Supported Housing Month

Case studies from across the Supporting People programme.

With so many Supporting People services now designed in partnership with service users and stakeholders, we are bringing you encouraging real life stories from our service users and their support providers.



Steven's story

Steven was found collapsed at his home where he'd been lying on the floor for two days. This frightened Steven so much that he decided he never wanted to drink alcohol again and he needed help. He'd been living in squalid conditions and had dozens of empty cider bottles lying around his living room. Steven began working with Swanswell to stop drinking, and was referred to Debbie, one of their support workers. A support plan was completed which helped Steven to stay away from friends who were also drinkers. Debbie also helped Steven to complete his Disability Living Allowance forms, organise a payment plan for his bills and speak with his housing association about his accommodation. Through Debbie's encouragement Steven was then able to enrol on a basic computer course, find work in a charity shop and even redecorate his flat. Steven's still away from drink and is extremely happy that, with Swanswell's support, he's turned his life around.

Mandy's story

Mandy had a long history of substance misuse resulting in imprisonment, periods of homelessness and low levels of self esteem. On release from prison, Mandy was referred to Swanswell and given the opportunity to turn her life around. A support plan was developed by Sam, her Supporting People worker, which helped Mandy to build self-confidence, motivating and guiding her to find a home, resolve financial issues and gain work.

So far Sam has helped Mandy to find full-time employment in the voluntary sector, join a service user group, obtain her own housing tenancy and learn to drive. She has become a Naloxone trainer and peer researcher, taken a 'Train the Trainer' course at university and participated in Swanswell's interview panel, also

Mandy is healthier and looking to the future. She's feeling well, doing well and is happy. Her improved skills and confidence mean her prospects look great and she's able to help others as well.

presenting to the Board of Trustees.

Fry Housing Trust Case Studies

Timely interventions – Barry's story

The floating support team have provided tenancy-related assistance to Barry since 23 October 2009. As a Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) high risk sex offender, with mental and physical health conditions,



Barry has complex needs. He has previously

lived in supported accommodation and was referred to the team to support his move into independence and start up his tenancy with Birmingham City Council. Barry presented to the team as a vulnerable adult with multiple support needs that included long term depression and diagnosed schizophrenia. Linking Barry to a support worker enabled him to make and maintain his move to independence. Whilst this in itself is a success, it has not all been an easy process.

Through regular contact, his support worker, Ian, noticed a change in Barry's general behaviour and escalating schizophrenic episodes. Ian was concerned that this could lead to increased risks for Barry and the community and so after running his concerns by his colleagues, he decided to encourage Barry to visit his social worker. Barry agreed to let Ian contact the mental health team and things began to rapidly fall into place. An emergency meeting was convened and Barry and Ian attended together. The mental health team reacted immediately to the needs being demonstrated by Barry and he saw a psychiatrist the next day. The police offender manager was also kept 'in the loop' regarding health and risk management issues to ensure that key safeguarding information was shared between partners.

The psychiatrist commissioned the home treatment team to support Barry with regular visits – Barry had confided that he was not taking his medication regularly, and had not been managing his insulin injection programme properly. As a result of this timely intervention, Barry is now much better both mentally and physically. His move to independent living is progressing in the right direction again and he is regarded as a low-risk service user, who can be sustained in the community. A fine example of what can be achieved with good teamwork from the mental health team and from his housing-related support provider.

Fry Housing Trust Case Studies

No pipe dream – Colin's story

Colin is 27 years old. He was employed as a water engineer before being given a custodial sentence. Colin was sorry that he had committed his offence and deeply regretted its impact on both himself and on his family. On release he was placed in probation approved premises and then referred to Fry's Newell House for supported accommodation. As might be expected from a person leaving prison, a crucial part of his support plan was to find employment or training so that he could get back into the 'world of work' and be a positive role model to his children.

Colin was particularly devastated at having lost what he considered his 'dream job'. He had the necessary qualifications and experience to work as a water engineer, but his confidence was in tatters and he felt he was letting his family down very badly. When working with Colin, staff could see the potential he had for success, as he was willing to try anything to get back into employment. They looked for ways to expand his skills and bring him back into the experience of working. Colin attended a cooking workshop as part of the Newell House life skills programme.

Colin's latent creative side quickly emerged as he started to make small chocolate cakes which other clients had the pleasure in sampling. His new found appreciation of cooking led Colin to attend an open day at Midland Heart. A programme 'Places of Change' is developing a bakery business linking social enterprise with housing support and offering training and skill development for service users. Colin was accepted as a volunteer to make cupcakes for the new business, which is under development and due to be launched in 2011.

Newell House also organises a weekly job club which helps clients find employment opportunities, update their CVs, practice interview techniques and communicate effectively over the telephone. Colin updated his CV through the job club, and as a result of the encouragement he received, Colin contacted companies within the water industry. Subsequently, he had a response from one of the companies and received an offer of employment.



Midland Heart Case Studies



Supported into reality – Jay's story

Jay had moved into our supported accommodation from a secure mental health unit in Stafford, where he had been receiving in-patient treatment for over two years. He is a 24 year old Asian male and his index offence had resulted in his isolation from his family and community for a significant period.

Jay was assessed for our medium-level supported accommodation and was offered a place in March 2010. Staff worked very closely with the secure unit, and assisted him with the transition back to Birmingham, where his family live. Very early on, Jay had expressed a desire to pursue a university course, and staff fully supported him with this, exploring culturally appropriate community resources with him.

Jay has been offered, and has accepted, a full-time degree course at Birmingham University and will commence a film and sound production course in September. He has settled in well at his supported accommodation and is engaged in community activities.

Bringing families together – Jane's story

Jane has been engaged with mental health services for most of her adult life. Due to the detrimental effect of recurring relapses, she was unable to raise her only child, who has been brought-up by a family member, although Jane has maintained regular contact. Jane has lived in our long-term supported accommodation for many years. Her son is now an adult, and he graduated from university last year. Jane expressed her desire for them to live together as a family, so her project worker supported her in finding and applying for two bedroomed accommodation. Jane was offered a suitable flat within a mile or so of the locality she has lived in for many years, and she has now moved in with her son. Her project worker is providing floating support during this transitional period. This is a milestone for both Jane and her son.

Her very severe and enduring mental health issues had blighted her life for many years, and Jane had not been able to, or felt ready to, realise this dream. With support, this has now come to fruition, and we all wish her every success.

From help to helpdesk – Ali's story

Ali is a refugee who entered the UK fleeing persecution in his native country. He was granted leave to remain and then discharged by National Asylum Support Service. Ali was supported to find suitable accommodation in Birmingham with relevant and adequate support to complete his diploma in ICT helpdesk support. During this interim period, Ali was supported into voluntary work, and has recently gained employment as an IT helpdesk technician with one of the leading companies in the West Midlands. Ali is now looking forward to an independent and socially fulfilling life in Birmingham.

Birmingham & Solihull Women's Aid Case Studies



A place of safety – Anita's story

Anita was referred to the outreach team by the practice nurse at her GP's surgery. She had recently moved into a new property having experienced five years of domestic violence. Her three year old daughter was subject to a child protection plan as a result of witnessing the abuse.

On her initial meeting with the BSWA worker, Anita was extremely tearful as she talked about some of the abuse she had suffered. She felt very isolated as she knew no one around her new house. Her low levels of self-confidence and self-esteem made it very hard for her to meet people and make new friends.

Anita was worried about the safety of her property. Although her former partner had no idea where she was, poor security of her doors and windows made her feel very unsafe at night. Anita also had money worries, having moved house with minimal furnishings and belongings. But Anita's main fear was that she would lose her daughter, as children's services were involved in her case and she felt that as a parent she didn't always cope as well as she should. Anita felt an overwhelming sense of guilt that she had failed within her relationship, was somehow responsible for her abuse and was now depriving her daughter of a 'proper family home'.

During the five months that Anita was supported by Outreach she received ongoing emotional assistance allowing her to offload and begin to come to terms with what had happened to her. Anita also received specific one-to-one sessions which allowed her to explore her experiences of domestic violence and see her abuse in a wider context. This in turn, helped to build Anita's confidence through shared reflection on her progress and on positive reinforcement of Anita's good qualities.

Staff accompanied Anita and her daughter to the local Children's Centre, where Anita was able to join a parents group, and meet other local women. Anita was supported at a case conference review where she felt able to raise her concerns and talk about the progress she was making. After five months, Anita says she has 'so much more confidence' and feels much happier about her life and her future. Anita has made three fantastic friends. She met two at the Children's Centre and one at the aerobics class she has started to attend. Anita also had greater confidence in being a mum thanks to the Children's Centre group and the fact that Children's Services were planning to remove the child protection plan.

Anita was put in touch with a number of charitable trusts to request additional furniture and equipment, and staff liaised with Home Check to increase the security of her property. Anita received almost £1,500 enabling her to decorate and furnish her home, and she now has a greater feeling of safety and security. Above all, Anita has come to realise that the abuse she experienced was not her fault and that she has shown tremendous courage in leaving and rebuilding her life.

Extra Care Charitable Trust Case Studies



Regaining independence – The Willis' story

Mr and Mrs Willis have been married for 39 full and active years – 17 of them together in their council house, which they bought a decade ago. Mrs Willis suffers from high blood pressure and is diabetic, and in 1987 was diagnosed with muscular

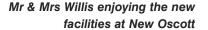
dystrophy. As her condition advanced she became wheelchair bound, and their home became a difficult place for her to navigate. It has many steps and stairs, and the doors are not wide enough for a motorised wheelchair to pass through.

On having a stroke himself, Mr Willis became unable to care for his wife, and although carers and their children visited on a daily basis, Mr Willis was unwilling to leave his wife on her own. As a result they both spent 90 percent of their lives in their own home. They lost contact with the majority of their friends and they became more and more isolated. The area where Mr and Mrs Willis lived was subject to a lot of teenage crime, and Mrs Willis was too frightened to venture out. Becoming housebound, her days were spent looking out of her patio window, or she would often spend almost the entire day in bed.

Mr and Mrs Willis moved into New Oscott on 16 April 2010. Mrs Willis was determined to improve her quality of life. She became a member of the gym and with the help of her instructor came up with a programme that would help increase her mobility. She has attended the gym almost every day, and over the past few months her condition has improved dramatically.

She can now fold her arms and hold her head high without feeling any discomfort, and she no longer needs a hoist to get in and out of bed. She can hold her own cup, and needs no assistance with eating or drinking, and is determined to be able to stand again unaided.

For the first time in years she is able to sleep right through the night. Mrs Willis takes great pride in her appearance and is a regular visitor to the New Oscott hairdressers, having a manicure and pedicure every week.







New Oscott Retirement Village has transformed the lives of many of its new residents

She considers her carers her adopted sons and daughters and has a framed picture of her with all her carers on her table.

Both Mr and Mrs Willis visit the New Oscott Café bar in the day – she has her own china cup in the café – and her own glass behind the New Oscott bar. They play dominoes and cards with the numerous friends they have made within the Village, and attend all the bingo and quiz nights.

Mr Willis now feels confident enough to participate in his own favourite pastimes. He is a keen fisherman and goes for a day's fishing with other residents of the village in the knowledge that his wife is happy and safe. Mrs Willis will sometimes visit the local garden centre to have a cup of tea and cake with her friends, something she says she "would never have thought possible just a few short months ago".

Moving into New Oscott has not only transformed Mrs Willis' life but also that of her husband, and her children who now no longer live with fears or worries for their mother's happiness and security.

Having your own space by DH

Two years ago I wasn't very happy because I was living in a shared flat, and didn't have much space to



live in. I wasn't very sociable and didn't have many friends. I now have my own flat with a nice shower. I can now keep all the things I like – my clocks and budgies. I couldn't do this before as I did not have enough personal space. People I trusted and

thought were my friends were taking advantage of me. I really do like having my own place it gives me a great sense of independence.

My support worker, along with other professionals, like my advocate and my occupational therapist, have helped me to achieve things that have improved the way I live, in a big way. I now do more activities and have increased independence in some areas of my life. I have an appointee who looks after my money so I don't get into debt. My support workers helped me to make that possible. I am now a stronger person and feel more relaxed, knowing that all my bills are paid, so I will not get into debt again.

I have made a lot of new friends where I live now. I feel happy with them. Sadly, last year my girlfriend died, but my new friends all supported me. They really helped me at this time and let me stay with them so I was not alone. I will always remember how kind and caring they were at this tough time in my life. My advocate helped me to speak at the funeral and found me counsellors to talk to. He also helped me organise lots of pictures showing good memories of my time with my girlfriend. The staff at Bramble helped me make a memorial garden that I now look after and keep looking nice.



I also completed a college course with Trident Reach and City College. I worked at home doing this, with all the staff around me. I completed a CV and worked on improving my life skills. It took me 10 months to complete the course; it was hard work but it was worth it when I got a City and Guilds certificate and best of all £100 to spend at Marks and Spencer. I have done lots of fun activities recently – like flying a flight simulator, crazy golf and clay pigeon shooting – and won awards for them as well. I really enjoy trying new things, even though I am now 59.

I have just got my birth certificate, and with the help of my support worker and the Salvation Army, I am hoping to find my brothers and sister. I hope that I can find them and get to know them. It would be really nice to see them again, as I haven't seen them since my Mom and Dad died a long time ago. I understand that it may take time to find them, but I hope to do this as soon as I can. It really would make me so happy to find them again.

Recovering from the problems of isolation by CB

I am currently getting support from Trident Reach staff.

My supporter has been working with me for just over 12 months.



I can be a very shy lady and very reluctant to open up about how I am feeling.

I used to live in Hodge Hill where I was very unhappy as I felt isolated from my family and this led me to begin drinking quite heavily. When I started drinking, I used to find myself in difficult situations and at times there were several incidents where, looking back, I did put myself at risk. I also tried to take my own life. It was then that I was introduced to my support worker. She listened to me and very slowly over time I began to open up to her and talk to her about how I was feeling.

During my one to one sessions with my support worker, I was able to tell her about how I was feeling isolated and she encouraged and supported me to go to the local neighbourhood office and she helped me to apply for a property closer to my family. I am now living in a council flat in Erdington where I am very happy. I am finding that I do not need to drink heavily and I even make the staff a cup of tea from time to time!

I think I can say that it was the support from my worker that helped me to move to a positive place. I work part time, but she helped me to maximise my income and I now receive tax credits and disability living allowance which has made a big difference. On a recent trip out, I found it much easier to mix with other staff members, which is also a big step forward for me.



Making life good for refugees by Mrs G

I am from Zimbabwe and I was granted refugee status in August 2009. I suffer from knee and back problems and this affects my movements. I have been supported by the Trident Reach refugee service.



I started to work with my refugee support worker who helped me to get a flat with Trident housing association in January 2010. My support worker has helped me to apply successfully for a social fund grant. A community care grant helped me to buy the most needed items like carpet, cooking utensils for my new flat and for transporting my things from the old house.

My refugee support worker visits me weekly. I now feel safe and secure in my new flat. When there was a misunderstanding with another organisation, my support worker worked with me to contact them and resolve the dispute. This was a great help to me. I am grateful to the Trident Reach refugee services because it has made a big difference to my life, making things so much better. The refugee support worker helped me find a health care work agency, where I am due to commence work soon and also a low cost driving school so that, after passing my test I can get to work despite my knee and back problems.

Generally, staff at Trident have been very helpful and, through their assistance, I have now managed to get my basic furniture needs met. They have worked with me to get all my repair requests attended to promptly and I am so pleased.

I am happy being with Trident Reach. They offer many programmes that help to keep customers active and sociable. They have money advice services and different kinds of workshops. I liked the learning event about computers and very soon I will be joining the group so that I can develop my skills. I have also applied to the university to study for my PhD.

The rewards of being a support worker

In January of this year, I was given the privilege to support a young man of 22, at the Aston project. On first contact he told me he had a three year old son who he had access to at weekends,



but he was hoping to secure his own place so that he would be able to look after him more often.

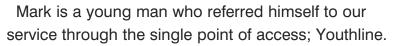
My first priority was to identify his support needs; this young man was interested in learning how to operate a fork lift truck. I supported him to access Pertemps and Four Star Employment where he was accepted on a work-based programme.

The young person is now out of the supported project and has taken a tenancy with Birmingham City Council. The flat needs some work but it does not faze him, he is very optimistic and has started to decorate it in his own taste.

He has progressed really well since January and has regular contact with his son. I am still working with this young person as he requires support in form filling, queries with certain letters and grants but he can see his own development and now benefits from having his own accommodation.



Success through Trident and the Prince's Trust – Mark's story



He needed support as he became homeless after a breakdown in relations within the family home.



We worked with Mark to gain temporary accommodation at a hostel in the local area. Mark was supported in applying for housing with Birmingham City Council so that he could secure his own tenancy successfully and move out of the temporary accommodation. Staff have supported him through stressful times, particularly when he has had family problems.

Mark has always been a very focused individual who wants to move forward with his life in a positive way. Mark was claiming jobseekers allowance and he has always been motivated to look for employment opportunities. Mark was supported to apply for the Prince's Trust's training opportunities for construction course, but unfortunately he did not get a place because they were so limited.

Naturally, Mark was disappointed, but worked with us to successfully reapply through Prince's Trust and Centro. He really enjoyed the Prince's Trust course; there were 12 trainees with opportunities for just two to gain a paid apprenticeship upon completion. Mark must have made a very good impression as he was offered one of those apprenticeships! He was delighted, as were all our team. We are now assisting him with housing, working with him to bid on properties and, as he is very high up on the list, we feel he will shortly be offered a property of his own to rent.

We continue to support him with his housing benefit claim, and anticipate helping him in into his new home, assisting him with setting up the management of bills at the new property and budget planning for his new circumstances.

St Basils Case Studies

A Mum at Edmonds Court Foyer by LH

I became homeless following a family breakdown. I stayed in various places for a while sleeping on friends sofas, living in bedsits and cars but I couldn't do it forever because I had become pregnant. Sleeping in cars was very uncomfortable and gave me



bad back ache. I'd had enough, so I went down to the neighbourhood office and told them my situation and they got in touch with St Basils, Edmonds Court Foyer. I went for an interview and my application was successful. I moved into a bedsit at Edmonds Court in May 2005.

I was four months pregnant by then and had to share the bathroom with two male residents who weren't very clean. I coped with that for a couple of weeks but they were very noisy and kept me awake almost every night. So I spoke to my key worker who said I could move in to a one bed flat. I was so happy that I could now have my own space. Later, I had my beautiful daughter and then moved into a two bed flat within the Foyer.

At Edmonds Court Foyer:

- I designed the welcome pack.
- I sat on the interview panel for Sure Start.
- I became a Resident Rep.
- I organised a Easter party for the children.
- I passed my life skills and learning power course.
- I was a finalist in the Young Person's Awards.
- I went rock climbing and to Drayton Manor with the money that we raised from our car wash.
- I passed my level one literacy and numeracy.

Whilst living in here I feel like I have become more confident and can communicate better with everyone. I think that I have achieved a lot and I know if I had never moved in to Edmonds Court Foyer, I wouldn't have achieved what I have today.

St Basils Case Studies

Taking back responsibility – K's Story

K came to Priory House with her daughter. Prior to this she had lived with her maternal aunt outside of Birmingham. K moved in with her aunt after giving birth to her daughter at the age of thirteen. She could



not stay at her family home due to overcrowding – she has nine brothers and sisters.

K returned to college and to work while her aunt and cousins looked after her child, but soon she felt that she was becoming isolated from her daughter for whom her aunt had parental responsibility. K informed staff that she spent many hours in the family garage, alone, and she was treated like an outsider.

K contacted social services herself at 16 because she wanted to take over parental responsibility for her daughter. Previously K had a long history of not working with professionals or engaging with staff, but staff assisted her to claim for all her relevant benefits, assisted her with life and independent living skills and encouraged her to save with credit union.

When K was being accommodated at Priory House, K's aunt approached social services wanting to regain full custody of her great niece. K's benefit claims were initially denied as her aunt was still claiming money for the child. St Basils staff liaised with social services and K was assisted to attend various parenting courses and complete her life skills course. As the court case was held out of Birmingham, St Basils staff did not attend. However, they did forward a report that detailed how well K had parented since being at Priory House. At the hearing, K regained full custody of her daughter.

K went on to complete a programme of resettlement. She is now living in the community and has a two bedroom house. K's daughter attends a local school and they are settled. K is currently expecting her second child. K is still receiving regular resettlement visits in the community from the St Basils team.

St Basils Case Studies

After sleeping rough by Joshua

In March 2010 my mother passed away. My brother and I had to move to live with my Nan and Grandad. After a couple of weeks me and my Grandad had an argument and he kicked me out.

As I had no close family to live with I had to sleep rough for a couple of nights. Eventually one of my friends put me up for a while.



My friend told me that she knew someone who had been through St Basils and how helpful they were, so the following day I contacted them and they got me an appointment. Within 48 hours of me contacting St Basils they got me some accommodation.

They have been extremely helpful since I moved in and I am very grateful for all the help I am receiving.

Rachel's story

I am writing to inform you of my time at St Basils. I feel my experience was great because I was supported 100 per cent by my key worker, Verona, and also Carlene, who worked to help me. Considering St Basils is a hostel it is very clean and well presented.

My key worker gave me nothing but help and advice throughout my time with St Basils and went above and beyond for me. Without my key worker I don't know where I'd be today. Verona never let me give up and she continually encouraged me to keep trying and showed me how to keep positive.

Being at St Basils has helped me prepare for independent living. All the staff have been great; they actually care and make you feel welcome. They helped me to settle in and to make that place a home. Without them we young people wouldn't be where we are today, without the chance they have provided for us. So thank you to all the staff including Carlene and most importantly Verona.