

Actively supporting those at risk of homelessness through adversity to security

"Thank you again for supporting me during all this. It has lifted a massive weight from my shoulders"



Introduction to the Annual Review, by the Chair of Trustees, **Antonia Lancaster**



Welcome to Ipswich Housing Action Group's Annual Report for April 2020 to March 2021

The last twelve months has been spent trying to create stability for our service users, staff and volunteers when everything around us seemed to be changing by the day.

Our new Chief Executive Officer, Jools, had barely been in post when the pandemic hit, and all plans were put on hold to enable us to adapt and continue to deliver our services in a way that kept everyone safe.

The pandemic has challenged the way we work, and we will take the learning from this to

continue to ensure our services are responsive and meet the needs of the people we support.

We have a new strategic plan and we have made some necessary changes and investments to enable us to develop and become more sustainable.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff and volunteers for their hard work and commitment in successfully adapting to the "new normal", and making Ipswich Housing Action Group such a success.



Reflections on the year and looking ahead, by the Chief Executive Officer, **Jools Ramsey**



At the beginning of April 2020, we were only at the start of understanding the huge impact the Covid-19 pandemic would have on all our lives.

The need for access to safe accommodation, and ongoing emotional and practical support, advice and guidance was never more needed by people living with the experience of homelessness.

The staff team at ihAg continued to provide that service everyday throughout the pandemic. The way we worked may have changed during those times, but our commitment to supporting people in our local community remained as steadfast as it always has been.

Sadly, we are beginning to see that more people are struggling to keep their homes, due to loss of income, relationship breakdowns, and bereavement. We are working hard to secure the funding we need to provide services for people across Suffolk, and to continue to offer a human response to the trauma that is homelessness.

Over the next few pages read more about how our organisation has helped those who come to us for advice and support. This time next year, I hope we again reflect on how the support we have offered has enabled people to rebuild their lives, and secure a place to call home.



The Advice Hub, at the Chapman Centre

The Advice Hub is open seven days a week, providing an informal and safe environment for those at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness to access a range of advice and support services including:

- Emotional and practical support
- Health and welfare support
- Housing and Benefit advice
- Engaging social activities
- Postal address service
- Laundry facilities
- Free showers
- Food and toiletries provision

Covid-19 meant that the service was unable to operate an “open door” policy throughout much of the year, but the phone lines remained open seven days a week and some face-to-face appointments were able to take place when restrictions were lifted.

Throughout the pandemic, our Outreach Workers walked the town each weekday, to find and support people who were sleeping on the streets. Support was given to access emergency accommodation, and access health provision.

During the height of the pandemic, staff were able to supply Safety packs – which consisted of facemasks, gloves, sanitiser and NHS information leaflets – to every person sleeping on the streets.

During the hot summer weeks, staff were also able to supply hot weather packs – which consisted of sun cream, water bottles, face masks, gloves and sanitiser.

Action this year

- 882 people used the Centre during the year
- 126 people were supported to secure emergency or temporary accommodation
- 51 people were supported to maintain their tenancy
- 188 were supported to engage with another specialist agency
- 59 people received their Covid-19 vaccinations at the Centre
- 94 new people registered for support around homelessness



W called the Advice Hub, having been given the number by the Local Authority, her long-term relationship had suddenly and irretrievably broken down, and she needed to leave her accommodation that night. She had a full time job, and had no idea what to do next. Our staff were able to explain what help she may be entitled to, and how to navigate the process of presenting as homeless. A number of calls were made on W's behalf, so her workday wasn't too disrupted. By mid-afternoon, we secured a place in a Bed and Breakfast for her via East Suffolk Council. W said she was extremely grateful for the help she received, and felt confident she could get back on her feet now she knew she had somewhere safe to sleep, and could continuing working.

Thanks to your support, I now have a future I believe in

S had a difficult family life, and had moved into a privately rented flat when he was able. Having worked for many years, a breakdown in S's mental health had led to unemployment, and after some years struggling with anxiety and money issues,

My life really felt dire – you have helped to find me a safe space, and I can't thank you enough

S was referred to the Centre for Inreach support. Over a period of many months, including a short stay in a mental health facility, S was able to open-up about his health and money issues, and was willing to engage with other specialist agencies for support. His tenancy was secured through a direct payment scheme, and his mental health stabilised. S continues to be in touch with his support worker to report on his progress, and has stated he is finally able to look forward.

If it wasn't for your staff listening, I would probably have hurt myself, or someone else

These are just two examples of the work undertaken by the staff and volunteers at The Advice Hub.

For more, please visit www.ihag.co.uk

Housing Services

The Housing Service provides 55 bed spaces across 14 properties in Ipswich for single people living with the experience of homelessness. Support is person-centred and assessed on individual need. Residents can stay for up to 18 months before moving to independent living.

Our support programme includes:

- Independent living skills
- Money management
- Tenancy sustainability
- Income maximisation
- Health and wellbeing

Throughout the year, our staff continued to offer weekly support to the people living in our accommodation. Additional welfare calls were made to support those struggling with isolation and anxiety.

With the support of Emmaus Suffolk, every resident was supplied with a “boredom pack” to keep them engaged during the full lockdown periods.

When restrictions were eased, residents’ support sessions took place outdoors, to promote better wellbeing and physical health.

Action this year

- 82 people were accommodated during the year
- 13 people supported to secure move on accommodation
- 55 Covid-19 Safety packs provided
- 10 enhanced Welcome Packs, to ensure Covid-19 secure move in

During this period, every person who needed to shield was given additional support to collect medication and shopping.

There was only one confirmed Covid-19 case in ihAg accommodation between April 2020 and March 2021.



C became homeless due to a bereavement. He was unable to remain in the property he and his wife had shared for some years. Having sofa surfed at his only child's flat for a few weeks, he was assessed for an ihAg property and moved in.

C continued to work part-time, despite his new accommodation being some four miles away – he was very proud of being able to make his own way by bike, and even during Covid-19 restrictions was committed to remaining in employment. It was soon clear that C could manage his day-to-day affairs, and he was encouraged to bid for move on property, which he secured within a month.

K had been sofa surfing for two years, when she decided “enough was enough” and contacted ihAg for support with accommodation. She was already engaging with a mental health support worker, and had linked her circumstances with her episodes of poor mental wellbeing. With the encouragement of her key worker, K formed a plan of action for her first six-months in her accommodation, and despite the pandemic has remained engaged, up to date with her appointments and rent, and has started volunteering in a community library.

These are just two examples of the work undertaken by the Housing Service.

Your support during this frightening time has really helped. I don't know what would have happened if I had nowhere to live during this

Knowing you were there to support me has been fantastic – I'm proud that I have managed to pay my rent on time, something I used to struggle with

This feels more like a home than I've ever had

For more, please visit www.ihag.co.uk

Housing First

The Housing First project stands independently from the Housing Services team as it specifically targets people who have experienced long periods of homelessness, whose needs have not been met by more traditional Housing Service support.

The fundamental principles of Housing First are:

- Access to housing is a right, not a reward
- 'Housing' and 'support' are separate
- Support is for as long as it is needed
- Support is offered in a way suited to each person
- Individuals have choice and control
- Support is strengths based and personalised
- Support is offered for harm reduction

Through Housing First, support is offered in a more intense and strengths-based way, individualised to each person. The ultimate outcome is for tenancy sustainability. However, the model provides significant Social Return on Investment, as it actively reduces the need for crisis intervention from other agencies, including Primary Health services and Police.

ihAg's Housing First has been operating in partnership with Anglia Care Trust (ACT) and Ipswich Borough Council.

Action this year

- Staff have provided intense support to eight accommodated people during this period, with an additional three being assessed for support from the service
- Weekly support continued throughout lockdown, much of which was carried out in gardens and parks.
- People who were forced to shield during lockdown, due to long-term health conditions, were supported to receive food and medication through delivery services
- One person has now remained engaged with support for three years



B wanted to share his experience in his own words: I was living on the street for 6 years, into crack, smack and gas since I was a teenager. Was in and out of Jail, police always pestering me. And then a support worker started talking and told me she would support me to get my own place (I thought what a load of bo**#cks I'd heard this s#*t before). I wasn't interested but she wouldn't leave me alone, she would sit with me and buy me coffee and chat. Bought me loads of phones so she could find me, I kept losing and selling them. After a while I realised she wasn't going away and thought she was alright, wasn't up herself. After a while was told there was a flat for me, I got to choose between two, one a long way from town and the one I'm in that was close. At first I got too anxious about signing, but my worker met me and talked through how it would work and the support she could give me, so I signed the tenancy.

My worker has helped me to get all the stuff I needed for the house and set up all the bills so they were easy to pay. She helps me to go food shopping and reminds me to go to appointments - I got onto the methadone programme. Not long after I moved in I had to go into hospital for two months.

I wouldn't of stayed in but she visited me almost every day and kept an eye on my flat for me.

I still use but not as much and do it a lot more safely. I am going to start a course at the allotments soon, I want to learn beekeeping. I haven't been arrested or been to court since I moved into my flat in spring of 2019. If there are complaints about noise, I make sure I quieten things down, last time there was a complaint I put a note with my phone number through my neighbours doors so they could call me if I'm too loud.

I want to find things I enjoy doing and use less and less drugs. I want to meet my daughter and be her Dad. I love my flat and don't ever want to lose it. Without this project I would be dead.

This is just one example of the work undertaken by the Housing First team.

For more, please visit www.ihag.co.uk

Money Advice Service

The Money Advice Service offers free, confidential and impartial money and debt advice to anyone living in Suffolk. In addition, the service offers advice to men leaving four of the region's prisons: HMP Highpoint, HMP Hollesley Bay, HMP Warren Hill and HMP Wayland.

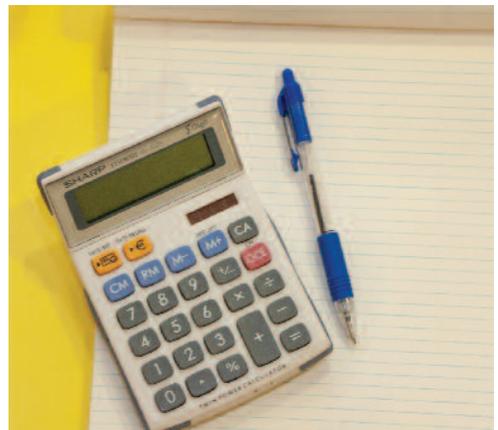
Our trained welfare and benefit advisors provide advocacy and support on a range of financial concerns, including:

- Repaying debts within a budget
- Debt related court proceedings
- Debt Relief Orders
- Bankruptcy
- Dealing with bailiffs
- Money management
- Maximising income
- Welfare benefit
- Applications for support grants
- Unpaid mortgage or rental payments

The service has achieved the Advice Quality Standard, and the advisors are regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Action this year

- 1,338 referrals for help received
- 909 cases assessed
- 433 men supported with debt management prior to their release from prison
- Average debt per person £14,286
- Secured an additional £3,499 of income per person (this figure is an average)
- 62 Debt Relief Orders secured for those with little or no income





N contacted the service for support, after receiving a Court Order for rent payments. As a single parent working part time, N had struggled to maintain payments towards the rent, especially when Covid-19 closed her child's day care facility. At this stage, N reduced her working hours by half.

With the support of an Adviser, N was able to review her benefit entitlement, and move from child tax credits to Universal Credit. Her Landlord was informed of the change to her working hours and income, and an agreement was made concerning the Court Order for her rent arrears. Contact was also made with all of N's utility suppliers to review the tariffs she was paying, and additional savings were made to her outgoings.

E was supported during his last 3 months in prison. He had never held a bank account was not sure how to go about this, particularly before the end of his sentence.

The IhAg advisor was able to support him to open an account in readiness for his release, and prepare him for how to apply for welfare benefits.

Very impressed with this service – I no longer have people sending me letters or making demands

I can't thank you enough. You helped me right from when I had a bailiff at the door. Your service is outstanding

It lifted a weight off my shoulders which I had carried around for years. I have personality disorder and find it difficult to trust people, but I felt completely at ease with the Adviser. It changed my life, and I am back working now

These are just two examples of the work undertaken by the Money Advice Service.

For more, please visit www.ihag.co.uk

Financial Statement

Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities

(Incorporating Income and Expenditure Account)

For the year ended 31 March 2021

	<i>Unrestricted funds 2021</i>	<i>Restricted funds 2021</i>	<i>Total funds 2021</i>	<i>Total funds 2020</i>
	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>	<i>£</i>
<i>Income from:</i>				
Donations and legacies	20,624	-	20,624	19,157
Charitable activities	858,167	367,964	1,226,131	1,250,109
Investments	4,398	-	4,398	5,587
Total income	883,189	367,964	1,251,153	1,274,853
<i>Expenditure on:</i>				
Raising funds	11,871	-	11,871	29,316
Charitable activities	817,387	365,553	1,182,940	1,252,898
Total expenditure	829,258	365,553	1,194,811	1,282,214
Net movement in funds	53,931	2,411	56,342	(7,361)
<i>Reconciliation of funds:</i>				
Total funds brought forward	941,327	19,540	960,867	968,228
Net movement in funds	53,931	2,411	56,342	(7,361)
Total funds carried forward	995,258	21,951	1,017,209	960,867

Please contact ihAg to request a copy of the full Financial Statement.

With thanks to our partner agencies:

Ipswich Borough Council
Suffolk County Council
Anglia Care Trust (ACT)
Ipswich Police
Ipswich Street Rangers
Town Pastors
Turning Point
Selig
Genesis Housing
Sanctuary Housing
Start Afresh
Health Outreach Teams
Mental Health Outreach

Senior Practitioner
SASA Marketing
Group Two Creative Associates
Simpleclick
Red Eye Innovation
Emmaus Suffolk
Access Community Trust, Suffolk
Ipswich Disability Advice Bureau
Advice UK
Citizens Advice
Orbit Housing
Home Group
Novus
Sodexo HMP
HMP Highpoint
Homeless Link
Housing First England



With enormous thanks and gratitude to:

Trustees

- Antonia Lancaster
- Jeremy Hennell James
- Elaine Webb
- Tracy Murphy
- Gemma Bloomfield
- Tom Jell
- David Jackson
- Christopher McEwen
- Daniel Bristow

Volunteers

- Rosie Walker
- Graham Walker
- Steve Morgan
- Val Stephenson
- Bradie Constance-Poole
- Diana Guest
- Carole Vellacott
- Roger Jarrod
- Kay Latham
- Dawn Farr
- Lou Jarrett
- Jo Andrews
- Phil Archer
- Tracey Clarke
- Jamie Scorer
- James Allen
- Jemma Jones
- Chris Self
- Lyn Colbear
- Belinda Farrell
- Mick Nichols
- Sam Smith
- Debbie Wooding



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- Clan Road Methodist Church
- Claydon High School
- Sweffling White Horse

***Funding: Grant Making Bodies,
Trusts and Foundations***

- The National Lottery Community Fund
- The Mulberry Trust
- The People's Postcode Lottery
- Albert Hunt Trust
- Cloth Workers Foundation
- Suffolk Community Foundation
- Mrs Smith and Mount Trust
- Ipswich Borough Council Communities Grant
- Hopkins Homes
- The Lord Belstead Charitable Trust
- L D Rope Trust
- Miller Trust



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