

Homelessness can happen to anyone.

Reader submission by Susan R & Tony C

It's a common phrase which we've all heard from time to time and generally simply pass over. But in fact it's a true statement and the consequences can be devastating. Having had two posts with tied accommodation, both of which went dreadfully wrong for different reasons we found ourselves with no home and very few possessions. We approached the local council and entered a system which has been denuded of funding by central government to such an extent that the council are forced to protect resources to the extent that they actively declare some of the most needy people in society to be Intentionally Homeless. A phrase which is in it's simplest form an absolute nonsense. Who in their right mind would make themselves homeless intentionally? After six months in a Homeless Hostel which was little better than a prison camp the dreaded letter arrived with instructions to appeal or basically find somewhere else to live. Realistically if we had anywhere else to live we wouldn't have been there in the first place. Although our appeal was eventually upheld and we were offered a flat which exceeded our expectations many who are less able than ourselves would have simply be forced to live on the streets. In our previous post we were working 160 hours per week between us with half of this unpaid. We are certainly not scroungers, a phrase used by over paid privileged politicians.

This is the point at which we received the help we needed from the most unexpected source. We were referred to The Salvation Army, an organisation we had no experience of and only a vague idea of the services they have to offer. After only 11 days under their care they had referred us to a hostel which was the Ritz compared with the council version and through their contacts at the council expressed the offer of the flat which is now our home. We are eternally grateful to the staff at The Salvation Army and will be dedicating our free time to repay them in any way we can. Without their help we were realistically looking at spending the autumn and winter in a tent in scrub-land near a river which floods almost every year. It is no exaggeration to say that they probably saved our lives.

We hope that this situation never occurs in the lives of anybody we know. But if by whatever misfortune it should, our advice is to make contact with The Salvation Army or one of the other numerous homeless charities as soon as humanly possible. Unfortunately you don't get the help you need without asking and far too many people simply fall through the system.

York Salvation Army homelessness hub - 63 Lawrence Street, York YO10 3BU.