

Aiming Higher For
The People of
Suffolk



Newsletter 11
September 2016

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**.

May The Fourth Be With Us!

4th Birthday Celebration Issue

Lofty Heights turned four in July. Though it may not have been easy it has always been interesting. Take a look back at how Lofty's world has changed.



From **decluttering** homes so full that we've used a tractor to transport the waste, to jungle taming, to preparing an old pub for **regeneration**. Lofty Heights has moved on from being just a loft clearance company.

Have no fear we will still empty a loft if you need it done. We will also declutter gardens, sheds, garages, rooms and whole houses. We have seen an increase in demand for our decorating work and garden clearances.

Lofty Heights has increased the amount of work it does with support agencies too. Working with Social Services and the Hospital Discharge Teams to help people to live well in their own homes. We have also been

working with **social housing** groups, including **Havebury, Orwell,** and **Flagship**, to support individuals keep their tenancies and improve their standard of life.

Goodbye Juliet

We said a fond farewell to Juliet our decluttering service development officer. The funding for her post ran out and her contract came to an end in June. Juliet made the decluttering service what it is today, putting in place good assessment and decluttering processes whilst practically and emotionally supporting individuals throughout the physical task of decluttering their homes.



Juliet is missed by us all and we wish her well for the future.

One door closes and another opens

Since Juliet's departure we have received news from The Tudor Trust that they are willing to provide a further two years funding so that we can continue the good work started by Juliet. So we are now able to create a new Decluttering Service Project Officer post. If you or any of your contacts are interested, please email info@lofty-heights.org to request a Job Description and application pack. We are aiming to hold interviews in October. A huge thanks to **The Tudor Trust** for enabling us to continue to provide this vital service to vulnerable people across Suffolk.

Hello and Welcome to Jaki and Rob

Jaki Field is our new Office and Marketing Manager working 25 hours a week. Jaki has been with us for 2 months and she has fitted in well with the team. Jaki has already started to make a difference. It is a great help to Olive to have someone 'back at base' answering the telephone to customers and others wanting information about our services. To attend community events, give talks and presentations to staff teams and other groups who want to know more about the work we do and how we make a difference to the lives of people in Suffolk, if you would like Jaki to visit your staff team or group to tell you more about what we do and why. Then contact us on info@lofty-heights.org and we can sort some dates out.



Jaki says "I have worked in social housing for over 15 years. Working with people with complex support needs to manage their tenancies. Joining Lofty Heights is a wonderful opportunity to improve people lives in a direct and practical way. Now the chances are that if you have called the office number, **01473 871109**, then you will have already spoken to me. Over the next few months I will be out and about raising **awareness** and much needed **funds** to enable Lofty Heights help more people and increase the fabulous work that they do. Thank you all for your warm welcome. I am revved and ready to start earning my keep!"

A warm welcome Rob Hart our new Board Member

Rob has extensive **Business Development** knowledge and following a period of mentoring Olive and www.lofty-heights.org info@lofty-heights.org

Tel: 01473 871109

learning more about Lofty Heights he asked if he could get more involved. We are delighted to welcome **Rob Hart** to our **Board of Directors** and look forward to working with him in the future.



"My name is Rob Hart I am 41 years old have a MBA in business and run my own company working in the construction industry. Away from work I enjoy gardening, sports and am an active member of Ipswich Ro

und Table. I am looking forward to continue to help Lofty Heights grow and give opportunities to young people for many years to come."

Lofty Heights is so grateful to the dedication of all our directors. We appreciate their time, given for free, to support us, advise us and encourage us. This is a good time to say thank you to you all, Keith Richardson and Stephen Taylor who have supported Olive from the start.

Caring For Carers



Thank you to **Suffolk Family Carers**. Their Caring for Carers course recommends our services to their customers in their course literature. This has directly resulted in more **carers** seeking our services. From sheds to pantries we have been able to help more carers than ever this year.

Through **Suffolk County Council's Carers Innovation Grant** we have been able to subsidise the work we do for the carers of Suffolk. This signposting from Suffolk Family Carers has directly benefited at least twelve households this year alone. So if you are a family carer and you need a 'helping hand' with a practical job about the home please get in touch?

Award Nomination – Suffolk Coastal Business Awards



Exciting news. Lofty Heights are **finalists** for an award by **Suffolk Coastal Business Awards**. The nomination is for the **People Development** category which is even more exciting. Lofty Heights is very proud of the work we do with our young people and our customers clearly feel that this is justified. We won't know until the awards are announced in September

whether we have won but to be finalists in this category is a great achievement.

As you probably know this is not our first commendation. Over the last year Lofty Heights has been awarded the **Suffolk High Sheriff's Organisation of the Year Award** –and the **National Crimebeat Award – Highly Recommended**. And that is just over the last year!

Excelling at Innovation

Lofty Heights are working on not one but two new projects.

Handy Friend Scheme – This would be a service open to all but, hopefully, subsidised for the most vulnerable residents of Suffolk. We are seeking funding to kick-start this project that will take on those 'odd jobs' that people may no longer have time, or the skills, to do anymore. These jobs are so small that they are often turned down by tradesmen as they are not 'worth it'. We know that they are invaluable to people as we are frequently asked to do them. Removing frustration from life is what Lofty Heights does so well. So we will come out to attach a gate lock, repair a hinge or put up a shelf. Fingers crossed our funding bid will be successful so that we can develop this service further.

Downsizing Scheme – Our de-clutter work has given us much experience in reducing possessions and organising homes. We have been in talks with a local housing provider to offer this service to their tenants to help them move to smaller homes and escape the 'bedroom tax'. We also believe this service could be of genuine assistance to anyone preparing to move. Not just those moving from a family home to sheltered or adapted accommodation but to anyone about to move home. Why pay to move items that, it turns out, you no longer want? Let us help to sort it and thin it down, **saving money** on storage and removal fees. We think this could be of specific interest to older people and those that care for them, and people that have been hospitalised and may need to move home.

Case Study:

Recently we went to help a customer who needed to move home quickly following a **relationship breakdown**. Following a bout of **depression** and **ill-health** her home had got into a muddle and the task of de-cluttering and packing was overwhelming for her. Her mother, also her carer, called in Lofty Heights.

After listening to what needed to happen Olive drew up a **personalised Action Plan**. The situation had caused so much stress that we were unsure if the customer would be able to cope with more than one day of de-cluttering. Keeping the client as the first priority in all our de-clutter work we drew up a very flexible plan. Though the first day was very hard Lofty Heights worked at a sensitive pace, led by the customer. However, the time taken to build a relationship with the customer increased her confidence and she actually managed to work another day and a half with us. Not only that but following that work she felt able to attend a car boot sale and sell off some of her belongings. She moved shortly afterwards and found the move a **relief** and a '**new start**' rather than the ordeal she had been expecting.

Following this work, we received a lovely letter the other day from this customer,

Dear Olive, Jaki, Dave and Alex

My Daughter and I will like to say an enormous thank you for rescuing us in preparation of a house move at the end of July.

Just before deciding to contact you I really thought that it – the move- simply couldn't happen. There was so much stuff! And so little time. I firmly believe that it couldn't have happened as smoothly as it did without your help, if at all!

I was so impressed, as was my daughter; by the way Olive assessed the whole situation, made the speedy decision that the matter was urgent and re-arranged the work schedule in order to begin on the next working day!

The relief we immediately felt was enormous! We then knew that between us all we could do it!

We had Olive, Dave and Alex to work with us for the first session which helped my daughter settle in to what and how things could be done. She was very happy about it all, all the way through. The relaxed, cheerful, willing and non-judgemental approach was apparent throughout.

How do they do it?? Answer – because you are so committed to helping people when they couldn't manage alone in challenging home situations such as ours was – that along with years of experience, caring sensitivity, flexibility, preparedness and sheer hard work!

You set out a plan of how it was all to be achieved, with timetable, provided boxes, plastic sacks etc and the work which included decluttering, sorting for charity, packing for the move or relegating to the bin was achieved in 2 days, or the equivalent of.

Many hands certainly made light work – it was AMAZING! We are both so grateful.



We Need You! Help Us to Help More People

As a **'not for profit'** Social Enterprise we can only generate income, to train and pay our young people, by charging for the services we offer. Like all social businesses we have to ensure we have the correct insurances, pay a living wage and, in the not too distant future, sign all our employees up to a pension scheme.

We have big ambitions to help more people but we need some help to do this. Your **Funding** and **support** could make a real difference. It can cost up to a million pounds to deal with a fire in a **hoarded property**. A **blocked bed** costs the NHS £400 a day. **Depression** and **loneliness** causes untold expense on our mental health and health services. **Lofty Heights** can turn this around. We may only be small but we are mighty. We have cleared hoarded properties in a way that **supports** people, **encouraging** them to live in a different way. We go in and prepare homes for much needed **hospital equipment** so that they can be **discharged** from hospital. One customer had waited five weeks to go home – just needing furniture removing to make way for a hospital bed. She was home within 24 hours of us receiving the call. The work we do helps **carers** to keep on caring without putting a strain on their own wellbeing.

So if you are a **budget holder, commissioner of services, grant making trust, local company** or simply somebody who can provide us with some funding to enable us to offer our services for free, or at a greatly reduced rate, then we would love to hear from you. Your support would allow us to help even more people in the **community**, both the customers we work with and the young people we train and employee. The other way people can support us is to remember that our services are **available to all** and consider using us the next time you need a job doing.

The Last Word From Olive



In July 2012 Lofty Heights began '**Trading for Good**' and so our 4th Birthday milestone provides a great opportunity to reflect on our **achievements** to date.

The past four years have not been without challenges and frustrations, often caused by **lack of resources** and money to put the solutions we see needed in place to help solve some of the social problems in our vulnerable communities in Suffolk.

Whether the problem is tackling long term **youth unemployment** or **poverty**, on a daily basis through our work we see the impact poverty and rapidly **diminishing public services** has on vulnerable people; socially and emotionally, and the negative effect this has on their physical health, mental health, and general wellbeing.

Highlights of our achievements

Lofty Heights has:-

- Re-engaged more than 30 long term unemployed young people in learning, training programmes or volunteering
- Provided work experience for 12 young people and paid employment for 7
- Provided regular employment of 2 years or more for 5 young people
- Assisted more than 400 people
- Won 2 major awards
- This year we were selected by British Gas to participate in their '**Ignite" Business Accelerator Programme**. We received guidance and support in areas such as Business Planning, Marketing and Financial Planning. We were provided with useful contacts in the world of Social Enterprise. We intend to put all this useful advice to good use that that we can generate more work and income in the future so that we can continue to "Trade for Good" for many more years to come. Our de-cluttering service in particular has enabled: -
 - speedier hospital discharges and unblocked beds
 - safe home environments to be created, reducing the risk of fire, slips, trips and falls
 - provided practical help and support to family carers

- ongoing care and support to be carried out safely in the home

As we enter our fifth year of 'Trading for Good', we continue to provide invaluable services. We will broaden the services that we offer but with the care and compassion that underline all that we do. Not only that but we will continue to do this in a way that helps the whole of our community.

Finally

Our birthday has made me look back over this journey we've taken. Four years ago we were homeless and the team were such young boys (comparatively). They were shy and nervous, unsure of their skills. They have developed into talented young men. They have confidence in their skills, rightly so, and the ability to step into any job that we throw at them. They have come so far from those early days. Shab has become a daddy again, Alex and Simon are zipping about the Suffolk countryside on their bikes. Alex is in demand for his gardening skills and Simon for his decorating ability. Dave has settled in as team leader and is taking a lead on decluttering jobs and manages our social media. Derek keeps an eye on our van to ensure it is in good working order as he has a keen interest in mechanics something he would like to concentrate on in the future. Not forgetting that some of the work we do is really challenging. Some days it is hard, often it's a truly dirty job. The Lofty Heights team do this day in and day out. They do it well and with a smile on their face; knowing that they are making a difference. As we go into our fifth year I can honestly say that I am so proud of you all!

For more information about any of our services please give us a call on 01473 871109 or email info@lofty-heights.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

Olive Quinton
Founding CEO
Lofty Heights
September 2016