



**IMPROVING  
LIVES AND  
PROVIDING HOMES  
DURING THESE  
DIFFICULT TIMES**



**NOW PROVIDING 556 BED SPACES FOR VULNERABLE ADULTS WITH A HISTORY OF HOMELESSNESS ACROSS HAMPSHIRE.**



# PORTSMOUTH

## COVID-19: A TRUE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, life changed immeasurably in the UK as it had been doing and would continue to do so across the rest of the world. For those living on the street or without a secure place to live, this was a frightening and confusing time. The people of Portsmouth however were not slow to respond.

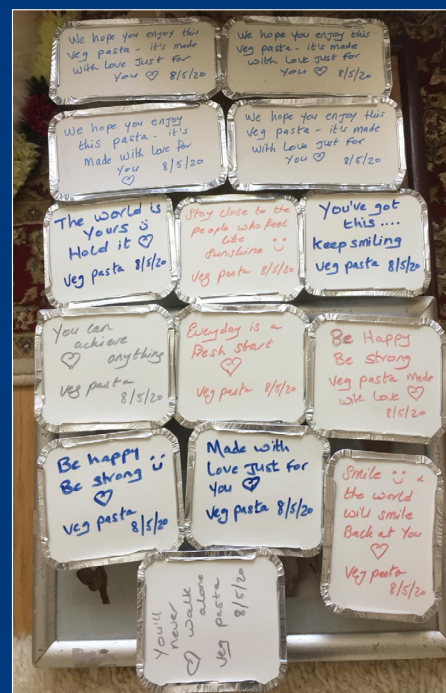
Within days The Society of St James had opened a house in Portsmouth to ensure 10 vulnerable and homeless adults who needed shielding could be shielded. Mike Taylor, SSJ Ops Director says "some were crying with relief because they finally felt safe." Only 7 days later and through the relentless and selfless work of frontline local authority, voluntary sector and private business staff the first hotel welcomed 118 homeless people and all 118 were given a health check at the point of check-in.

Within weeks, a second hotel was opened taking the total number of available bed spaces to 218. Today there are 188 residents who are homeless. Many of the residents were regular visitors to the City's Homeless Day Service and many to the night shelters but some were previously unknown to services.

These previously unknowns were sleeping on friends sofas or had lost their jobs and tenancies due to Covid-19 and as a result would have been street homeless if not for the hotels and houses made available.

It is evident talking to staff that they are very proud of what all those involved have accomplished together. Anna Jackson, SSJ Portsmouth Services Manager says "I just feel so proud to be part of this amazing community and partnership effort. All organisations have worked together and it's been a real pleasure to work alongside Two Saints to provide this vital support in both hotels; so much is being learnt by all of us. I would just like to say a massive thank you to everyone who has given their time and support to make this possible."

There is a level of routine now in the hotels as volunteers, support staff, security staff, health teams and the local community work hand in hand to take care of the immediate needs of the vulnerable adults in the hotel. Moments of kindness regularly bring a tear to those working there; only last week meals cooked by the community arrived with



### Food donations

messages of hope written across the top of each food carton.

Residents each have their own room and are delivered 3 nutritious meals a day by local volunteers, they are given support to access healthcare, substance misuse advice, benefits and prescriptions and discussions about onward support needs are starting to happen. Nevertheless, residents are concerned about what happens to them next, once social distancing eases.

Life within the hotel has not necessarily been a picture of calm and to some extent has mirrored the chaotic lifestyles of those that would have been living on the streets. There have been a small handful of evictions from the hotel but in the main the residents have been extremely grateful to be in warm and safe accommodation and have shown great commitment to social distancing. It is a credit to all involved that to date there have been no confirmed cases of Coronavirus amongst this community though one or two have been advised to self-isolate.



Volunteers and food donations



# Service users' stories

Peter was moved into SSJ's isolation property early on due to underlying health conditions, Peter said "I was welcomed by staff and the staff were amazing".

He was then moved to one of the hotels, somewhat daunted at first but after being met by "smiling faces" the transition was made easier. When Peter first heard about the Coronavirus he was accessing the City's Homeless Day Service and night shelters. Peter said he didn't understand the severity of the situation at first he said "I just thought it was the government trying to get rid of me!" Before accessing local services, Peter had been released from prison with nowhere to live. In prison he had always had a cell mate with no privacy so being in his own hotel room he said "is like a breath of fresh air, I have some freedom back".

Peter is concerned that once social distancing is relaxed it will be a big step



**Peter and a volunteer**

backwards for him and he will likely have to return to homelessness services but is

determined to take the opportunities made available to him.

Owen was impacted by Coronavirus when he lost his job and was made homeless by his landlord, despite being a good tenant. Within days Owen had decided to end his life, but circumstances drew him to SSJ where he was made welcome at the IBIS hotel in Portsmouth during the lockdown.

When Owen first arrived at the hotel, he was in a state of despair, having lost his confidence and faith in the world, but thanks to the help of the support workers that soon changed. Owen tells me that "since being at the hotel he has landed on his feet" thanks to the "amazing support work" on offer which has helped Owen overcome some of his original issues and he has now started planning ahead for a future where he hopes to become a support worker for people in a similar position.



He says, "since being around the support workers, I finally have an ambition, I finally have a goal."

When talking about how the support has helped him, Owen describes it as finally being able to lift his head out from underwater – something he puts down to the care provided by all of those who have supported him since the start of lockdown.

"If it wasn't for this place I don't think I would still be here," says Owen, "they have actually listened, they have sat with me and treated me like a human being for the first time in my life."

Mike Taylor, SSJ Operations Director says "many of the people we work with have complex traumatic backgrounds and just putting them in a hotel is not going to solve this, the road to recovery can be long and cyclical and tempers can flair".

*Our staff from across SSJ have compiled a list of who they would like to thank for their support during lockdown:*

- ARC Aldershot Response to Coronavirus
- Beachcomber Gin
- Bombay Sapphire
- Costco
- Cove Baptist Church
- The Crimea Pub, Aldershot
- Cycling UK
- Denmead Scouts, Denmead WI
- Belles and residents of Denmead
- Drayton Chemist, Portsmouth
- Fareshare
- The Food Bank
- Harvest foods
- HIVE Portsmouth (volunteers)
- Homeless Health Care, Portsmouth
- The Hope Revolution
- Hygiene Bank
- The Morrison's Foundation
- Lincoln Green Nursery
- Portsmouth Coronavirus Support Group
- Portsmouth City Council out of hours service
- Portsmouth City Council PCC Youth Service
- Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth (Alcohol Service) Ambulance Service,
- The Rotary Club
- Housing Options Team at RBC
- Saints Foundation
- St. Edmunds School
- The Vine Centre
- West Sussex Covid-19 Mutual Aid group (volunteers)
- William Chase
- West Sussex Covid-19 Mutual Aid group

*It is impossible to name everyone as the support has been huge so thank you to anyone else who has supported us but isn't mentioned above – THANK YOU!*

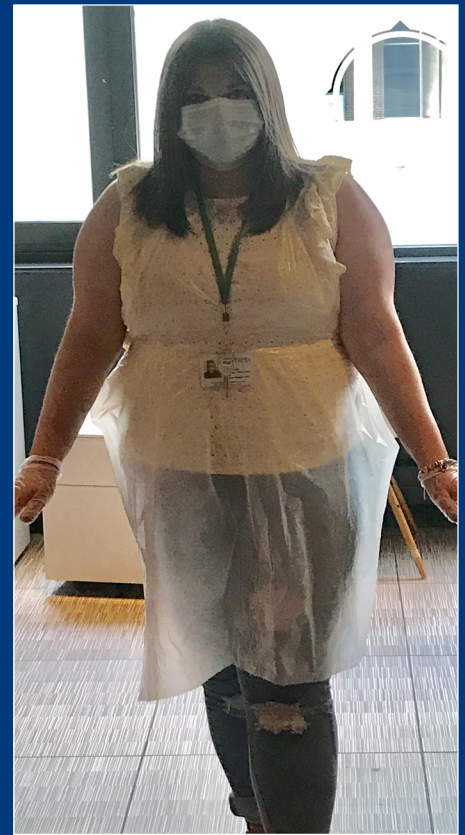
# Stories from the Frontline

Lucy is a Senior Support Worker within Homelessness Services and has been talking about those first few days in March where managing social distancing at the homeless day service and the night shelters was very difficult and so disheartening. She said she felt awful that those who were street homeless were only able to come into the day service for half an hour at a time. Lucy says concern about Coronavirus grew day by day amongst the clients but she described her excitement at being able to tell them that they would be moving to the hotel. She said she remembers "explaining to them all that they were going, they were so excited, the minibus was outside". Lucy popped back to the hotel next day, before her shift "it was so quiet because they hadn't been in a real bed for such a long time".

Lucy tells me she is so proud of what everyone involved has achieved "I love that we have all of these people under one roof, all support staff are here, mental health nurses coming in, wellbeing services to do smoking cessation, all the support that they need. We have two bedrooms for one to one sessions and even a donation room. Charity shops

have dropped off clothing, local supermarkets have donated food, packages for staff and even Easter Eggs". She said "The volunteers are brilliant, jumped straight in, know exactly what they are doing and they are getting on with the service users". She tells me that there is such a "warm" feeling of "everyone working together to make the best of a strange situation. We have everything we need, hand sanitiser, soaps, PPE and social distancing is being well observed".

We asked Lucy about behaviour in the hotel, "of course we've seen a bit of trouble every now and again, I don't think it is anything more than we would have seen within our normal services and we deal with it fine in the same way as we would normally". She went on to say that "having them here is far safer than having everyone on the street as it would have got to the point of us not being able to run the day service or night shelter". Lucy said that here she is seeing positive changes in people because they have the security of a bed, they are washing daily, dressing nicely and looking generally healthier. She, like others, is concerned to know what will happen next.



Lucy, Senior Support Worker

Helen has been volunteering at the hotel for a month now and has been delivering food for the residents at the hotel 3 times a day, 6 days a week. Ex-teacher Helen is on furlough from the retail industry at the moment and wanted to help out rather than be "stuck at home". She was offered a number of volunteer opportunities but chose this one alongside another 7-8 HIVE volunteers.

We asked Helen about her typical day. On arriving at the hotel she creates packages of donated food from the store cupboard or the hot meals being delivered by various organisations. Alongside a support worker she delivers the meals directly to the residents' rooms and conducts a quick welfare check at the same time. She tells me she often has to climb 4 flights of stairs to make her deliveries due to the lift not working, potentially an added physical exercise bonus!

Helen tells me "I've found it really rewarding, they are interesting people and in the main really friendly. I even recognise some of them from my local area. I'm amazed at how beautifully kept



Helen, HIVE volunteer

many of the rooms are, they keep their belongings beautifully, better than your average student halls I should think". Helen said "they are stuck in one room, they might go out for fresh air, bit of a smoke but otherwise there is nowhere for them to go. They are stuck in a small room. I have a small house and garden and a family back home, I would not change places...the residents are incredibly cheery in the circumstances".

On being asked if she had seen any trouble at the hotel, Helen told me that "I've seen one argument in my time here that ended in violence but it wasn't dissimilar to a playground scuffle and it started because someone was challenged for their lack of social distancing. It was dealt with appropriately".

Helen believes there are real risks associated with what happens next for those currently in the hotel but sees them all dealing with it a day or a week at a time. For some in the hotel homelessness is a temporary scenario, for many it isn't.



# ELSEWHERE DURING LOCKDOWN

In Southampton, SSJ along with valued partners Two Saints, SCC, Street Homeless Prevention Team, Home Group, Salvation Army and the Homeless Healthcare Team worked hard to deliver a quick response to covid-19 to ensure Southampton's homeless were kept safe.

Places within B&B's, student accommodation and SSJ's own properties were secured to ensure those who needed to self-isolate could and that those who were rough sleeping were given the opportunity to stay safe. Local charities Saints Foundation and Fairshare quickly came on board to provide hot meals that were greatly appreciated. SSJ's Operations Director, Nicky said "I am amazed at how something can be achieved with an



Frontline worker receiving their bike from Recycle

injection of funds and a will to work in partnership to achieve something so important"

Also in Southampton, funding from the Big Bike Revival (Cycling UK) has enabled our Re-Cycle Bikes and Saints4Sports projects to team up to get key workers moving during the pandemic. Over 20 key workers, including nurses and carers, have already received a bike to help them make their journey to work.

Staff at our CQC registered care home, St James Care, have worked extremely hard to protect the 16 very vulnerable residents currently living there. Karen, Registered Manager, says "initially we faced many challenges from the residents, who did not really understand the severity of the lockdown situation, including how fast the pandemic was spreading. The staff were dedicated, calm, motivational, reassuring and increased activities, in order to ensure that the residents were isolated, safely, in their "SJC Bubble" this ensured that the home has managed to remain covid free. The team make me proud every day with their intense infection control methods, and isolating outside of work, putting their own lives on hold, so to not mix with any possible contamination"



Operations Director Tony Keall says "now that testing is much more available we can welcome new residents into the home much more quickly. Supermarket food shortages meant we were subject to the same shopping limits as other households – except we had 16 mouths to feed! We are very thankful to our staff for all they have done"

Meanwhile, Housing Manager Simone says, "If I were to summarise the lockdown period for our services in the North of Hampshire in one word it would be "Cooperation". Our great staff team who despite having to manage the personal challenges that the Covid-19 lockdown threw at them, have continued to, amongst other things, support 24 families with food and supplies, support the 20 clients in our hostel and move on houses and provide emergency accommodation for families and individuals who needed to shield. Support from the local community has been incredible and Rushmoor Borough council staff have supported us throughout".

## INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

As part of our focus to ensure that we deliver services in a psychologically informed way, we have launched a new project supported by Homeless Link and the Ending Women's Homelessness Fund. Project lead, Nicole says "SSJ wants to put Women's voices at the heart of what we do and therefore we are forging relationships with other professionals across a diverse range of sectors enabling a multifaceted approach, collaboration and empowerment. We have staff leads within all our services

and training will start again soon - this is a very exciting time for the Society of St James"

March 8th was International Women's Day and Nicole used this as a way to get the community involved in supporting the women in our services by providing pamper sessions Reiki treatments, hair styling and goodie bags. Thank you Ha Ha Hairdressing academy, the volunteers involved and our corporate partners, Southern Co-op, who provided ingredi-



International Woman's Day activity

ents and prizes for the bake off, cakes & beverages for the coffee mornings and hand-written motivation cards from Southern Co-op staff.

# FUNDRAISING

## Thank you....

The people of Hampshire continue to astound us with their generosity and unique ways to raise money for SSJ. James and Phil carried Christmas trees on their back for a festive-themed marathon in December, raising more than £1,300 towards our Christmas campaign. The sweet tones of spring were in the air this March as the Solent Orchestra played in aid of SSJ and James Morgan chose to

celebrate his 50th birthday by asking for donations to SSJ instead of gifts - Happy Birthday, James! Portsmouth High School head girls group arranged a series of activities managing to raise an astonishing £9718.25 and our very own Ash and his channel relay team yet again swam the channel for SSJ raising much needed funds.

We are so grateful for the



Clockwise from top left: Portsmouth High fashion show. Ash and Channel relay team. Solent Orchestra spring concert. Portsmouth High fashion show. James and Phil. James Morgan

continued support of the community groups, organisations and individuals who

have supported us this year. If you would like to help please visit [www.ssj.org.uk/donate/](http://www.ssj.org.uk/donate/)

## SSJ WIN NATIONAL AWARD



We are so excited that our partnership with The Southern Co-op has been recognised with a national award at the Third Sector Business Charity Awards.

Announced on Wednesday, May 27th, the award saw SSJ and the Southern Co-op succeed in the short-term partnership award for the Love Your Neighbourhood programme. We are extremely proud to be judged to be the best in a category that had such strong competition.

Judges said it was 'a strong submission with sizeable impact' and that 'both partners should be commended on fantastic and meaningful collaboration'.

The two organisations have been in partnership since early 2019 after colleagues at Southern Co-op's head office voted for SSJ to become their charity partner of the year with a focus on tackling local crime, drug and alcohol addiction, and of course, homelessness.

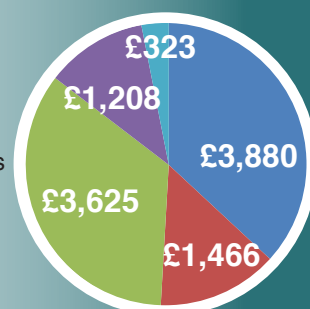
## Grant funders

Thank you for the continued support of our grant funders during these difficult times, particularly to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation, Morrisons Foundation and Neighbourly for funding awarded to support our Covid-19 related work. Also thank you for the continued support of the National Lottery Community Fund, Neighbourly, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Nationwide Community Grant and Wiltshire Community Foundation and Homeless Link.

### INCOME 2018/19

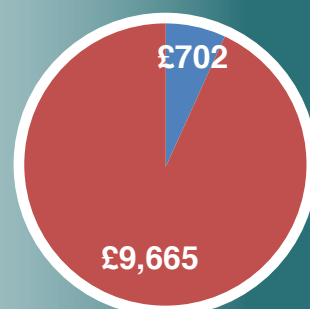
#### How the society is funded £000's

- Rents
- Housing related support grants
- Substance misuse grants
- Other grants and donations
- Jamie's Computers



#### How the money is spent £000's

- Administration costs and interest
- Resident support, sustenance and outreach



### HOW CAN YOU HELP...?

Find out more about how you can help us at [www.ssj.org.uk/support-us/](http://www.ssj.org.uk/support-us/)