



Summer Newsletter, July 2024

A word from the CEO

By the time you read this newsletter the 2024 election will have happened and we should all know the result.

During the campaign we at AHAG managed to speak with some of the candidates hoping to be the next MP for Aylesbury. We had the chance to tell them how important it is that the next government finally takes action to bring homelessness to an end.

During the Covid-19 pandemic everyone who was sleeping rough was offered accommodation and evictions were banned. This was because public health measures such as lockdown relied on everyone having a home. After the pandemic the special

measures were lifted and the cost-of-living crisis which followed has meant that homelessness has now got much worse. We at AHAG are now helping more than double the number of people we saw before the pandemic.

The government set a target to end rough sleeping by 2024. The sad reality is that rough sleeping has instead risen nationally by around 60% over the past 2 years.

Aylesbury Homeless Action Group is a local charity, rooted in the community since 1992. Many governments have come and gone in that time. What has been consistent however is the support many local people have given to our mission.

People who are homeless and people at risk of becoming homeless need your support now. We cannot not wait for the government to act.

Please read on to find out more about how you can donate to support our vision to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring in our area.



James, CEO, AHAG

In the first six months of 2024 we have supported:

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| 363 people with FREE housing support and advice | 207 people who told us they had no place to call home |
| 106 prevention cases | 102 people who told us financial hardship contributed to their situation |
| 63 households served No Fault Eviction notices | 23 people to move into stable accommodation |

News and views

Renting can be a challenging experience for both tenants and landlords. In recent years, the demand for both private and social housing rentals has increased significantly. Numerous reports highlight issues such as low housing stock, poor quality properties, and high rents.

Affordability is one issue we deal with frequently along properties that are in poor condition. At AHAG our experienced team of support workers assist tenants with issues such as black mould, broken locks, lack of heating and hot water, and in one tragic case, a fire resulting in loss of life.

Some properties have been so unsanitary that tenants fear contamination when cooking, yet they are still thankful for having a roof over their heads

rather than being homeless. While there are instances of tenants who cause damage and accrue rent arrears, there are far more stories of rogue landlords not adhering to basic regulations.

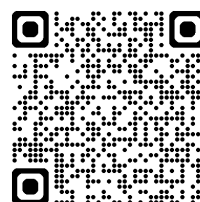
Illegal evictions cause a great deal of distress for tenants and we have dealt with cases where landlords removed fuse boxes, threatened tenants with violence, and raised rents to unaffordable levels, pushing tenants into arrears. Recently, a landlord moved back into a property with his family, forcing the tenant to sign a new tenancy agreement.

Our team has successfully challenged social housing landlords attempting to evict tenants unlawfully.

Laws exist to protect tenants, and we are here to help interpret these laws when things go wrong.

For some time now, AHAG has collaborated with housing law specialists at Hillingdon Law Centre to tackle complex cases.

If you or someone you know is facing unfair eviction please contact us by scanning the QR code below.



Case Spotlight

Jasmine approached us because her landlord had asked her to leave and the council were saying that they were unable to help as the eviction had not been served correctly.

The landlord had sent Jasmine a letter stating he wanted her and her family to leave their accommodation by a certain date, but had not attached a form 6A, which is a legal requirement where there is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. The landlord tried to argue that as Jasmine and her family had not signed a tenancy agreement or paid a deposit that he could evict them without going through any legal channels.

We put Jasmine in touch with our solicitors at Hillingdon Law Centre, who confirmed that as Jasmine and her

family are in self-contained accommodation, do not share any part of their accommodation with the landlord or any member of his family, and are able to provide evidence that they have been paying rent on a monthly basis to the landlord, that they in fact do have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy, even though no written agreement was entered into.

When this was communicated with the landlord via his solicitor, the landlord then tried to issue a section 8 notice for rent arrears and breach of tenancy. He tried to claim that the rent arrears had accrued during the COVID lockdown, when he had given the tenants, a payment break due to them not being able to work.

Unfortunately for the landlord, when this went to court, Jasmine was able to provide an email that she had received from the landlord in November 2023 stating that there were no arrears on their rent account, which meant that he could not claim arrears from 2020.

With evidence provided by Jasmine of harassment by the landlord and his repeated attempts to evict the family illegally, the council have now placed them in temporary accommodation without a court order being issued to evict them from their home.



The identity of our clients has been changed to respect their privacy.

Summer Appeal

We helped over 500 people with housing issues during 2023.

There are many of you who are regular donors and fundraisers, and because of you we are able to provide additional support such as food vouchers and other emergency provisions.

The hard reality is that we need more regular donors.

CAF believe that donating to charity should be simple and stress-free.

It's easy to make a donation simply scan the QR code to extend a helping hand of hope.



Meet the team

Having studied Psychology at university and then on to receiving a Masters in Clinical Mental Health Sciences, I knew my future job role would be focused on the main principle of supporting other people.

With such large numbers of those experiencing homelessness living with mental health conditions, my focus is very much around mitigating risks and ensure those coming to us have access to mental health support.

What I hear often from those I support is that the main priority is finding safe, affordable housing. Mental health conditions are exacerbated by the fact they have either no form of or insecure housing.

There is no feeling quite like securing accommodation for someone. We always ensure that clients have settled

into their new accommodation. The phone call or visit to a client once they have settled is very positive. The change in their wellbeing from when we first meet them is amazing.

Housing outcomes can often be slow. This can be because there are long waiting lists or a delay in benefit claims. However, although it is a frustrating situation, people often understand how the housing system works and they are genuinely grateful that we are able to support them on their journey.

Funds make a huge difference in the work we do. They can be the reason a person secures a new home, it can be a sim card for their phones to make and receive calls with other supporting agencies. Funds can help provide warm clothing, socks, gloves and shoes.

Without funding, AHAG wouldn't be where it is today. We would be unable to provide a safe, environment for people to meet with us and talk about their situation over a cup of tea or coffee.



Charlotte, Support Worker