

CRAWLEY OPEN HOUSE SUMMER NEWSLETTER JUNE 2020

Update from Charlie Arratoon, Director

It would be hard to start anywhere other than with the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it's had on us as an organisation and as a partner in the community response.

We worked closely with Crawley Borough Council to identify, find, meet, inform and support over seventy people who were sleeping rough to take up temporary accommodation. This was a massive project. Accommodation became scarce as not just Crawley but other local authorities such as Horsham and Mid-Sussex faced enormous demand.

With seventy plus people now in accommodation and being told not to leave for their safety, and the safety of others, a new challenge arose in making sure they had what they needed to stay in. At this point, we developed partnerships with Giving Back Crawley, the Easter Team, CGL, CGG, and others to source food and essentials and deliver it each day to those in need.

For the first time it opened, access was restricted to our Day Centre, due to the pandemic. Only the homeless could access the Day Centre and then only to connect them to temporary accommodation. All other support became telephone-based, offering appointments and welfare checks from a safe distance.

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New and creative ways of working have had to happen to keep the client's mental health in a good place. We bought tablets for gaming and viewing and have held barbecues, gardening classes, video nights, and more to make people staying in feel less oppressive than it might.

Over the last week, we have introduced a new rota to reflect the new lockdown guidance. Things are still far from normal and we might go backwards before we go forwards but I'm grateful to my team for their support, flexibility, commitment and positivity over what has been the challenge of a lifetime.

Fundraising in the pandemic

As with lots of other charities, we've had to adjust our fundraising to compensate for the income from key events such as Run Gatwick. We encouraged people to take part in the 2.6 Challenge where people did all sorts of things connected by the number twenty-six. Lots of people took part and we're grateful to all but honourable mentions to James for his amazing fast and to Ian for doing twenty-six sets of twenty-six keepy-uppies, each with a different hat on!

An unexpected consequence of the pandemic has been keeping us on tenterhooks. We were shortlisted for a Crawley Community Award for the work we do but the prize giving was in March. So we still don't know who won!

Work has started on converting our first-floor offices into eight, semi-independent units. Work is expected to take 12 weeks and it will be great to have the new rooms available to support even more people back on their feet.

Find out more about the work of Crawley Open House on their website www.crawleyopenhouse.co.uk

Make a donation www.crawleyopenhouse.co.uk/makea-donation