

NEWS

Brighton artist's paintings raise thousands for city's young homeless

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An exhibition and online auction of paintings by a self-taught Brighton artist has raised a staggering £23,000 to support homeless young people in the city.

Local artist Tony Mills, who only picked up a paintbrush in adulthood for the first time ten years ago, created a stunning series of paintings, each featuring a homeless person in different scenes of Brighton, as part of his Eight Miles Away project.

Due to lockdown restrictions, the original exhibition which was due to be displayed at the top of the British Airways i360 Viewing Tower, was instead put on show in its ground floor beachfront and west-facing windows. Visitors

were able to scan a QR code with their smartphone which linked to a video about the project.

All the paintings were sold by online silent auction, with the proceeds being donated to directly help homeless young people living at Sanctuary Supported Living's Brighton Hove Foyer.

Located in the centre of Brighton, Sanctuary Supported Living's Brighton and Hove Foyer provides supported housing for 50 homeless young people aged 16 to 25. The residents are encouraged to take control of their lives and build on their skills and strengths.

Support is completely tailored to each young person's needs, with the ultimate aim of helping

them to move out and live independently within two years.

The artist's project attracted attention from all over the world and at the conclusion of the auction last weekend, the total had reached £23,000. The total now looks set to continue to grow with further sales of prints and donations from companies including John Lewis.

Jan Weston-Shaw, Deputy Local Service Manager at Brighton and Hove Foyer, said: "What Tony has done – and is doing – is incredible. Some of the young people who come through our doors don't meet the criteria for council assistance, despite working so hard and in the past, we've sometimes felt as if we've let them down when it's time for them to move on. The money will initially support eight young people with whatever they need to live independently – whether that's a deposit and their first month's rent on a flat, or items to furnish their home. The Foyer team will continue to stay in touch with the recipients and provide ongoing support for a period of time should they need it.

Jan continued: "This money will make a huge impact – and help us to help those who usually fall through the cracks."

Artist Tony Mills said: "I'm absolutely delighted. I never knew, when I started painting that first picture, that this is where it would end up, but I'm hoping that it really will change people's lives. It's just amazing."

