

## Short case study – December 2021

In December we have been particularly worried about a very vulnerable young couple, Sarah and Martin\*, who came to us, having both fled violent situations in their respective hometowns, which were outside of London. They both had very complex health and social care problems and were sleeping in a tent in central London. The cold weather was exacerbating Sarah's pre-existing respiratory problems and causing trips to A&E.

The couple had tried to access help before they came to us but were told to return to their hometowns and approach their local authorities there. However, we were able to advise them that they should not return if they were in danger where they had come from, and that homelessness policies allowed them to approach any local authority for help if this was the case. We helped them compile evidence of their health problems to show that they were vulnerable and assisted them to make a homeless application to the local council.

The local council tried very hard to contact the couple on the phone, but Sarah and Martin were having problems keeping their phones constantly charged whilst on the street, so the council were not able to make contact. This is partly a complication from Covid and the necessity of home working, as before the pandemic the couple would have been able to simply go to the homeless persons unit to be assessed. We then contacted the outreach team in the area and explained the situation and asked if they could assist Sarah and Martin to make contact with the council. The outreach team found them and placed them in emergency cold weather accommodation. The outreach team can now more easily work with the couple to secure longer term accommodation.

\*Not their real names