



CHAT NEWS

CHAT believes that everyone is entitled to have enough food to eat and decent, secure and affordable housing – somewhere to call home.

A Less Stressful Christmas

Alan, 65, visited us last December in a desperate situation. He had missed a Universal Credit (UC) appointment due to health issues, which meant he was sanctioned, leaving him without money for any food or energy.

Seeing that the sanction was unjust, we began an appeal while also helping him apply for an emergency loan from the DWP which is available in emergencies. This would not be immediately available so we provided an energy voucher and

food to support him through the holidays. In January, the DWP lifted the sanction, and Alan was receiving his UC again. We noted he was shortly reaching pensionable age, so we made sure to stay in touch long enough to help him transition to new benefits. We were able to support Alan with his immediate needs, provide relief in the short term, and help him secure a long-term solution, which has allowed him to live independently. By the time we last saw him, he was in high spirits, and we're confident that this year's Christmas will be much less stressful for him.

A Bumper Harvest!



Thank you for all your harvest donations which have helped stock our newly refurbished pantry. During October we helped with over 700 food packs through the

foodbank and affordable food pantry. Every year the donations just get bigger, so a special thanks to our volunteers who sorted and unpacked them all!

Bringing Hope throughout Mid Devon

A New Way for Food



On 25th September, we were joined by local agencies and councillors to officially launch our affordable food pantry, which is the latest way we are responding to the growing need for food security in our area.

Unlike the foodbank (which we continue to run for those who are in a crisis), the pantry operates on a membership basis, allowing those in need to choose the food items that are most useful to them. By reducing food waste

Before using the pantry I had £20 a week for food and the cupboards would have nothing in them by Friday. Now when I open the cupboard I have a choice of what to eat” Jane

and helping families stretch their budgets, the CHAT Pantry is making a tangible difference in the lives of many, particularly as we approach the cold winter months. The financial contribution made is used to purchase fresh produce and members of the pantry

particularly appreciate the ability to choose items that suit their family and lifestyle.

Cllr Neal Davey, Mayor of Tiverton shared “The new food pantry is an excellent innovation by CHAT and I was very impressed by the layout, presentation and quality of the pantry during my recent visit. We live during a period that is financially challenging for many people and families and I congratulate the CHAT team for their innovative approach to providing a longer term solution to food insecurity.”



Bringing Hope throughout Mid Devon

Bringing Hope to Mid Devon this Christmas



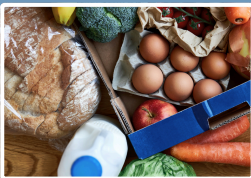
Help us to Bring Hope This Christmas

For many of our clients, this time of year is marked by anxiety and distress. Imagine the struggle of not knowing how to buy gifts for your children or grandchildren, being unable to host family and friends, or worrying about affording heat for your home. This is the reality faced by many of our clients as Christmas approaches.

We believe that everyone deserves a safe, warm, and dry place to live, along with enough food to celebrate Christmas. We need your help to make this possible.

Give the Gift of Change

When someone is struggling with housing or debt, and feel they have nowhere to turn, we're here to provide the support they need, empowering them to change their life. Your gift of £28 will enable us to continue offering this vital support, bringing hope to those who need it most this Christmas and ensuring our clients enter 2025 with renewed hope.



Give the Gift of Food

In the last six months we have seen over 300 families use our foodbank and affordable food pantry. Keeping our shelves stocked this winter is crucial to ensure those in need in our community have enough food.



Give the Gift of Warmth

The CHAT office offers a warm, safe space for all. Last winter we also distributed £3,800 in emergency fuel vouchers to ensure people could heat their homes during the coldest months.



Give the Gift of Shelter

In the past year, we have delivered 5,750 advice sessions, supporting individuals facing homelessness or overwhelming debt. Of these, 150 were for people rough sleeping or sofa surfing.

For more information about how you can be a part of bringing hope this Christmas or to make a gift of £28 visit www.chatmid.org/christmas-24 or email holly.sutton@chatmid.co.uk

Bringing Hope throughout Mid Devon



Could you host a Tree of Hope in your workplace, church, or community group this Christmas?

As a time of reflection and celebration, it can also bring worry for many families. CHAT provides essential support six days a week in Mid Devon and needs your help to continue into 2025.

By signing up, you'll receive gift tags for your tree, allowing clients and visitors to choose tags for donations (financial or item-based).

This initiative aims to support those in need during the festive season and beyond.

For a Tree of Hope pack or more information, contact Holly at holly.sutton@chatmid.co.uk.



CHRISTMAS AUCTION
Our annual Christmas Auction launched on Saturday 16th November and runs for 3 weeks. We have some extra special lots this year including a day at Exeter Races and Sunday lunch at Tiverton Golf Club. Why not get your hands on a great Christmas gift, whilst raising funds for CHAT at the same time?
www.jumblebee.co.uk/2024chatchristmasauction



Are you shopping online this festive period?

You can raise free donations for us, when you shop 6,000+ stores online using Give as you Live Online!

It is really easy to sign up, just visit the following link: bit.ly/giveasyoulivechat

Fuel Costs

We know the recent changes to the winter fuel allowance may leave some pensioners facing difficult choices.

In past years, we've been grateful to receive donations from those who didn't need the allowance, enabling us to help those in need. So far this year, we've distributed over £6,000 in emergency energy vouchers, and we expect demand as the weather gets colder to be high. If you are able, please consider making a donation so we can continue to help in this way and if you know anyone struggling to keep their home warm, please encourage them to come and talk to us.



Time on Your Hands?

Do you have some time to spare? Would you like to use that time to make a lasting difference in peoples lives? If so, Helen would love to hear from you! There are lots of ways you can get involved at CHAT and no matter what role you do, or how much time you have to give, your support will help make a real difference.

Last month volunteers contributed 837 hours by collecting food, admin support, reception hosting, debt and money advice, ad-hoc sorting and delivering, client support and many other ways.

We work in Tiverton, Crediton, Cullompton and Uffculme, and all locations have volunteering opportunities. Whether you're looking for a new challenge, trying something new, or taking a year out, we welcome volunteers of all ages and stages!

Visit www.chatmid.org/volunteering for details of how to apply and detailed role descriptions.

30th Anniversary

Next year is our 30th anniversary and this is a poignant reminder that when Sally Chapman founded CHAT in 1995, the hope was our services wouldn't be needed by 2025.



Sally Chapman in the early days of CHAT

Instead, demand has only increased, highlighting the continuing need to support those facing homelessness and financial hardship in Mid Devon.

We'll start our anniversary year with a Thanksgiving Service at St. Paul's Church, Tiverton, EX16 5HU, on Sunday, January 26th, at 6:30pm.

Please join us there and watch out for other events throughout the year to help us mark this milestone.

Bringing Hope throughout Mid Devon

Farewell

Mike and Sarah have become familiar faces to many of us over the past four years, as they have worked with the team at CHAT to coordinate the foodbank. At the end of October they decided the time was right to move on to new things but before they went we asked them for a few thoughts about their time with us.



We first got involved with CHAT because we admired their work and had supported them previously. During the 2020 lockdown, we volunteered, and in early 2021, Ali asked us to manage the food bank for a few months. We never expected to still be here nearly four years later, but it's been a rewarding experience.

Helping families through the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis has been one of the most meaningful parts of this work. It's especially satisfying to see clients reach a point where they no longer need support and can plan for their future on their own.

Some moments have really stood out. Meeting Sophie, Duchess of Edinburgh, in September 2023 was a highlight, her understanding of the issues was impressive. Another big moment was reopening our doors in 2021 after the pandemic, finally getting to meet clients face-to-face again and hear their stories.

There have been challenges, especially with the rising demand for food. Keeping up with this demand has been hard, but we've managed thanks to the kindness of the local community, regular supermarket trips, and our membership with Fareshare, which helps reduce food waste. Working with CHAT has opened our eyes to how many local people are struggling, and we've loved being part of such a committed team of staff and volunteers who always go the extra mile.

For new team members, we'd say: be open to ideas, ready to listen, and willing to contribute your thoughts. CHAT values each volunteer's contributions and commitment.

Looking ahead, we hope one day foodbanks won't be needed. Until then, we're glad to know CHAT is here to help families move towards independence, with support available when they need it most.

Thank you Mike and Sarah!

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Homeless Link
Member