

Community Chest Case Studies – Forest Heath District Council 2017/18 grant year funding

1. Abundant Life Church

Dean lives in Lakenheath with his wife and two children and has lived in the village for about three years. He has been attending our dads and children's clubs since March 2017. He has gradually grown in confidence and involvement in the project. His children love coming to the club and the whole family have enjoyed some of our family events. Dean is now regular in attending Dads Drop-in and Time Out for Dads too. He completed the Dads Matter Course last year and is keen to volunteer with the project.

He has offered to be trained as a First Aider for the groups (which he has experience in) and to help develop our new website which we hope to have ready by the end of April.

It has been very encouraging to see the way Dean embraces fatherhood and is inspired to help other dads in their role as fathers. He has great ideas and is keen to help move the work of EPIC Dad forward. He is a great example of what we want to achieve through the project with a dad benefitting from the project then seeking to help others have the same experience. Dads, like Dean, are inspiring us to put together an official Volunteer Training Programme (Fatherhood Champions) which we plan to work on over the summer and launch in late September.

2. Fresh Start New Beginnings

16 year old female: Befriended by an adult male she met on Facebook – the family were groomed to an extent where the perpetrator was often used for babysitting. The perpetrator is now in prison after being found guilty of sexual offences against a child.

Since the abuse the child has had two suicide attempts, poor self image, low self esteem, low self confidence, lack of trust in others, low mood, poor sleep, flashbacks, feeling sick each morning, anxiety, poor coping strategies, isolation, self blame. This will be a long term piece of work due to the extent of the symptoms. Unfortunately her parents do not want to attend our parenting group and we now see the young person weekly near to her home. A safety plan has been agreed and implemented and progress is gradually being made.

3. Newmarket CAB

Client is a man in his late 40's and suffers from PTSD, he is unable to cope with unfamiliar situations or people. His entitlement to Employment Support Allowance was reviewed and following an assessment, he was placed in a Work Related Group meaning he was required to engage in activities aimed at preparing him for employment.

After some work to gain his trust, the client attended our office with his paperwork. The client's GP had provided written evidence that the client had suicidal thoughts and that he (the GP) felt, "being put into an unfamiliar situation would push him

beyond the safe limits regarding his mental health and anxiety". Following our intervention, the decision was reversed for eighteen months while the client receives specialist psychiatric support.

4. Newmarket CAB

Client is an elderly lady, who lives on her own and presented as slightly confused. She telephoned us because she had fallen behind with her utility bills due to estimated bills, but was unsure what she could do about it.

The client has mobility problems and said she was unable to attend the bureau: however we needed to see specific paperwork and get her form of authority to act on her behalf, so we:

- Arranged transport to our office
- Confirmed she was receiving the correct benefits
- Arranged a repayment plan for the debt
- Gained agreement from the utility provider that her bills should not be estimated
- Asked her landlord to consider changing the form of heating (night storage)
- Once the debt was cleared, arranged a change of tariff to something more affordable

5. Newmarket CAB

Client C is a woman in her early thirties with a small child. Over eighteen months, we had 97 contacts with this client. She originally presented as homeless in 2016 following a relationship breakdown. She had left the relationship with debts and no possessions. Over the following year, we assisted the client with housing and benefit issues and started work on addressing the debts.

Early in 2017 the client's ex-partner moved to this area and the client stopped interacting with us, she felt able to address the debt issue herself. By September 2017 her relationship had broken down again, her ex-partner had left her with more debt and she had fallen behind with her rent, putting her tenancy at risk.

We supported the client by arranging a Debt Relief Order for the debt which was now in excess of £13k: she has a part-time job and is able to cope on her income. However of concern is that the rent arrears have affected her tenancy and her housing association have extended her starter tenancy for another six months. We have stressed to the client that it is imperative that she comply with the landlords wishes, as otherwise she may become homeless.

6. Our Special Friends

We were contacted by a 40-year old single father through signposting by the local council, as he had been made homeless through eviction following drug addiction which had begun at age 14. At the point of contacting OSF, the client had been clean for 7 days, and has been substance free ever since.

His need for support from OSF was due to the fact that his emergency housing had a no pet policy, and he needed to get a job to pay debts and pay future rent. The client had owned his two dogs since they were puppies and was devastated at the prospect of having to relinquish ownership of his beloved animals.

OSF found a volunteer who offered to foster both the animals, and agreed to continue to foster the dogs when it became apparent that the search for pet friendly accommodation was not going to be simple.

On initial assessment of the dogs, OSF established that both dogs needed urgent vet attention. One dog had a corneal laceration by cat, and the second dog had severe dental issues, which required a full dental treatment. Both dogs also needed to be microchipped. OSF paid for all of the treatment.

Due to problems with obtaining pet friendly accommodation; our client struggled for months to find suitable housing. Eventually, OSF contacted the local MP to see if more could be done to support the client and reunite him with his dogs. OSF provided our client with some additional signposts for housing. 4.5 months after his initial call to OSF for help, our client had secured the pet friendly accommodation he needed, and he continues to be "clean" and in permanent work. He was reunited with his dogs when he moved into his new accommodation.

The owner did not have to give up his animals, and was able to focus on finding suitable housing with the knowledge that his animals were being cared for in a safe environment.

This foster placement supported the client's wellbeing whilst he was in recovery from addiction, and gave him focus. The journey to finding suitable housing was unnecessarily prolonged due to restrictive housing policies, but the moment which the dogs were reunited with their owner was a very special one....and was worth waiting for.

Text Message Testimonial from client:

Hello Belinda, everything is totally fine, love every second of having them back. We are out walking in the park as I'm txin you, they go out for walks morning night every day 'rain or shine'.... It has been a delightful day though."

7. Our Special Friends

A lady was signposted to us by the Council, needing urgent fostering for a Border Collie and two cats, as she was having to flee her home due to domestic abuse. The temporary accommodation provided would not house her animals.

The dog was fostered within 3 hours with a foster family who had homed dogs from Our Special Friends in the past.

With collaborative support from the RSPCA, a cattery was found for the cats and a vet appointment for a vaccination was arranged before they could be dropped off. The client was reassured that her pets were being safely cared for, taking the strain off her whilst she sought pet-friendly accommodation.

She collected the cats and the dog was delivered to her by the foster home on the same day that OSF was notified of her new housing. The animals were all re-united with their owner and her daughter in time for Christmas.

Client sent a text after Christmas to say *"The pets are all happy to be back together, best Christmas ever"*

8. Rural Coffee Caravan

We talked at length with a lady in a wheelchair after suffering a stroke, she is only in her 50's/60's.

She took lots of info about disabled advice, Suffolk independent living, Disabled Advice Bureau, Sensing Change, Avenues East and also details of the wardens disabled holiday accommodation at Thorpeness.

She is trying to remain positive about getting better but it is highly unlikely. She wants to connect more with villagers so some people can push her round the village so that she can get out of the house. She has recently joined the good neighbour scheme and we introduced her to some more members.

We also mentioned the possibility of her getting a mobility scooter which would help with her mobility a great deal. She seemed keen and finance may be a problem and the group talked about maybe having the village fundraise a scooter at some point in the future.

9. Suffolk West CAB

We have been supporting a client with MS and a disabled son, who appears to have fallen through every crack in DWP claims processing and one of our caseworkers is now in discussion with DWP regarding compensation, since they have accepted that there were failures with their treatment of the case.

The letter details systematic loss of documents, continual failure to action agreed tasks, and a list of the work that we have carried out over the past year on behalf of this single client: 68 emails; dealt with 53 phone calls; sent and received 15 letters and had 17 appointments with the client, who has had to borrow money from relations, her health has worsened and she is now receiving weekly calls from her GP who is concerned for her mental health.

I am not sure how this client would ever have received her entitlement without our help since our MP has been involved in the case since April with no success either.

10. Suffolk West CAB

The client contacted us in concern because he had contracted with a company called xxxxxxx Conservatories to repair his conservatory roof. His wife had found a special pre-Christmas deal on the internet and within 24 hours of contacting them a representative had called and quoted £4600 for a replacement roof.

The client paid an initial £1840 by debit card, and was told the roof would be installed on 8th January. On 10th January he received an email saying they would not be attending without explanation, and despite promises every time he called them, he has heard nothing from them other than an email accepting his cancellation and stating that the cheque had been posted to him on 31st January.

Our consumer caseworker advised him to contact his bank, Santander, and ask for a charge-back, warning him to persist if they did not understand (which proved to be the case). However the Fraud and Disputes department sent the client a claim form and told him they would refund the money to his account within 48 hours of receiving the completed form.

11. Voluntary Network - Befriending

We risk assessed a gentleman living in Newmarket for our Befriending Service. He explained that he used to play the piano but was no longer able to do so, he was disappointed that his piano was no longer played at all. We made contact with a Piano Tutor, Alessandro (former concert pianist), who very kindly agreed to visit and play for our Client. We were delighted to put these people in contact and bring some comfort, Alessandro is keen to visit again. Meanwhile we have found a volunteer who can visit regularly, a young lady who also plays the piano.