

Here to Help But
Not to Judge



Newsletter 18
November 2018

Lofty Heights has two clear aims; to improve people's quality of life in their own homes whilst providing jobs and training for local young people

Festive Greetings

How did that happen? It's nearly Christmas. We are going to look at what we've been doing and look forward to the exciting new year ahead of us. Christmas is a clutter-full time of year. Some of the best advice I've heard relates to 'tit for tat' giving at Christmas. Give someone the gift of 'no tat' this year and agree to NOT buy each other presents. You'll save the money, save the storage, and potentially save the landfill space. Without the need to give a 'little something' maybe you can save all that money and stress and genuinely wish someone a 'Happy Christmas' (or alternative festive greeting)!



Job Shadowing Success

In our last newsletter we offered the opportunity to carry out job shadowing with Lofty Heights. With the launch of the Self-Neglect and Hoarding policy we hoped to introduce people into the reality of hoarded and cluttered homes and meet some of the real people behind some of the statistics being discussed.



Seeing pictures is really not the same as the experience, and meeting people who are trapped in these homes brings a much fuller understanding of why you can't just tackle the problem with a skip and some muscle.

Annie from Orbit took us up on the opportunity. We sought permissions before making any arrangements. We prepared a range of activities for Annie to take part in, after finding out what elements she was most interested in and what might impact on her role at

Orbit. Annie joined us for an allocation meeting to discover what goes into the practical elements of planning a job. She accompanied Georgina on some assessment visits, visiting properties and then working out an estimate to carry out the work.

Words from Annie

"I work in the Admin Department of Orbit Home Improvement Agency in Bury St Edmunds, and a few years ago I went with a couple of colleagues to a Hoarding Conference, where I met Olive, her husband and a few of the team. It was a really interesting and informative day and gave an in-sight into the work that Lofty Heights carries out. So, when I read in Lofty Height's last newsletter that there was an opportunity to do some job shadowing, I couldn't wait to ask my line manager if I could contact Olive.

I have, so far, had two visits with the Lofty Heights Team. The first was spent in the office and gave me a chance to see just what goes on behind the scenes...and what a lot that entails! Clearly, I didn't appreciate the amount of work that a service like this needs to do on a daily basis so that everything runs smoothly.

My second visit was spent accompanying Georgina on some of her visits and I felt very privileged to be able to go into some of their client's homes. This is such a personal area of someone's life, and so hard for the people involved to cope with trying to move forward, that it really struck me what professional, fantastic people the Lofty Heights Team are and how much they really care about their clients.

I shall look forward to my next visit with them."

Thank You to Orbit Home Improvement Agency

Lofty Heights would like to say a huge thank you to Orbit. We made an appeal for help when one of our new recruits looked like they may not be able to take part in our training scheme. Through Realise Futures we had funding for 19-24-year-olds to take part in a bespoke programme of training but two of our applicants were only 18. Not wanting to turn away anyone willing to work, we hoped that an Ipswich based charity or business would help with the funding. Orbit is based in Bury St Edmunds, yet they stepped in and sponsored one of those places. Not only that but we are now in talks with them about opportunities for progression for our new recruits.

No Tat Xmas Gift Idea

ID is a dilemma for young people. Many of us take it for granted that our children have passports from an early age and that proving their identity is simple.

This is not the case for some of the young people that we work with. They may have fled the family home – leaving documents behind or come through the care system where a family holiday hasn't been an issue. Even just living on a low income can make producing ID a an unobtainable expense.

It used to be that you didn't need to prove who you are quite so much but these days you need photo ID to open a bank account, carry out training, rent a property (even privately renting), or start a job.

So this year, instead of buying a goat for a village maybe you could find out if a young person in your circle is struggling to get a passport or driving licence

Sudden Changes in Care Needs – Reducing Patient Costs

As part of our work to clear properties ready for sale or return to a landlord we have uncovered several issues where rents and utilities have been allowed to continue for a long time, two and a half years in one case. This is mostly due to the uncertainty of a person's needs, but it raises concerns about wasted funds. It's very common when a person is in hospital that duty of care will bounce between the hospital and the community teams, leading to a lack of clarity over what has already been done.

When we inspect properties in need of clearance, we have found multiple cases where utilities have been on needlessly. Utilities that include standing charges will generate needless bills because they are not based on usage. Subscription to entertainment packages – Sky and Netflix – can only be evidenced by checking bank statements. Magazine and music subscription services are more obvious as they will involve a (often monthly) delivery.



A deeper issue is with rented properties. There may be a housing benefit claim that is paying for the property. This could lead to a potential charge of fraud for the claimant or his representative if this is not dealt with promptly. If the property is rented through social housing then this is holding back a home from someone else in need. If there is no benefit payment then a rented property, along with utilities and subscriptions, represent a huge drain on person's personal income or savings. This money could be used towards care costs.

We have attended properties to find all manner of things:

- A gentleman six months in hospital had his heating on high for the whole of that time – he was admitted in winter and we inspected in July. His TV was irreparably damaged due to being left on standby.
- A property left vacant for two and a half years received a phone call during our visit.
- A rented property vacant for over two years was funded by housing benefit.
- A gentleman three months in hospital returned home to severe water damage following a frozen pipe two months before

When we are all so aware of our own budgets it's important to remember that: an unnecessary phone line costs £30 a month – that is £360 in a year.

Ongoing rent payments average £125 per week – this is £6500 per year – paid by the person or by housing benefit. The cost of housing someone in temporary accommodation due to a property being tied up unnecessarily could exceed £200 per week.

Some of these services are essential to keep the property ready for a return home, but at what stage is there a conversation about thinking longer term, especially if 'home' is no longer a viable option.

We have our own checklist that we plan to put onto our website. If you would like a copy then simply phone or email and we will send it to you.

The Hoarding Conference

Lofty Heights CIC was asked to provide a workshop at the recent Safeguarding Adults Board Hoarding Conference in Trinity Park. Our workshops on partnership working were fully booked for both sessions, something that we are very proud of. We know that people travelled from all over the region, notably Norfolk and Cambridge, to talk to us.

For the event our computer genius, Curtis, helped to create this infographic to show the networks and partnerships involved throughout any individual's case. (We will be uploading a version to our website)

This infographic doesn't only show the groups that work with the individual but it shows whose budget is paying for that help.

Since our own hoarding conference in 2013 we have been saying that Hoarding Disorder is EVERYONE's Problem.

Interestingly, the main consensus to come from the participants at this latest conference was *'where is the therapy'* and *'you can't just rush in and throw everything away'*. Yet Lofty Heights' staff know that there is immense pressure to get things done quickly and cheaply.

Maybe we need another conference to explain all of this to the accountants making the real decisions.

We are really proud of our joint working strategy, it truly is the back bone of our work. This is why you will see us at case conferences, the Health and Wellbeing Board meetings, VCSE meetings and also giving signposting information to clients and customers about extra help or funding they could get.

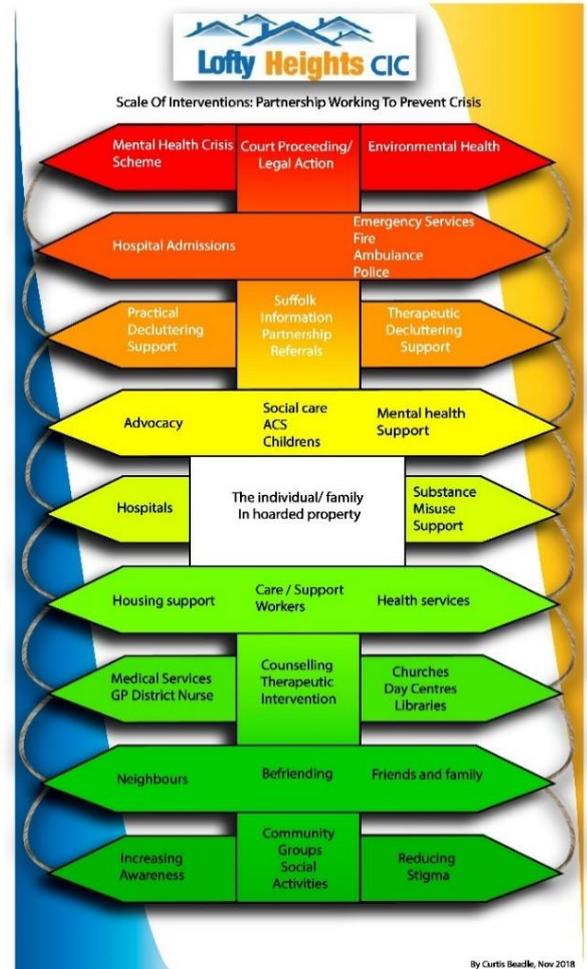
Suffolk Fire Service

One group who have always taken clutter very seriously is the Suffolk Fire Service. Lofty Heights CIC has a long history of working closely with the Fire Service, as our clientele are especially at risk.

Through the hoarding conference we have 're-ignited' that relationship and have now had a meeting to further that work. It's not just hoarded homes at risk, our Homeward Bound Service is to check smoke alarms and fire risk as part of our home checklist. We are looking to create an information leaflet specifically to advise people in cluttered homes and those with poor mobility. The advice in these cases are slightly different – as are the fire prevention techniques.

If you think someone needs a visit to talk about the risk of fire then click the link below or call: 01473 260588 (Fire Business Support)

<https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/suffolk-fire-and-rescue-service/fire-safety-in-the-home/check-if-youre-eligible-for-a-safer-home-visit/apply-for-a-safer-home-visit-on-behalf-of-someone-else>



Train to Work – Lofty Heights – 01/10/18 - 07/11/18



For the past two months Sharon Watson and Gary Goodwin, tutors from Realise Futures, have been engaged in facilitating a 'Train to Work' qualification to a group of young people who have either come from the care support sector or had been long term unemployed, they had all experienced difficulties and barriers in their lives. We began by attending various workshops organised by Lofty Heights, which primarily engaged with young people and gave information on the course and other criteria attached to the project as a whole. The course comprised of eleven units including: Communication Skills, Understanding Time Management, Customer Service, Health, Safety and First Aid at Work, Prepare for Interview. Apart from Health and Safety all modules were facilitated by Sharon and

Gary.

We began with ten participants who were charged with three study days per week plus two days engaging in a volunteer position, the project would run for six weeks

Most participants had not been involved in any learning opportunities for some time, initially it seemed there would be considerable challenges to face (for both learners and tutors), however from day one everyone warmed to the task in hand.

As time progressed the participants, who initially were strangers, transformed into a supportive, confident and hard-working group of people who were a pleasure to work with.

The group experienced a very difficult situation in week three, which could have compromised the course, but not at all, the following day all but one turned up and continued to completion of course, which speaks volumes for the resilience and tenacity of this group of people.

Out of the ten that started the course eight completed and have all been interviewed by Lofty Heights for the opportunities on offer.

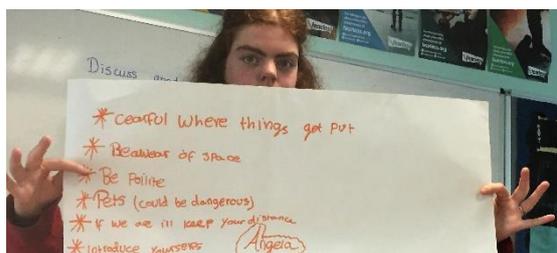
I feel this process has been a real success story and a reason to celebrate such brilliant outcomes for all involved.

I take the opportunity on behalf of Sharon and myself to wish everyone all the very best for the future.

Keep up the good work.

Gary Goodwin, Tutor, Realise Futures Learning and Development

Words From Becky



When I first heard about this six week course I felt really scared and anxious. I didn't know anyone when I started. Within the first few hours we knew a little about one another. After a few days everyone really came out of their shells. Over the last six weeks I have met some fantastic people, I didn't want the course to end. The group has all stuck together, made strong bonds with each other and everyone was supportive throughout.

The teachers were amazing. They would always come in enthusiastic and had smiles on their faces. This helped us to be motivated.

Within Lofty Heights there are many different roles/services on offer. These can include: garden services; house decluttering; move-in/out; loft decluttering and help for hoarders.

I volunteer as part of Lofty Heights programme for two days a week. My placement is at Age UK. No day is ever the same.... We have moved furniture around the shop, done clearances of peoples' houses; loaded/unpacked the van. This I feel has been, and will be, really relevant if I get a job with Lofty Heights. Everyone there is so friendly as they want to be there.

After being successful in my interview I got offered two weeks work experience. I'm really not sure what to expect but I can't wait to start and see some of the group once again.

Forging a Strong Network Across All Sectors

In the last few weeks we have been talking to many people. Lofty Heights was created to be an introduction to work for young people struggling to access the work place. As our decluttering work has expanded so has our employment needs. We are still committed to providing real work and training to excluded groups of young people but that isn't all we do. Lofty Heights has been running for six years, we are currently carrying out our third recruitment and training program. These young people are now being mentored by our core team. Our core team are highly skilled in the decluttering and cleaning work that we do, and also in working with highly anxious people in their own homes. We could not carry out our complex workload without them.

However, we cannot afford to keep all the people that we train and work with, so it is important for us to create and maintain links with other employers to enable opportunities for all of our team to progress.

So, we were delighted to be contacted by Lizzie Forbes of Balfour Beatty recently. She saw the potential for Lofty Heights' to fulfil a number of roles within their Social Value commitments. We are now discussing work experience for our newest recruits to let them discover the variety of possibilities in the construction industry, and also to learn about the design and development of large building and highways' projects. We have already thanked Orbit Home Improvement Agency for their commitment to support our training program but we need to talk to all employers in our locality. We need progression routes for our new recruits but we also have highly skilled and experience staff ready to take the leap on their next step.

2018 Round Up

(Please sing to the tune of The Twelve Days of Christmas)

Since the first day of January we have:

Carried out 90 small jobs

Taken 112 declutter enquiries

Created, developed, and begun an amazing project with the Ipswich and East Suffolk CCG

Carried out 52 Homeward Bound Jobs and got 47 people home from hospital (or prevented an admission)

Met the High Sheriff (This is the five gold rings part!)

Carried out a recruitment drive without the support of our traditional allies (we lost Mygo and Talentmatch this year)

Made a lasting connection with Realise Futures

Carried out training for 10 young people

Offered work experience to 5 of those

Will offer 2-year placements to some of those before the end of the year

Assessed some of the very worst hoarded homes we have ever seen

Made 200 deliveries to charity (I may have rounded that up)

Made as many deposits of recyclable items to the tip

AND many more things that I have run out of room for!

All this and we are still only making 2% profit. So please think about that when you open our estimate and think it's expensive. For every £1 we take in – only 2p is left as our surplus. We have high costs because we have high standards and not because anyone is being highly paid!

Words from Olive

This has been such an amazing year. We've seen the start of Homeward Bound, our third recruitment, and of course the adoption of 'Percy' into our fleet following a highly successful fundraising campaign.

We will start next year with a need to look at some serious funding, anyone who has spoken to me will know that we have NO money. Just look at all that we have done with that no money! Can you imagine what could be achieved if that was to change!!!

I want to round off the year by saying a huge thank you to everyone. To Jaki and Georgina in the office, to Dave our team leader, Alex, Shahab, and Simon our experienced and dedicated crew, Curtis – our cyber-spert in the office, our directors for their unfailing support, Tony for always mucking in, to our new recruits and their guardians getting them to class every day, and to everyone who has rallied, cajoled and whispered in ears on our behalf. I'm trying to avoid sounding like an Oscar acceptance speech but I am so very grateful for the outstanding people that I am surrounded by, I am humbled by your passion for my dream.

