps.



OTHER WAYS TO HELP CHESS

Your continued support makes all the difference.



Donate Today:

www.chesshomeless.org/donate



Volunteer:

www.chesshomeless.org/volunteer



Spread the Word:

Share our mission on social media [@chesshomeless](https://twitter.com/chesshomeless)

