

The Graih Gazette

Voices for Peace and Justice

Edition 7

November 2020

Numbers to ponder

437. Bed spaces provided by the Night Shelter to the end of September 2020, spread over 62 different guests.

0. The number of nights our night shelter has been closed since opening in late January 2019.

0. The amount of statutory funding that Graih currently receives.

Source: Graih

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Editorial

Warm greetings from Graih!

With the freedom from lockdown here on the island it has been a blessing to be able to open up our drop-in again. It’s been a busy summer and early autumn so I’m happy to be able to get this out before the festive season starts up! There’s a fuller update on our work below.

As the year draws to its end it remains unclear what the longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic will be. It has been an extraordinary year of uncertainty and fear and vulnerability and much remains unclear about the future. The Covid crisis joins with other, deeper crises such as climate change and makes the world a difficult place for many.

In some ways these realities now confronting us all are similar to the problems that have always confronted our guests. They often struggle with much fear and anxiety and their lives feel vulnerable and frail. They often do not know what the next day will bring. One of the comments made to me during lockdown was from a guest remarking that now everyone else was experiencing what was ‘normal’ for him.

continued below

It seems important that we do not go back to what was 'normal'. The scandal of homelessness and people sleeping on the streets was robustly faced during lockdown in the UK. The benefits to our groaning climate were clear for all to see and feel and hear. Normality cannot be continued poverty, marginalisation, oppression and ecological devastation; this 'normality' has contributed to the crises we face. What lies before us must be something better, something new.

Perhaps the best response to so much fear and uncertainty is, paradoxically, found around our drop-in table. We have never pretended to do great things at Graih. We have simply tried to do what we can with great love (as Mother Teresa said). We're not experts. We can't fix people. What we can do, and what we continue to do, is provide a place of warmth and welcome and kindness. I never cease to be amazed at the transformations that such a peaceful, gentle response to chaos can bring.

Thank you for your continued interest and support through these difficult times. As the year closes and we remember the small but extraordinary story of a poor boy born into a vulnerable and marginalised family, a story that continues to transform our lives and our world today, may you know peace. Whatever the coming days hold we will meet them with love, with kindness, with gentleness and with a hope that does not fade.

May you and yours be blessed.
Grace and peace, Michael

Quotes

"Easily accessible services where staff are accommodating and friendly and treat you as an individual e.g. Graih."

"Flexible accessible services. Friendly, supportive staff who listen."

"People being nice & helpful."

"People understand how bad social anxiety is and how it stops you doing everything."

Quotes from our 'Homeless Health Needs Audit' in 2015, responding to the question 'What works well?'

Graih – general update

Along with the rest of the island we have been enjoying the freedom from Covid-19 restrictions that have become part of life in the UK and beyond. We are very blessed to be here and to be able to open as freely as we can.

Our night shelter stayed open throughout the lockdown here, offering emergency accommodation every night to adults in need. We are incredibly grateful for our staff – both our regular and bank staff – who kept us open and patiently wore PPE throughout the period. We had a number of individuals needing us and we were glad to be there.

The shelter continues to be well used. We welcomed two new staff members, Arthur and Paul, on to the team in late summer and said goodbye to Paul (so many Pauls!) and Jamie, with much gratitude for their time and service with us. The consistency of the shelter, being open through the night every night, continues to be crucial for the very vulnerable and chaotic people that we serve. As we stood at the end of September we had provided 437 bed spaces to 62 different individuals this year (2019 total: 494 to 59 individuals).

The drop-in during the day and in the evening has now resumed, opening when schools went back in the early summer. What the lockdown made clear was not just the practical element to the drop-in (the food, the shower, the hot drinks...) but the essential social aspect. Many of our guests suffered from greater isolation and loneliness through the lockdown and have welcomed a return around the table at the drop-in. The safe social space that we provide is an important element in our unconditional welcome of those who are often on the margins.

The summer and early autumn was very busy both at the shelter and the drop-in. We have had a lot of guests struggling with various forms of mental ill health. This is both deeply distressing for the individuals concerned but also presents our staff and volunteers with daily challenges in how best to welcome and serve our guests. Mental ill health continues to be one of the biggest problems we face and we work closely with statutory professionals as we try and support people and keep them safe.

Outside of the drop-in our community visiting continues, in a variety of settings around the island! We are out and about in people's accommodation, in care homes, the hospital, prison, or just meeting with people in the community. This simple, relational work allows us to help people find and maintain stability and offers a listening ear and a kind presence to people whose lives often have little of either. Our supported accommodation, run in partnership with the Department of Infrastructure, continues to provide peace and stability.

On wider horizons there have been two developments of note.

First, the Landlord Registration Bill continues its way through a consultation process with Tynwald. This is an important piece of legislation that will hopefully go some way to protecting vulnerable tenants and allow appropriate regulation of what remains a rather murky private sector. Please continue to urge your MHKs to support the Bill.

Second, in the early autumn the government released a request for two PINs (Prior Interest Notices) for projects close to our hearts. This is the first step in a potential tender process as the government seeks interest in running these projects. One is a thirty-bed night

shelter and daily drop-in. One is a twenty-bed supported accommodation unit. It would be an understatement to say that we're excited about these projects! For the first time in our history it appears that the government may be about to give significant attention and resources to some of the most vulnerable in our community through these projects. We are hugely supportive of them happening.

We had several discussions about these projects within Graih. It became clear to us that while we desperately want to see these projects come to fruition Graih simply does not have the capacity to run them ourselves. To that end we've made clear to the government and to other third sector partners that we're very happy to share our data and experience with those wishing to pursue the projects but we do not have the organisational capacity required for them ourselves. Graih remains a tiny charity and our governing committee is mostly comprised of volunteers with busy lives. We just don't have the institutional resources needed to make these projects the success that they must be.

It is currently unclear when or how these important projects will be opened. We very much hope it is sooner rather than later! In the meantime we will continue to do our best to serve those who are homeless and in insecure accommodation.

We are less than twelve months away from a general election. We would urge you to make homelessness, whether through these two proposed projects or important legislation, a priority for your political representatives and candidates. Please talk to them about it, raise awareness of the ongoing need for lasting solutions, and encourage them to support this work.

We are deeply grateful to all of you who continue to volunteer, support, donate goods and money, and pray for us as we work. We could not continue to serve our guests without this support. Thank you.

Michael Manning



Testimony

We received this story into the *Gazette*. The person concerned wished it to be shared anonymously and we thank them for their courage and honesty in sharing part of their story.

Hello. Well, I guess my addiction became as a teenager, not blaming anyone but myself. We used to hang out and drink LCL pills. Every Friday night after work my boss would leave them somewhere after school. I remember them still strong lager, in a green tin, we used to go to the park and drink them. I was never lazy, always went to college or had a job held down.

I met my daughter's father and started to smoke copious amounts of cannabis skunk. This was lethal. I had no confidence to take my daughter to a school. I would sit in the house PARANOIA zoomed in my brain it was a terrible time. I had a few breakdowns and ended up in psychiatric hospitals. Like I said, it was no fault than my own!

So as I grew older and had my child I decided to let my parents adopt. I was NOT WELL AT ALL. This was a very hard thing to decide and to do! Now, if myself and then partner brought our child up I REALLY DO NOT THINK SHE WOULD BE WHERE SHE IS NOW! SHE HAS FLOURISHED. A BEAUTIFUL SOUL IN THE HEALTH SECTOR, SHE IS ALSO A GREAT ARTIST TOO! I am so GRATEFUL for my PARENTS and siblings for looking after her. She wanted for nothing. Very privileged to have lovely grandparents, aunts and uncles looking after her!

Looking back I wish I could have done a lot more for my baby. I was selfish, I admit. Booze and drugs are vile. They ruin people's lives and families! I lost a relative to drink (young person). I get into RAGES and deep depression! Why oh why did I not concentrate at school and go to uni! I always wanted to do archaeology. I was fascinated by that. I wanted to be everything high up. Never materialised though! Nowadays I look after an elderly family member who has lost her husband and daughter. She is a beautiful soul.

So the MORAL OF THE STORY is to try not to drink too much of the deadly sinner ETHANOL (ALCOHOL). If you're going to do drugs please don't and think of your precious loved ones as they love you and don't want to be carting you off in a coffin! Yes it's blimming HARD but believe in yourself YOU CAN DO IT. It will be tough at first. Go running, cycling etc. Get those natural endorphins working. Go for a walk, go paddling in the sea. NATURE IS BEAUTIFUL, GO STARGAZING! YOU CAN BEAT THESE DRUGS AND DRINK! YOU CAN AND WILL DO IT!

Life will be so much happier. Yes, it's easier said than done! But you, yes you, whoever is going through a rough time, don't stop believing in yourself. HAVE FAITH. If you fall behind that is okay. Baby steps at first. Please, do not give up. Time is precious and short.

For now the universe is so VAST. Keep your head up and don't give up I beg you. Whoever you may be, rich, poor, whatever, YOU MATTER. So, at the end of this long and painful journey you will get through this! Believe in yourself. KEEP YOUR HEAD UP. KEEP YOUR HEART STRONG.

Namaste.

Anonymous



Graih's Committee

We've had a few changes on the committee that runs Graih. At our AGM in September we said goodbye to Fred Newton, who had served as our Treasurer since Graih was formed as a charity in 2008.

We are incredibly grateful to Fred for his generous service and stewardship of our wildly fluctuating finances over so many years! Fred brought a gentleness and peace to our financial discussions and has been a constant source of encouragement, prayer and wisdom over the years. Roles such as the Treasurer are often the hidden ones, the crucial behind-the-scenes work that enables everything else to happen. Fred's face and name will not be widely known to our guests but in reality his service has been essential to keeping us open and functioning and welcoming people. We pray every good blessing upon Fred and his family as they go into a fresh season.

As we say goodbye to Fred we say hello to Duncan French! Duncan has very kindly agreed to take over as Treasurer and has been involved as a volunteer for a while. We're very grateful for Duncan's willingness to take on this service and excited to see what the next season holds for us.

We also welcomed Alex Gibson on to the committee over the summer. Alex brings a wealth of HR expertise and we're so pleased and grateful to have his wisdom in our midst.

If that's left you feeling somewhat confused about who 'the committee' now is here's a full list! The committee currently comprises Tom Bateman (Chair), Jayne Hanley (Vice-Chair), Andy Hewins (Secretary), Duncan French (Treasurer), Alex Gibson, Erica Irwin and Michael Manning. These good people volunteer their time and wisdom to keep Graih running and make all the relevant decisions about the role and direction of the charity.

Events (let us know more!)

Truman Falls and friends are putting on another fantastic Christmas concert, 'Lesh Shee As Graih', with proceeds coming to us. Friday 11th December, doors opening at 7pm at St Ninian's church building. Tickets are available from jeffjepson.co.uk. It's always a great night!

Listings (let us know more!)

Stauros (Christian addiction agency): Gordon Buist, 453731

Quing (wellbeing and recovery): Graham Clucas, 246713

Motiv8 (addiction counselling): 627656

Salvation Army: 627742

Office of Fair Trading: 686510

Broadway Baptist Church: 614932

Housing Matters: 675507

ASAT (Adult Services Access Team): 686179

Health Visitor for Vulnerable Adults: 665941

Environmental Health: 685894

The One World Centre: 800464

Did you know...?

...that the world military spending in 2019 was \$1,917 billion (\$1.9 trillion). Think about this number when anyone next suggests that there isn't enough money for the ecological crisis we face, or poverty, or ending homelessness, or providing education and healthcare to everyone... (Source: New Internationalist)

...that we are in the process of selling our minibus? Our minibus has been a very useful, if somewhat rusty and battered, asset to us over the past years, ideal for helping guests move

into accommodation and also to lend to others needing to use it. In recent times it's become a bit too expensive to maintain and when someone expressed an interest in taking it off our hands we decided it was the end of a season. If you happen to know of any alternative vehicles that we might be able to gain use of please get in touch!

Memories

Rob C. was a big man. When he first came to us at the drop-in some years ago he arrived with a fearsome reputation, yet we never found that he was any trouble at all.

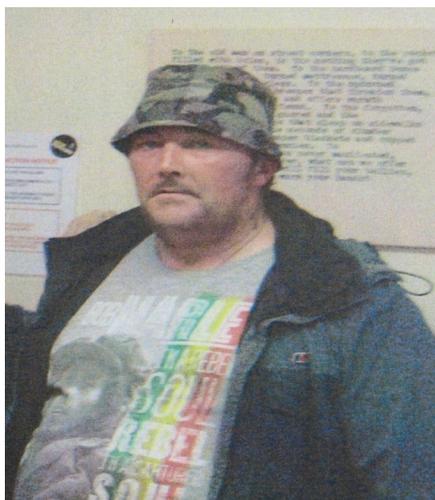
Rob and his family had known tragedy and difficulty in struggling with substances and the toll of addiction. Despite his many struggles Rob was often smiling. I remember him sat around the drop-in table playing with my eldest son, who was just a baby at the time and was thrilled by the faces that Rob was pulling. There weren't many teeth in the smile and many would have found it frightening but both Aedan, my son, and Rob were chortling away!

We saw a gentle side to Rob. He was easily led, which meant that he constantly found himself in difficulties. It also meant that if you caught him at the right time great things could happen. I remember spending hours with him in my kitchen one autumn making marrow chutney from our allotment. He got involved in a number of support groups and got baptised with a local church. He was always seeking for some healing and some freedom from what bound him.

His family meant a lot to Rob and he returned to the north of the island to be closer to them. He flourished for a time in Waverley House, the support accommodation run by our good friends Kenny and Carol while they were on the island. He made a number of new friends in Ramsey but also found it hard to escape his past. When Waverley House closed he stayed in Ramsey, moving into a private flat.

Rob died in June after a short illness. He was in his forties.

Michael Manning



What we need

Volunteers (please speak to Erica Irwin on the details below)

Kitchen roll

Bin bags

Joggers (S, M, L)

Washing up liquid

Bleach

Coffee

Sugar

Money remains one of the best and most flexible donations to make and we remain dependant on charitable donations, both regular or one-off. Details are below.

Graih's Bank Details:

Lloyds

Account number: 00509505

Sort code: 301280 *Please contact us with your details if you require a receipt*

Thank you so much for your generosity. It allows us to continue to welcome our guests well.

Contact

Editor: Michael Manning, michael@graih.org.im, 324767. Any ideas, letters, questions, news, listings, pictures or submissions for the *Gazette*, send them here!

Graih's Manager: Erica Irwin, erica@graih.org.im, 224807.

Drop-in day-time opening hours:

Monday to Friday: 10.00 to 14.00
Sunday: 12.30 to 14.00

Night Shelter:

Every night from 21.00 to 07.30
Entry is through the drop-in or ring the office mobile below. Entry after hours is at staff discretion.

Office mobile during opening hours only: 304381.

Much more information about Graih can be found on our website: www.graih.org.im

Graih's address: The Alpha Centre, Broadway, Douglas IM2 4EN

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