

Aiming Higher For  
The People of  
Suffolk



Newsletter 14  
August 2017

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**.

## High Five!

And we blow out the candles on another birthday cake! At times, we never thought that we would get here but Lofty Heights has turned five years old. In people terms we would be starting school – Lofty Heights is all about learning. Every day we learn something new. On bad days, it could be a smell but on good days we learn new methods, facts and the wonders of human nature. We celebrated the day with Geoffrey Probert, High Sheriff of Suffolk, who presented us with a Certificate of Recognition.

Thank you to everyone for their support in the preparations and on the day. You know who you are!



## **CIC**

Announcing our new CIC status. We have always been a Non-Profit Social Enterprise but not only is that a mouthful, it also seems to be hard to understand.

So, we took the leap and have made the tiny amendments needed to qualify as a Community Interest Company. We can't be clearer in our commitment to our community.



## **Looking Forward**

I will leave the retrospective to Olive as our world has grown dramatically since our humble beginnings five years ago. What does the future hold for Lofty Heights? Well, we still struggle daily with a lack of funding and dependable income but we have many shiny plans for Lofty Heights to continue to grow and thrive.



## **Move It!**

We spent 12 months researching the decrease in take up of sheltered accommodation for Orwell Housing Association. This is the end result. To promote this, we can offer 3 Orwell Tenants a discount of £100 towards this work. It must be a minimum of 1 day and it must be connected to downsizing or changing to supported accommodation (it can be both). Talk to us to find out more.

NB – Emptying the loft has been highlighted to us as a major factor holding people back from considering a move. Call us and we can get you moving!

## **Hoarding Training**

We have trialled some training sessions with our local social work teams and they have been very successful.

This has led us to put together plans to run our own formal training. There is a difference between cluttered homes and hoarded homes and Lofty Heights sees more cases of each than most support teams will. We are well placed to share that knowledge with you. This could be in the form of a dedicated training session or a less formal talk at a team meeting with either Olive or Georgina.

Tell us, what do you need out of hoarding training? We can show you the clutter scale in more detail, you could shadow an assessment visit to see all that needs to be considered when planning a decluttering job; or would you prefer to look at some case studies in more depth to discover more about the causes and solutions for hoarding?



Please let us know what YOU want from training and we can put together a bespoke package.

## Our Van

As you may know from our Facebook page we have had van trouble. It was carried away on a stretcher last week and we had already had a terrifying quote for its surgery.

However, Richard Pipe Engineering Motorist Centre have performed a miraculous operation. The bill is still daunting but much more accessible to us. We would like to thank Dave Chapman and his team for their dedication and expertise.

It leaves us knowing that we need to be more prepared in future. With the preparations in place for a new intake of trainees, all of whom are likely to be non-drivers, not only is our van essential but a second large vehicle is becoming a necessity.



Can you help? Do you know of a fleet about to be replaced? Do you have contacts in the motor trade that would like to support a CIC? Or would your organisation like to sponsor a vehicle (we would park it in all corners of Suffolk - potentially with YOUR name on it).

## Team Three

You heard it here first! Lofty Heights is announcing the plan for a third team.

It won't happen until next year and there is much to put in place before then (not least the selection process). We have learnt a lot from the previous years and we know that our experienced team will step up to the challenge of becoming mentors and role models.



The trend in the workplace is to demand work-ready adults, with their own kit/DBS checks, to be available "off the shelf". We don't necessarily agree with this but we can be part of how it happens. This is just one of the many reasons that we received the New Anglia Youth Pledge Marque.

We need support to do this. This news does increase the need for our transport situation to be resolved. With a new team on the cards it is more important than ever for us to have suitable, reliable transport that can hold more people.

We will keep you updated once things get moving but if you want to talk to us about sponsoring a candidate, providing placements, or if you want information on how to apply, then get in touch.

## **Soapbox Moment**

During our birthday celebrations, we highlighted the issue of waste disposal. As you know, we are now a CIC.

This means that any profit we raise through our work is ploughed back into training our team or into reducing costs for our more vulnerable clients. This is mostly theoretical as we have yet to create a surplus.

Charities and private residents can dispose of household waste for free at any of the county's many recycling centres. We, however, are charged as a business for any non-recyclable waste. We raised this as an issue because many of our clients are unable to access the council service due to mobility or other health-related obstacles. We were told that charities can do this but **not** not-for-profit organisations – **OUTRAGE ALERT** – because they are likely to be

paying themselves inflated salaries to 'appear' to be making 'no profit'. Suffolk County Council has signed up to encourage social enterprise, social value especially, yet this is, apparently, the reasoning behind the waste policy.

This means that vulnerable people may pay twice. Once through their Council Tax payments and then again when they employ legitimate support to carry out this work.

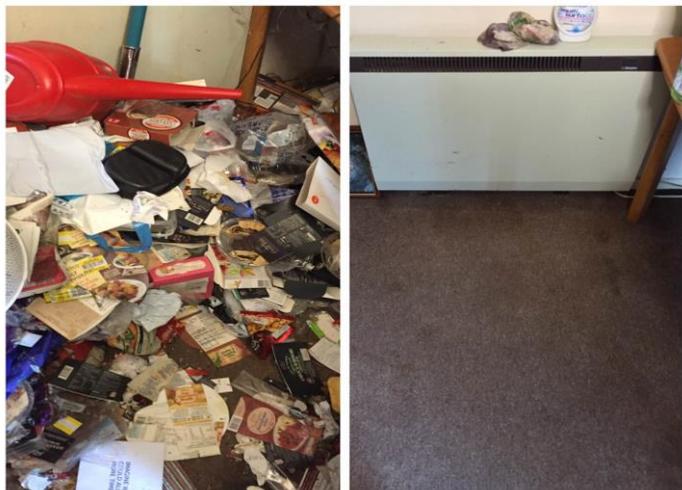
We are not talking about the waste generated because they have decided to have a jacuzzi fitted on their tennis court. This is household waste that they have been unable to dispose of due to physical or mental ill-health. It could be down to self-neglect or complex disorders that prevent them from being able to discard items, even obvious refuse.

Over the years we have battled against this but time and again we are told that we are a 'business' and therefore the disposal counts as 'trade waste'. It isn't trade waste. We move domestic waste from inside homes and gardens. We recycle so much, from buttons to bicycles, but, if you look at the picture, sometimes it is non-recyclable waste.

However, these people would be entitled to take all of this to the tip and be rid of it for no direct charge to themselves. But not if they cannot carry/drive it there. Even if they accompany us to the recycling centre to declare that this is their personal waste we will be charged at trade prices.

Now waste is a variable issue at the whim of each local council/borough (when dealing with kerbside/bulky collections) but the tip is the realm of Suffolk County Council, with standardised rules throughout the county. So could we not get some scrutiny happening here? In most boroughs, there are schemes to enable the vulnerable to access a free collection once a year – let's get thinking about how we can allow vulnerable people to access the tip in the same way.

My final point on this matter is that it is often Suffolk County Council that is the biggest victim of this. They are one of our primary commissioners (via Adult and Community Services) and we are called in on some very complicated cases. These are most likely to involve (possibly) multiple skips due to the amount of waste present. Therefore, this inflexibility in policy is costing **them** more, at a time when they are crying poverty and claiming budget constraints. Bigger picture thinking please.



## **Case Study**

### **Mrs B**

I have picked Mrs B as our case study in this issue because, not only is she one of the loveliest people we have worked with, but she is unusual for us because she was self-funded and receiving no professional support.



*Before*

Mrs B worked in the caring profession for much of her life and it was her contacts at Ipswich Hospital that gave her our details. Her health had deteriorated to the point where she needed aids and adaptations installed. However, her clutter had reached the point where these mobility aids could not be brought in because there was simply no space to put them.

In her small house Mrs B had acquired many useful things. A dedicated crafter without the necessary space to carry out her hobby. It took a lot of determination for her to make the call to us. Shame of her home had been preventing her from allowing anyone inside for the previous 7 years.

Georgina carried out an assessment and agreed a plan. This was centred on what was needed and how to make it happen in

the most cost-effective way. We used a small team (two people) and transported most of the excess belongings to charity shops with a large delivery of craft items going to Recreate Ltd.

Look at the difference we made.

What is even better is the delightful card we received shortly after. It touched us all deeply. "Thank you all so very much for all the work at mine. I cried the first time I came down the next morning. Happy Tears!" Not only is it touching to read how you have helped someone but it's special to know that we helped make the space for our 'crafter' to get back to the hobby she enjoys so much.



*After*



This work has not made Mrs B's physical health any better but she can move freely around her house, she can have the mobility aids and adaptations installed to make this even easier (and safer) for her, and she has space to enjoy her hobby. As you can see in this beautiful card

The impact is felt, more than seen. We can use phrases like: reducing social exclusion, reducing anxiety and shame, preventing slips, trips and falls (and we do use these phrases) but the bottom line is we are allowing people to open their doors. To support services, to tradesmen, and to their friends and family once more.

Talk to us (we're really not scary) and we can do the same for you.

## **Words from Alex**

We are very proud of all our team members. Alex is celebrating his third anniversary at Lofty Heights.



*Alex says: Over the last 3 years I have become more confident with people because of the variety of work we do and the new jobs every week. The work I am doing at Lofty Heights is making a difference to people's lives, and to mine. Getting to help people is really humbling and it allows me to build my experience in the work I have done and the new skills I have learnt here.*

*The financial side of things has obviously improved because before I was here at Lofty Heights I was on the job centre but because I have been employed for 3 years at Lofty Heights I have been able to move forward in my life. At the beginning of working at Lofty Heights I was able to get help with getting to work through Wheels to Work and Talent Match which allowed me to have time to fix the motorcycle I already had and get it back on the road. Working at Lofty Heights has allowed me to finance the motorcycle I have now because of the wage I now make. All in all, this is a lovely place to work and has made a big difference to my life.*

## **Words from Olive**

It's easy to get caught up in the day to day 'firefighting' of running a small business. Birthdays give you the chance to look back and reflect. 5 years is a milestone for us. When I started Lofty Heights I wasn't sure we would make 5 months. We had no home, no transport (just my old camper van), limited equipment, a mobile phone number and my personal laptop. This was very daunting for someone who had worked in the public sector with the probability of job security and, possibly, a reasonable pension.

Lofty Heights has an office, a landline, several email addresses and a lovely new leaflet (that we told you about in the last newsletter). We have trained up two teams of nervous young boys that have grown and developed into reliable working men, four of whom are still with us. Now we are starting work on a third team, we have equipment, we have uniforms, Georgina – our enthusiastic Declutter Officer, Jaki – our whip-cracking office manager, a dedicated sign-written van and the Renault Clio donated to us last year.

In the last year work has increased dramatically. The cases we are dealing with are increasingly complex, both in the needs of the individual and the conditions we work in. I wonder if this is to do with the level of trust in our service or if agencies are more pro-active in uncovering the 'hidden needs' of hoarders throughout Suffolk. We are also extending our service further into Essex (our new location supports that more readily).

Yes, we still struggle with funding, yes, we've had a tough year but we have come a long way and I would like to thank everybody that has supported us so passionately over the last 5 years. I am looking forward to meeting the next challenges for the year (s) ahead.

**Olive Quinton**

**CEO Lofty Heights CIC Ltd**