

CANONSGROVE NEWSLETTER

Following our commitment to improve engagement with Trull residents and give a greater understanding of our work we are pleased to bring you the latest news and information from the accommodation project for rough sleepers at Canonsgrove.

The accommodation was set up following a Government requirement to take rough sleepers off the streets recognising this group as particularly vulnerable to Covid-19.

Our approach, bringing in other professional services such as health, social care, mental health and addiction services, means the rough sleepers are receiving extra support in their new environment, preparing them to move to more independent accommodation.

*Please note names have been changed to protect identity

Equipping residents for independent living

YMCA Dulverton Group's Tenancy Accreditation Scheme (TAS) is being delivered to residents who are currently receiving support at Canonsgrove. The TAS is an education module based program which equips the residents with all the necessary and relevant information they may need when they come to move on and live independently. One of the objectives of this course is to ensure that everyone's move into independent accommodation is safe and sustainable.

We offer them a weekly appointment to engage with our TAS tutor. In these appointments we go through various aspects of living independently. This could be where to look for accommodation and what type of accommodation is suitable for their needs whilst highlighting what a landlord should do for their tenants but also what a landlord will expect from them. We cover financial matters such as budgeting and how to manage your money whilst living independently, plus addressing any previous housing related debt that they may have incurred. We also focus on the subject of community – how to be part of your local community and the importance of this. Finally, we discuss topics such as the importance of looking after ourselves, physically and mentally alongside future employment and education opportunities.

The course can be delivered in a number of different ways and can be adapted to suit all of our client's needs. The flexibility in delivery is vital as it ensures that everyone who is referred onto the course gets the most out of it.

Alongside teaching the skills to be tenancy ready to those who have been referred into the scheme, we have also provided support with ensuring residents know their National Insurance numbers, applying and setting up bank accounts and obtaining photo ID for many other residents who are currently in the accommodation.

Jake*, a resident at Canonsgrove said, “I faced many personal challenges before coming to Canonsgrove, I really was not a nice person. With support from staff on site I’m finally off the gear and have completed my Tenancy Accreditation Course. The course helped me clear all of my housing debt and I am now looking to start education in 2021. I feel like I have my self-respect back and am looking forward to the future again”.



Q&A

Tina* arrived at Canonsgrove after sleeping rough for approximately six months. She had a history of drug and domestic abuse and had been on and off the streets since she was eight, due to a challenging relationship with her mother.

We met up with Tina at Canonsgrove to have a chat about her time in the new supported accommodation and her plans for the future.

What do you enjoy about Canonsgrove?

Canonsgrove is surrounded by outdoor space, including a large playing field. I’m able to play rounders with peers, badminton and also run. I also enjoy singing!

What challenges have you faced?

For what feels like my whole life, I have never had a place to call home. I have been on and off the streets for as long as I can remember. I relied heavily on drugs and often had to shoplift to fund my addiction. I was previously in a violent relationship which led to me being sectioned and ongoing mental health issues, which I still face today.

How has your experience at Canonsgrove been?

I like it here.

I feel supported by staff and extremely lucky to have use of the sports fields.

My previous placements did not offer half as much as Canonsgrove does.

I have reduced my use of drugs and can honestly say that I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. If it hadn't moved to Canonsgrove, I would still be in the dark place and would most likely have ended up in prison.

What do you want for your future?

I would like a place of my own, that I can call home.

I'm ready to finally give up using drugs and I hope to have completely given in the very near future.

Tina is receiving support from our team to find her own independent accommodation and continue her amazing progress of getting her life back on track.

Somerset Live reporter visit

Somerset Live's Local Democracy Reporter, Daniel Mumby, recently requested to visit Canonsgrove to take a look at the facility and meet both staff and residents for a news feature.

Daniel was welcomed by Canonsgrove Manager, Patricia Collins, and had a tour of the grounds. The pair then discussed the facilities and the positive impact our support approach, More Than a Room is having on individuals, and the benefit of working in partnership with Somerset West and Taunton council alongside numerous other key agencies.

Daniel took the time to speak to a group of residents, all of whom have completely different past experiences but unfortunately have homelessness in common.

Michael, a resident at Canonsgrove, spoke to Daniel about his previous challenges and subsequent depression. Following a mid-life crisis, Michael turned to alcohol and was drinking up to two litres of spirits a day. Since being accommodated and supported at Canonsgrove, Michael has direct access to mental health services, has volunteered within the local community and has significantly reduced his intake of alcohol.

YMCA Dulverton Group would like to thank Daniel Mumby for this article which highlights that the cause of homelessness is so different for each individual. With the right support available, and easily accessible, everyone is able to realise their full potential.

If you would like to read the article in full please visit Somerset Live's website, or following the link below: <https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/how-ymca-somersets-councils-helping-4683641>

Blackdown Visit

Lisa, a support worker at Canonsgrove, recently took residents up into the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty to explore Otterford Lakes. Everyone had a wonderful time - nobody had previously had the opportunity to walk the Blackdowns before, so it was an experience to remember!



Accommodation appraisal

SWT is undertaking a review of its accommodation requirements for homeless and rough sleeping provision.

The Council wants to evaluate resources and demand to ensure it can provide enough accommodation to work to end homelessness and rough sleeping in the district in line with its corporate priority for homes and communities.

Executive members have approved a proposal to undertake an options appraisal and report back with recommendations. The appraisal will consider all options and sites with the aim of providing more accommodation and support to the homeless and rough sleeping population.

An integral part of any recommendation would be to seek a 'hub' solution so that support services are close to residents building on joined-up partnership working the Council has established with the YMCA, ARC, Social Care, Public Health, the Probation Service, the NHS Somerset Partnership, Turning Point, the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Second Step, the Salvation Army, Open Door and local church, voluntary and community groups.

The proposal sets out an ambition to adopt a new voluntary responsibility to house a greater number of rough sleepers than the council has a statutory duty to accommodate.

This would approximately double the number of single homeless which SWT is seeking to accommodate directly or through partners, and is a big step towards helping the Council meet the government's objective to halve rough sleeping by 2022 and end rough sleeping by 2027.

This approach would also ensure the council could provide enough accommodation to avoid returning rough sleepers accommodated under the government's 'Everyone In' Covid-19 directive back to the streets.

Further information on the Canonsgrove accommodation project can be found on our websites at

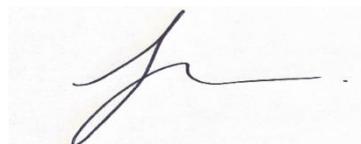
www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-information/
<https://www.ymca-dg.org/>

We welcome any feedback or further questions on Canonsgrove@ymca-dg.org

Yours



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