

## Impact report for Somerset Masonic Fund (April 2021) Helping to reduce homelessness in Somerset

### The Somerset Move-In Fund – an update

We launched the Somerset Move-In Fund in September 2019 thanks to funding from the Somerset Masonic Fund, Somerset County Council and other donors.

Progress was stalled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we are pleased to report that to date we have committed over £70,000 of funding to eight local organisations. This funding was split into two equal tranches.

We have just received monitoring on the first tranche and will be paying the second instalment to partner organisations in the next few weeks.

To date, 75 individuals have received grants to help them furnish their homes, having recently moved from being homeless to housed. £25,507 has been spent by organisations on these grants to help those clients to live independently, in a comfortable home environment and with the aim of making their new tenancy sustainable.

### Learnings from this work

Every organisation who has partnered with us on this project has reported back to us and has been very positive about this fund and it appears to have fulfilled its aim of giving case workers a pot of money to call on to move clients forward with their lives.

Some organisations have found it a bit more difficult to distribute than others due to Coronavirus (both due to logistics and the facts that some clients have been housed as part of the Coronavirus response). Originally £35,000 was awarded for the first phase and just over £25,000 has been spent to the end of March 2021. However, all partners feel confident that they can spend their second instalment and the underspend from the first phase in the coming months, now the pandemic is easing.

Feedback shows us that our approach has been simple and impactful, and organisations are delighted to be soon receiving the next phase of funding to continue this work.

### Stories from beneficiaries

#### Laura's story

Laura was involved in the Criminal Justice System for several years and has been working with one of our partner organisations since receiving a Probationary Order in 2017. Laura had a turbulent childhood; a survivor of childhood abuse and has numerous mental health issues. Laura's lifestyle in adulthood eventually led to her sofa surfing and never having a space to call her own. With support from her Keyworker, Laura found a property and was successful in the bidding process. Being in receipt of Universal Credit and receiving low monthly income meant Laura was unable to furnish the property herself. The SCF Move-In fund enabled Laura to purchase a double bed, bedroom furniture, bedding, a kitchen table, blinds, and soft furnishings such as cushions and blankets. Together with her Keyworker, Laura budgeted and choose items herself. Laura has told her Keyworker that without this grant, she would not have been able to afford to make her house feel like her own and she now feels she has a stable place to live which she calls home.

### **Molly's story**

Molly, suffering from health conditions, was living in overcrowded property. Molly was offered a property for herself and her child through Somerset Homefinder, but she had no furniture/carpets/cooker/crockery, etc. so could not move in, and accept the tenancy.

Citizens Advice Mendip gave Molly the option of a variety of schemes, including the Move-in grant which provided a cooker and a fridge. In addition to this, her lounge has been measured for a carpet that will be fitted post-lockdown.

The Move-In grant help was part of the holistic help and advice that was offered to Molly. Including:

- liaison with the housing officer on the housing offer
- advice on sources of help for the tenancy deposit
- advice on claiming Council Tax Support
- advice on getting the housing element included in client's Universal Credit.

Molly was initially referred to Citizens Advice Mendip by a Mendip Health Connector, demonstrating the value of this 'joined up' approach.

Following this intervention, the situation moved from Molly being told that they would not have much chance of accessing housing, through to being offered a new home, securing a deposit, white goods, a carpet, and the knowledge to access the benefits to which she was entitled.

### **TS's Story**

TS went to Spencer House in January 2020 after sofa-surfing following a relationship breakdown. When he arrived, he was suffering from poor mental health and was using low-level recreational drugs to cope with the way he was feeling. After settling into supported accommodation in Wells, TS engaged with the Tenant Accreditation Scheme (TAS). When TS first arrived, he spent most of his time in his room sleeping and would check in with TAS every few days. After a few months of adjusting to life in supported accommodation he became more engaged with support workers, he gained self-employment and started helping local building companies and seemed to be a lot happier and healthier. Once he completed his TAS work, he was awarded his gold-banding on Homefinder Choice Based Letting Scheme and soon after was set to move into a Housing Association property. TS is now living independently and is working full time in the construction industry and credits his time spent at YMCA Brunel Supported Housing for helping him take his life back. After TS moved on, he was able to use the funding from the Somerset Community Foundation Fund to help buy a brand-new refrigerator and cooker for his new home, he was over the moon when he received his new items.

### **Thank you**

We are grateful to the Somerset Masonic Fund for supporting this vital work to support homeless people in Somerset to move forward with their lives and enjoy a home of their own.

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