

'God never gives someone a gift they are not capable of receiving. If he gives us the gift of Christmas it is because we all have the ability to understand and receive it.'

Once again Christmas is upon us and we approach the end of another year in which we have been able to help homeless and vulnerable people take their first steps out of homelessness and despair, and towards a safer and more secure future.



Emily's Story

From the age of 16 Emily had been living between her separated parents and friends houses. Her mother had been in and out of custody since Emily was 5 years old, and she had suffered abuse both from her mother and her mother's associates. Her relationship with her father was strained and he would only reluctantly allow her to stay with him for short periods of time. Attempting to live independently Emily had secured her own tenancy in Newcastle but was targeted by her mother's associates which led to complaints from neighbours and the police felt she was not safe in the property. Subsequently evicted Emily self-harmed and was admitted to hospital with a suspected paracetamol overdose. On discharge, aged only twenty, she found herself homeless and with no on-going support. Making her way back to Hexham she began staying in a friends garden shed, without the parents knowledge, and in her father's house when he was away.

After being with us for some time it became clear that Emily had other health needs and after contact with her GP and subsequent referral to mental health services Emily was diagnosed as having Bipolar Disorder. We also supported her to contact Northumbria Domestic Abuse Service (NDAS) Having suffered abuse for many years she had not been offered, or approached any agency, for help.

Once Emily had a safe and secure place to live and the support she needed to begin to address and move on from the trauma she had suffered she lost no time in making plans for her future.

She began a volunteer placement in a local café, which then lead to employment with another local business. She was supported to register on Homefinder and began to look for a home of her own.

Emily has now moved to that home of her own. As with everyone who moves on from our service we helped with the move, supporting her to set-up utility accounts, Housing Benefit and Council Tax claims. We secured a small charitable grant towards the cost of carpets, and basic items of furniture were provided via CORE Furniture in Hexham. A new cooker was purchased with funds from our individual charitable donations.

Now happy in her new home Emily knows that we will always be there for her if she needs our help in the future.



Simon's Story

Simon had been with us for over three years, originally in our smaller accommodation service and moving over to Links House in September 2021

Referred to our service by the Local Authority he had become homeless in his mid-50's after the closure of a local hotel. He had been employment as a breakfast chef at the hotel for many years and his accommodation came with the job. As is so often the case, as we got to know Simon it became clear that his support needs were more complex than first appearing. For many years he had been a functioning alcoholic, this only becoming a more acute problem when he lost his job and his home. It also became clear that he was struggling with quite basic tasks, and his personal hygiene was problematic. This was not something we expected from someone who had worked as a chef almost all his working life. Supported to attend a GP appointment with an accompanying member of staff we were able to raise our concerns and a referral was made for a health assessment. The outcome suggested a stroke at some point, which had impaired Simon's cognitive function. From this it was clear that he would need long term supported accommodation and would struggle to live fully independently.

We began discussions with Social Services to arrange a needs assessment for Simon, to help secure the accommodation he needed. We also

contacted the Local Authority, Karbon Homes and the Homefinder Team to ensure that appropriate properties were made available to him on the Homefinder system.

In late 2023 suitable sheltered housing was secured for him in Hexham. Visits were made and Social Services contacted. Simon had been due to move before Christmas 2023 but in the event it wasn't until January 2024 that he moved into his new home. Furniture from CORE Furniture in Hexham was purchased and bedding, small electrical items and a new cooker were provided, again with the funds from our individual donations fund. We helped Simon with his application for Housing Benefit and Council Tax support and to arrange Standing Orders and Direct Debits for various utility bills. We have continued to offer support to Simon, particularly in ensuring Social Services provide appropriate independent living support. It has taken some time but Simon now has the security of the long-term supported housing that he needs.



This Christmas for the first time we entered a tree in the Christmas Tree Festival held at St Andrew's Church in Corbridge. This was a great success and everyone really enjoyed getting involved, be it

thoughts on design, making the decorations or helping to set the tree up in the church.

Seeing the other trees at the festival has certainly fired our enthusiasm for next years' entry.



The help we are able to offer people is made possible by the financial support of many organisations and individuals. The donations we receive from local churches, small associations and clubs and individuals makes a real and positive difference to the lives of those in our service. The ability to provide basic furnishings and

a cooker, fridge or washing machine is only possible because of the generosity of people like you.

" Since leaving care I've been in and out of so many hostels, this is the first time I've felt anyone cares about me"

This was said to me by a Links House resident only a few weeks ago.



For what should we give thanks this Christmas? For faith that sustains millions through life's challenges and inspires countless acts of compassion every day? For the hope that our world may be redeemed by love? For the charity that makes us think of the voiceless and the vulnerable who need our love and protection? Faith, hope and charity the virtues at the heart of all we do.

We send you our heartfelt thanks for helping us to help so many.

Andrew Sanders – CEO

*WITH EVERY BEST WISH FOR A
HAPPY AND PEACEFUL
CHRISTMAS FROM ALL AT GAP
SUPPORTED HOUSING*



All donations received contribute directly to our work of supporting homeless and vulnerable people.

Donations can be made via our website. Cheque payable to Gap Supported Housing Ltd

Bank details: Co-Op Bank. Acc: Gap Supported Housing Ltd. No: 67301098 Sort Code: 08-92-99

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