

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM GAP IN HEXHAM

Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year

2023



Here we are again, another year drawing to its close. It really is astonishing how quickly the year seems to pass, another year of doing what we can to help a homeless person get their life back on track and see a future.

Our new Links House service continues to develop and the ability to offer female only accommodation has seen a big increase in the numbers of vulnerable women we have been able to help. Thanks in no small part to the generosity of people like you, we have greatly increased the support available to people, meaning we can get the best from the improved facilities we have available.

This additional support is not only from our own staff but also from outside agencies. For example the delivery of several Red Cross Community Education Workshops and registration with the Workers Education Association (WEA) to facilitate a variety of educational and learning opportunities.

We've also been busy promoting activities away from Links House, to help tackle social isolation, improve physical and mental health, perhaps experience something new, and to just have some fun in the fresh air.

We are now busy decorating Links House and making preparations for Christmas, putting up the tree and decorations, planning Christmas dinner and choosing presents so that everyone has gifts to open on Christmas morning.

Christmas, a time of reflection on life, the passing years, the present, what the future holds. It is a time that can be particularly difficult for those in our service. A time when the emotional support our staff can offer is particularly valued. It also a time to reflect on the help we have been able to offer people, the opportunities taken, the positive steps made...

Jayne's Story

Jayne came to our service after we had been contacted by Shelter in Newcastle. After years of living with an abusive partner she felt she would rather be homeless than continue to stay. What made her leaving particularly difficult was her two cats, Pip and Pol. Jayne had no one to care for them, and she was fearful of what her abuser would do if they remained in the house. Contact was made with the charity Cats Protection and their Paws Protect service. This offers a safe temporary refuge for pets whose owner is escaping domestic abuse. We were able to offer our help to Jayne thanks to the new female only accommodation and contact was made with NDAS (Northumbria Domestic Abuse Service) so Jayne could benefit from their specialist support. We helped Jayne register with a GP, change address for bank, benefits, etc. and register on Homefinder.

Just prior to becoming homeless Jayne had secured employment with a large retail company who proved to be very supportive of her circumstances and quickly transferring her to a Hexham branch of the store.

Jayne has now moved on with her life, a successful bid on Homefinder resulted in her securing a single bed bungalow within easy travelling distance from her work in Hexham. We helped secure grant towards decoration and furnishing, and by using the funds available from donations we were able to provide a new cooker and washing machine. Once Jayne had the keys she was reunited with Pip and Pol, confirmation that she did indeed have a new home.



The support we are able to offer a homeless person 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 all help us to provide the extra support to people that can make the crucial difference to their lives. We receive donations from people throughout the year, but we do see an increase in donations at Christmas. We are not alone in this. I often wonder why that is.

Every year we hear how commercial Christmas has become, that it has lost its true meaning in our increasingly secular society. If this is truly the case, why do more people donate to charities such as ours at Christmas? Why do people volunteer to help in night shelters, food kitchens, as hospital visitors and the other acts of kindness that people perform, admittedly not only at Christmas, but particularly so over the Christmas period?

I wonder, is this because the message of Christmas is so strong it remains true, come what may, for both those with faith and those without? Because the symbolism embodied in the birth of Christ in Bethlehem will always hold true?

The essential meaning of Advent and Christmas must surely be that things do not have to stay as they are. That good can be done in the face of evil, that we can change and become better people. Christmas tells us that there is hope for us all, as individuals and as a society. That hope of change, of moving forward to a better place is what we can help homeless people find when they come through our door.

The spirit and meaning of Christmas enacted each and every day of the year.

Thank you for helping us make that happen.

*With Best Wishes to you and
everyone at SD Anderson,*



Andrew Sanders – CEO

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



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