

# Chorley Help the Homeless History

## “Beginnings”

### 1994:

Parishioners of various Chorley churches and members of local voluntary groups organised a meeting to see what they could do to relieve poverty and distress amongst homeless or recently resettled individuals, to reduce the number of homeless people in the Borough of Chorley.

An executive committee was selected to oversee the new project. A founding member was **Edith Crook**, who received an MBE in 1997 for 18 years of work in housing with North British Housing Association.



“Relieving Poverty & Distress”

### 1995:

**Help the Homeless (Chorley)** was established as a fairly simple and informal drop-in scheme. Chorley Council allowed the use of a building on Steely Lane on Friday afternoons, and Tatton Community Centre was also used.

The services began as a drop-in that offered a drink and a chat, soon followed by the use of a furniture van. The Furniture Redistribution Scheme became the organisation’s first dedicated service.

### 1997:

24<sup>th</sup> February: **Help the Homeless (Chorley)** was registered as a charity.

# “The SmartMove Years”

## 1998:

Still at Steely Lane, plans were made to find a new permanent base of operations. The charity heads looked at an empty property at **45 Clifford Street** but it needed major renovation. So on National Homelessness Day on February 1<sup>st</sup>, a massive fundraising drive was launched to raise the £24,000 needed to refurbish the property.

After four months, the charity had raised £16,000 through traditional fundraising. Chorley Council’s housing committee made up the rest with a very generous rent agreement, and preparation began on the premises.

Meanwhile this year, Help the Homeless was awarded a grant from the National Lottery for £52,704. This funding allowed for the salary of a full-time Project Manager and the charity began a major working involvement with the **SmartMove** scheme.

The SmartMove service involved:

- Accommodation Finding
- Floating Tenancy Support – to assist people struggling with their tenancy to stay in their home
- Bond Guarantee Scheme – to provide private landlords with a written guarantee in place of cash bonds.

Chorley Guardian article:

### **Lottery cash bonus for project to house homeless**

The town's Help the Homeless charity announced its £52,704 boost less than a week before the launch of the SmartMove Guarantee Scheme.

Charity chairman Edith Crook said: "This is a significant step towards solving one of the major problems faced by young, single homeless people. Together with other projects being carried out by the group it should go some way towards relieving poverty and stress in the Chorley area."

The SmartMove project is being operated under franchise by Crisis, the national homeless charity, to get young homeless people off the streets and into secure rented accommodation.

The project involves a bond guarantee scheme aimed at providing quality rented private housing for the homeless or potentially homeless people on low incomes. A deposit is guaranteed to landlords on behalf of the tenant against damage or loss of property.

The SmartMove scheme is due to start today.



## 1999 - 2001:

In March 1999 the renovation of 45 Clifford Street was finished and Help the Homeless moved in. This base of operations served as an office for advice appointments, and the building also offered shower and laundry facilities for homeless people.

Over the next few years, Help the Homeless continued to deliver SmartMove services with a professional operation that employed four Tenant Support Officers, two administration staff and a Project Manager. Most of the annual funding came from a Supporting People contract.

After guiding the charity for several years, Edith Crook stepped down as Chair and the position was taken by **Roger Stagles**, a former Housing Director at Chorley Council.

## 2002:

Help the Homeless Chorley opened its Charity Shop on Bolton Street.

## 2003:

The growth of the organisation led to the decision to dissolve the old charity and replace it with a newly-registered charity as a company limited by guarantee. On the 26<sup>th</sup> November "**Help the Homeless (Chorley) Ltd**" was incorporated, and on the 17<sup>th</sup> December this company was registered as a new charity, No. 1101240.

At this time, **Anne Jones** served as the charity's Chair.

## 2004:

The Supporting People contract was still received annually, allowing for the recruitment of a Landlord Development Worker and Finance Manager, while the office space was reorganised to have three Tenant Support Officers working at the same time.

## 2006:

This year Roger Stagles became Chair once more, and the Furniture Service was improved with a new warehouse space.

December 1<sup>st</sup>: **The SmartMove Mediation Service** launched. Developed by staff and volunteers, this family counselling service moved into the house next door – 43 Clifford St.

Chorley Guardian article:

### It's open doors for homeless

The doors are set to open on a new centre for Chorley's homeless.

A year after a project was launched to transform a property in Clifford Street in the town, members of the Help the Homeless charity are ready for business...

The new premises are being officially opened by Chorley MP Lindsay Hoyle and Mayor Coun Alan Whittaker on March 16th, but the charity is still after volunteers to help man the centre.

Edith Crook, of Cottage Fields, Chorley who has been involved with Help the Homeless since the start, said the move brings the whole operation under one roof for the first time.

She said: "It has been wonderful to have raised so much so soon, and I must thank all those who have made donations and given their time to charity. It's been wonderful, and due to everyone's efforts, we are now ready to open.

"We are hoping to move into the new property by the end of next week. But we want to open the centre from 10am to 4pm five days a week."

The new town centre property is to be used as a centre to store food, clothes and bedding, and will offer a shower, hot drink and laundry facilities to homeless people.

“Running low”

## 2007 - 2008:

Help the Homeless learned that its main source of funding – the Supporting People contract – would instead be awarded to another organisation called DISC from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007. At that time, some of the lead housing advisors transferred to similar jobs at DISC.

In May 2008 the Project Manager departed after a decade of dedicated work. SmartMove services were downscaled to an informal advice service staffed mostly by volunteers, and the office closed on Fridays. The furniture service continued to operate efficiently with volunteers.

The Mediation and Counselling services were running strong, but had to move out of 43 Clifford St and found a new location in the church office space at Halliwell St.

## 2009:

Without a main source of funding, Help the Homeless ran on reserve funds that were predicted to run out by the end of the year.

Businessman **Paul McBeth** was approached to be involved with HTHC and he became the new Chair of the charity in March. His first main tasks were to obtain funding and look at ways to reduce cost.



The most unfortunate casualty of cutbacks was the closure of HTHC’s charity shop on Bolton St, which had suffered from slow pedestrian traffic after the street’s Post Office and supermarket both closed.

By the end of the year, Help the Homeless was almost facing closure, but there was a life-line...

# “The Fylde Coast YMCA Years”

## 2010:

Help the Homeless connected with a YMCA charity called **Fylde Coast YMCA**, a similar – but much larger – organisation in Lytham St Annes with shared projects and aims. A plan was developed to merge Help the Homeless as a branch of Fylde Coast YMCA.



The immediate benefit was an injection of money and new professionalism for the office at Clifford St, with the hiring of a full time General Manager and receptionists hired from employment schemes. HTHC was re-branded with new logos and a new website.



Fylde Coast YMCA were interested in greatly expanding our furniture donation scheme, so resources were dedicated to finding a large warehouse to launch two new branches of the charity: ‘Help Recycle’, a furniture recycling social enterprise, and ‘Help Refurnish’, a warehouse retail project to sell quality items of pre-owned furniture.

## 2011:

The FCYMCA merger was in full progress. While volunteer housing advice services still ran from Clifford St, the new furniture projects were getting underway at Charnock Richard.

June 18<sup>th</sup>: ‘Help Refurnish’ officially opened at a retail warehouse near Camelot theme park.



In October Paul McBeth stepped down as Chair and was replaced by Rev Martin Cox of St Laurence’s Church.

25<sup>th</sup> November: Help Refurnish quickly grabbed a shop space in Chorley town centre and opened a second branch.

## 2012:

The Chorley charity shop performed quite well, but unfortunately the ‘Help Recycle’ retail warehouse struggled. A lack of profit from these schemes led to redundancies for most staff.

Late in the year, Fylde Coast YMCA management announced a de-merger with Help the Homeless.

## “Back to Basics”

### 2013:

**Rev Martin Whiffen** of the Chorley United Reformed Church became the new Chair.

With the impending de-merger from FCYMCA, Directors and volunteer staff got together to decide the future of the charity. Acknowledging the importance of our core advice services, and Chorley’s continuing need for a friendly and welcoming homelessness charity, it was decided that we must continue in whatever capacity we could.

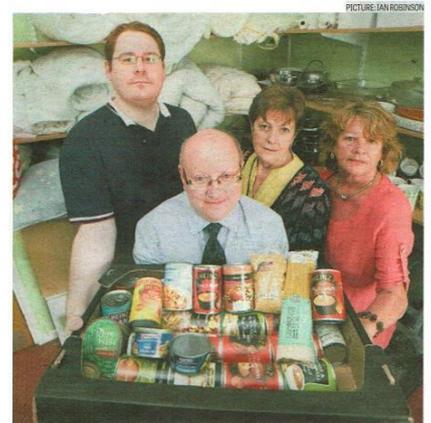
April: The partnership with Fylde Coast YMCA officially ended. The shop and warehouse closed and the furniture service concluded.

Directors established a new charity and company limited by guarantee: **Chorley Help the Homeless Ltd**, charity no. 1152392.

Operating as always from 45 Clifford Street, this was a return to a very small and basic charity, run almost entirely by volunteers, and without official grants or funding from any charity partners.

August: The nearby Chorley United Reformed Church began a free evening meal on Thursdays run partly by CHTH volunteers.

## Concerns as charity helps more homeless



Manager Peter Walkden with volunteers Gavin Clayton, Dianne Taylor and Phyllis Barton

### 2014 - 2019:

Food parcels started to become a larger part of CHTH’s services, as welfare changes and the financial climate caused more people to need the help of food banks.

Supermarkets in the Chorley area provided wonderful assistance, including:

- November 2014: Sainsburys Rucksack Appeal, rucksacks filled with food.
- Adsa’s Community Life gave monetary donations in Feb, July and December 2015.
- Tesco, Booths and Co-op have collection baskets for customers to donate food.
- Booths kindly gave CHTH some storage space to store food bank supplies.





- In 2017 Woodchats Coffee shop launched a Suspended Coffee ticket scheme, to provide free coffee or tea for those in need.
- April 2017: Co-op Local Community Fund raised £1,990 for Help the Homeless.
- Asda Superstore in Chorley continued to support CHTH with regular submissions to their green token scheme and community funding.

In 2016, Cllr Margaret Lees became a Trustee, and supported the charity by donating proceeds of the annual 'Chorley's Got Soul' night to Help the Homeless.

September 2017: Help the Homeless had its Annual General Meeting, at which time Rev Martin Whiffen stepped down as Chair, to be replaced by Anne Wilson.



In 2018, one of CHTH's founders and longest-serving members, Dorothy Griffiths, stepped down to retire from charity duties, and Trustees decided to show their appreciation by naming the charity office at Clifford Street "Dorothy House".

Chorley Building Society chose CHTH as their Charity of the Year for 2018, supporting us all year and raising a total of £2500.



January 2019: Some much-needed improvements to Dorothy House began with a new lick of paint for the walls, and new carpets laid in most rooms.

March 2019: Seeing a need to further develop and co-ordinate the charity's services, a new Interim Manager was hired, who became the full-time Manager in 2020.



September 2019: The charity's current Chairman Anne Wilson had to step down due to poor health. The position was taken by another Trustee, Ken Phillips.

Dec 2019: CHTH began to seek more sources of funding to develop services further. The Broughton Catholic Charitable Society awarded a donation of £4000 to support the food bank, advice services, and building improvements.

# “The Pandemic”

## 2020 - 2021

2020 was a challenging and unusual year for everyone, as the COVID-19 pandemic caused the country to go into a national lockdown in March that lasted nearly three months. Chorley Help the Homeless partially closed during this time, but continued to give out food parcels one day per week.

In June 2020 CHTH reopened fully, but with new working conditions to keep everyone safe. Unfortunately this meant that for the first time, clients were no longer able to come in for a brew and toast.

CHTH worked alongside Chorley Council and other support agencies to help families and individuals who had been effected by the lockdown. The Food Bank service was greatly boosted during this time, giving out at least twice as much food as previous years.

In June, CHTH began a **Market Voucher scheme** in co-operation with several stallholders on Chorley Market. These vouchers allowed people to get fresh fruit, veg and meat, in addition to the storable food provided in food parcels.

The Market Voucher scheme was funded by several grants and large donations, including: The Lancashire Community COVID-19 Support Fund, Chorley Council, and Clayton-le-Woods Parish Council. In addition, other organisations and schools bought batches of the market vouchers to help their family client bases directly.

In February 2021, CHTH received a significant grant by the Chorley Council Emergency Food Fund to continue delivering a Food Parcel service and Market Voucher scheme through the rest of the year.

In April 2021, Chorley Help the Homeless expanded into a new location. To Be Continued...

