



Message from the Operations Manager

Recently I was asked to teach a group of 16 year olds about homelessness. As I pondered how I would explain the complexity of the issues surrounding homelessness, I decided to play the game Jenga with them.

On large wooden bricks I wrote down some of the reasons that clients had given us for why they had become homeless. These included relationship breakdown, unemployment, addiction, debt, poor mental health etc.

Homelessness is rarely caused by a single event. It is usually a combination of a number of events that have occurred in a person's life.

As I built the Jenga tower with the group, I explained that this could represent anyone of us. It was stable, tall and strong.

One by one we each took a brick and called out what was written on the side. "Relationship breakdown, debt, unemployment..."

As each person gingerly placed the bricks on top of the tower it became more and more unstable. I explained that this is how it can feel for people as they battle one problem after another.

I stood back and watched the last person remove the final brick. He was pretty sure that the tower would fall and kept saying that he "didn't want to do it!" He slowly removed the final brick which said 'debt' on it and there was an almighty crash as the whole lot came tumbling down...

As we surveyed the broken pile, I quietly said, "This is what homelessness looks like."

On the next page you can read the story of one of our clients. In her own words she describes how, with the support of AHAG, she rebuilt the fallen bricks of her life. We are very grateful to her for her willingness to share her journey as a message of hope to others who may find themselves in similar circumstances.





Aylesbury Homeless Action Group

Registered Charity Number 1009983



September 2016

57 Years old
Employed – Full Time
- No Home
- No Furniture
- No Savings
- Relationship ended

This was not where I expected to be at this time in my life. I should be settled and secure both financially and emotionally. Through various circumstances along the way I have no home, no furniture, no savings, nothing, no hope of even being able to rent somewhere as I had no money behind me, no savings. I work full time in a low pay job.

I felt so very **ashamed** **useless** and **vulnerable**. I couldn't tell my children, how could I, how could I admit that I was at rock bottom.

Citizen's Advice was where I went, to be told that there was nothing they or the Council could do for me as I was not a priority. - **I was told about 'AHAG'**

I entered the hall barely able to have a conversation without breaking down, being ashamed does that to you. I felt like I was **worthless** even considering getting into my car and driving away, far away where no one would know me or judge me as a waste of space for getting into this situation.

I was met with kindness and understanding. Reassured that there was something that could be done.

'AHAG', it felt like they gathered me up and made me feel like there was some light at the end of the tunnel.

Through their kindness, support understanding and help I was able to find an affordable one Bed Maisonette. Slowly I managed to get her things that I needed and slowly began to regain my self-esteem. This began to turn the tide.

Almost a year later, I have worked my way on in my job which gave me more and more confidence.

I began to feel better about myself and realised that no matter what age you are you can change your life around, think positive about yourself.

I now am 58 years and about to start a new life in Denmark after a chance meeting on holiday with a very special man.

Without the support and kindness and very practical help I received from

'AHAG' I don't think I would today be in the place that I am. Thank you for everything.



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