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Since 27th January Nina & Charlotte's colleague Jaime Cleave is back into the swing of things in Swaffham/Dereham attempting to reach the national conference which he is supposed to beat. He hasns one constantly after another and almost gives up on several occasions. Eventually he comes back to the conference saying, "It's not the despair I can take the despair, it's the hope I can't stand".

The other day I was at a networking lunch for local charity leaders. Each person was given five minutes to speak about the issues they were encountering. After hearing from a food bank, a mental health charity, a homeless charity and a charity charged and my appetite for new stories deserted me. My hope was trickling away.

The first speaker, Helen the manager at King's Lynn Foodbank, told us of the dramatic increase in requests for food parcels. During the Easter holiday, demand was 171 per cent higher than a year ago. These as much had been leaving the warehouse in parcels than being received in donations. Helen described it as 'an exhausting and worrying increase'.

The second speaker was Emily from the King's Lynn Debt Centre. She told us that, as the cost of living crisis deepens, more and more people are finding it impossible to make ends meet, no matter how hard they try. She explained that the Debt Centre is seeing more people who, after paying their commitments, have 'food, and the rising cost of fuel. They simply do not have anything left over'. They are already making difficult choices between food, heat and clothing their children.

The third person to speak was Julian, chair of trustees at King's Lynn Night Shelter. He told us how the night shelter has been at full capacity all winter. Despite this, there were 20 people to the waiting list! He anticipated a very difficult few years ahead.

Having gone through Covid 19, my hope was that things would only get better. But for those with the least, things have gone from bad to worse. The poorest in our communities are feeling the full force of the soaring cost of living. Whilst Ukrainian Refugees are being helped, the Ukrainian Refugee Fund, the Ukrainian Refugee Foundation points out that "households in receipt of benefits will experience a real terms cut to their incomes which are already at historically low levels."[1]

Finding answers to these problems is a huge challenge. Fortunately, there are signs that those in political power are beginning to respond more appropriately. Norfolk County Council is topping up £5.7m of Government funding from the Household Support Fund to provide £1.5m to the Norfolk Community Foundation to set up a new Norfolk Cost of Living Support Scheme which will help people who are struggling to pay for food, energy and water bills, and other essentials.

Norfolk Community Foundation are partnering with Norfolk County Council to deliver the scheme and have already started to roll out the initial grants programme. They will deliver a coordinated programme of help in partnership with local charities. Their project will enable the development of affordable food hubs across Norfolk with the aim of ensuring that no one in Norfolk goes hungry.

On a smaller scale, King's Lynn churches are doing their part by offering free community meals, running drop-ins, or hosting community fridges. Some are also providing emergency food parcels. Many of these are being supported across their parishes. In addition, it is the churches that are providing the vision and leadership for King's Lynn Foodbank, and it is the churches that are partnering together to run King's Lynn Debt Centre.

These initiatives are a start but more help is needed. We have to be creative and find new solutions. Covid-19 presented us with problems on a scale we had never seen before. Putting together, scientists designed effective drugs, businesses adapted to provide services in new ways, and people in the most vulnerable situation put their neighbours and the most vulnerable became top priority. If we could find a way through the pandemic, then there must be hope that we can find a way through these new challenges.

John Cleave eventually arrived at the conference, somewhat the worse for wear, having navigated many humps in the road! but crucially with his hope restored. For many the journey through the next few years is going to be bumpy with many obstacles, but if we can pull together, applying creative generosity, maybe we can all have our hopes restored.

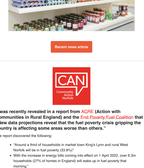
Andrew

[1] https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/main-cost-living-benefit-seeks-its-biggest-drop-value-fifty-years

Norfolk County Council recently unveiled a £7.7m package of hardship support offering increased flexibility and choice in the way a broader range of households can access help.

The council is topping up £5.7m of Government funding from the Household Support Fund with £2m of its own money to provide a range of support for residents including those of pensionable age who are struggling to pay for food, energy and water bills, and other essentials.

The council encourages residents who find themselves in hardship to contact them on 0344 800 8020.



It was recently revealed in a report from ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and the Fuel Poverty Coalition that "New data projections reveal that the fuel poverty crisis gripping the country is **set to become even more severe than others."**

The report illustrated the following:

- Around a third of households in market town Kings Lynn and rural West Norfolk will be in fuel poverty (32.8%)*
- With the increase in energy bills coming into effect on 1 April 2022, over 6.3m households (27% of homes in England) will wake up in fuel poverty that morning.*

*(Reminder: Five streets where nearly everyone is in fuel poverty – End Fuel Poverty Coalition).

How we can help

Here at Community Action Norfolk, we are here to help you. We recently published some support and advice for the upcoming energy price rise in an article here. We are **Norfolk Community Foundation** are providing grants and resources for your time, village hall or community centre. We regularly receive advice and resources from ACRE which can be applied to your village hall or community centre. These include regular discussions and communications mean that we can support any query you might have.

If you have any concerns or queries, please get in touch via email at office@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk

ACRE and the End Fuel Poverty Coalition have published resources and support with the rise in energy costs. You can see their page for advice and tips. They have also other national briefings such as the Rural Services Network and the CPRE.

The EFPC have also created a dating people to heart their MP to call for action on the energy price increase. Sending direct emails or posts on social media are an effective way of letting your MP know your concerns. We recommend making your message personalised – adding it aside from the other communications that they may receive that have been copied and pasted.

Christians Against Poverty's (CAP) Lynn Debt Centre has released new stats to highlight how loneliness and debt is affecting many people in the town.

CAP Lynn Debt Centre has so far supported over 154 local people in their journey out of debt and many had previously suffered with loneliness and mental health issues.

CAP's latest data shows two in five of our clients, before coming to CAP, would go for over a week without having a meaningful conversation with anyone and before seeking free debt help, 40% felt ashamed of their situation. Where we they previously felt they had nowhere to turn and didn't think anyone could help them.

Emily Hart, Debt Centre Manager, says, "Right now we're meeting people on a daily basis who are feeling isolated, scared and forgotten as they struggle alone with their debts. These stats show that for many, debt and loneliness go hand in hand, affecting mental health and how it can lead to them feeling lonely and shut of from the outside world."

The cost of living crisis is affecting all of us. But for people on the lowest incomes, it means so much more. It includes:

- Skipping meals so that you can feed your children
- Cutting back on toiletries so that you can afford to get the bus to a job interview
- Turning off essential appliances so that you can afford internet for your kids to do their homework.

This isn't right. We believe in a future where everyone can afford the essentials, and are working alongside the food banks in our network to campaign for real change.

King's Lynn Foodbank is open 12:00-14:00 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday.

URGENTLY NEEDED ITEMS

- SOUP
- TINNED RICE PUDDING OR CUSTARD
- DEODORANT
- SPREADS
- BISCUITS, CHOCOLATE BARS, CRISPS, GRANOLA BARS, FLAPJACK, LUNCH BISCUITS
- PACKET MEALS
- SAUCES - KETCHUP, BBQ, MAYONNAISE
- STRONG CARRIER BAGS (DO WE PEOPLE CAN TAKE THE FOOD HOME?)

From help with paperwork to reducing isolation – west Norfolk's warm welcome has given people hope and the chance of a fresh start.

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Celebrate 23rd July 2022

Celebrate King's Lynn is happening on Saturday 23rd July 2022
If you are interested in being involved please email Oliviakingslynn@gmail.com

You can also find out more at our:
Celebrate: Open Meetings
Thursday 12th May and Tuesday 24th May from 5pm -6.30pm
St Johns Church in the Walks

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christian aid

SING FOR ZIMBABWE
Saturday 18th June 12.00 until 18.00
Hunstanton Methodist Church

Come and meet Zimbabwean friends and learn more about the country during an afternoon of music, food and fellowship

There will be fun and activities for children

Everyone is welcome; please bring a friend and a contribution of food

We will be collecting for Christian Aid's work in Zimbabwe
The service at 10.30 am on Sunday 19th June will be linked to the event

Contact Rosie Rayner for more information: 07963 181573

Volunteer Market Place Event

If you are a West Norfolk Voluntary Community or Social Enterprise organisation that works with volunteers (or a VCSE organisation running projects with volunteers specifically in West Norfolk), this event may be of interest.

Community Action Norfolk (CAN) are organising a free West Norfolk Volunteer Recruitment Marketplace Event with the support of BCKLWN to help you showcase your volunteering opportunities in West Norfolk and hopefully attract/recruit more volunteers.

VOLUNTEER MARKETPLACE EVENT
Thursday 14th July 2022
between 2pm and 6pm
at Lynnsport, King's Lynn – in the 'dance floor' area.

There will be space for 30 small tables where VCSE organisations (and some public sector partners) can set up a 'Market Stall' with information about their organisation and more specifically the volunteering opportunities you have available in West Norfolk. It may be useful to have some leaflets for members of the public to take away with them as they wander round – the idea is for people to be able to chat and ask questions about the volunteering roles too.

Please contact Jackie Cushing (Locality Manager West for CAN) by email at jackie.cushing@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk **to book a table.**

West Norfolk Carers and Friends

West Norfolk Carers
Supporting Carers across Norfolk

Are you looking after someone who has a memory problem, or has dementia. Would you like more information and advice about support that is available? Come join us for a cuppa and a chat. A warm welcome awaits you, along with varied activities, speakers and therapies at Methodist Church Rooms, County Court Road, King's Lynn PE30 5EJ on the first Friday of the month 13:00 – 15:00. Or join us at
Hunstanton Community Centre, Avenue Road, Hunstanton PE36 5EW on the first Monday of the month 10:30 – 12:30. For more details contact West Norfolk Carers on 01553 768155.

TRAINING

Upcoming FREE training for voluntary organisations

These are the upcoming online FREE training sessions CAN are organising/facilitating for the voluntary and community sector in May/June/July 2022 . Click here for posters which contain more detail regarding the sessions.

- Thursday 9th June (10:00 to 12:00) **Introduction to Safeguarding Adults for Norfolk VCSEs** delivered by CAN. Part of Empowering Communities Partnership training offer booking via Tasha.Higgins@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk
- Wednesday 22nd June (10:00 to 12:30) **Cyber Security for Norfolk VCSEs** delivered by CAN. Part of Empowering Communities Partnership training offer booking via Tasha.Higgins@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk
- Thursday 23rd June (10:00 to 12:00) **Introduction to Safeguarding Adults for West Norfolk Village Halls & Community Buildings** delivered by CAN. West Norfolk only training supported by The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk booking via jackie.cushing@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk
- Thursday 7th July (11:00 to 12:00) **Alcohol Awareness training for West Norfolk VCSEs** delivered by Change Grow Live (CGL). West Norfolk only training supported by The Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk booking via jackie.cushing@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk
- Wednesday 13th July (1.30pm to 4pm) **A Foundation in Funding for Norfolk VCSEs** delivered by CAN. Part of Empowering Communities Partnership training offer booking via Tasha.Higgins@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk
- Thursday 21st July (1pm to 2pm) **How to Make Your Charity Premises Green, Accessible & Energy Efficient** delivered by The Ethical Property Foundation. Part of Empowering Communities Partnership training offer booking via Tasha.Higgins@communityactionnorfolk.org.uk

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LET'S TALK...

I would love to hear from you to discuss any of the following things:

- How you are getting involved in your local community, and any good news stories about the difference this is making
- Events you are running, which welcome the local community
- If you would like me to visit your church, church meeting or group
- Anything you would find useful in future editions of this letter
- Just to say hello!

Andrew Frere-Smith
t: 07949 964932
e: andrew.frere-smith@dioceseofnorwich.org

Imagine Norfolk Together is a partnership between the Diocese of Norwich and the Church Urban Fund. We support local churches creating stronger communities through social action.

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