

The EU Active Inclusion Strategy

In 2006 the European Commission recognised the need to integrate employment and social inclusion policy and developed the concept of active inclusion in order to help Member States mobilise those who can work, and to provide adequate support to those who cannot.

The EU Active Inclusion Strategy aims to tackle poverty and social exclusion for those furthest from the labour market by combining three elements: Adequate income support; inclusive labour markets; and access to quality services including housing, employment and health services.

The Cities for Active Inclusion project

The Cities for Active Inclusion project is a dynamic network of ten European Cities, including Birmingham, which examines how active inclusion matters are addressed at the local level. It is funded by the EU PROGRESS programme.



Cities for Active Inclusion

This publication is commissioned under the European Union Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity (2007-2013). This programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the EUROPE 2020 goals in these fields.

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/progress>.

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.



PREVENTION THROUGH ACTIVE INCLUSION Transforming Lives Through Housing Related Support

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES



The purpose of this booklet is to highlight some of the real life stories and customer journey of vulnerable people and bring to light the exceptional services delivered through the Supporting People programme.

***A ROMA mum-of-five has spoken of her struggle to beat starvation and prejudice after leaving Romania for Birmingham four years ago with hopes of a “better life”.**

Nadia Lorga, 35, said she could only feed her children flour from a church and battled with people looking at her “differently” after she moved to the West Midlands. “Back then it was very difficult,” she said. “We had nothing to eat, I didn’t know how to add credit on my electricity card, and because we didn’t understand each other the benefits authorities suddenly stopped my family tax credits.”



Nadia spoke out as Red Cross marked Gypsy Roma Travellers History Month, which runs throughout June. As part of the month, the Red Cross offices in Camp Hill are celebrating the success of the Circles Project.

The Birmingham City Council funded scheme helps members of the Gypsy, Roma and traveller communities to find new homes and gives them advice on services such as health and social care providers, education, employment and welfare. Nadia, a single mother from the Roma

community, was among those to have benefited.

When the Red Cross started supporting her, she and her family were living in extreme poverty in a tiny, two-room flat. “Being from another country, especially Romania, people looked at me differently and I couldn’t find anyone to help me,” she said. “I didn’t know where to go or what to do to support my children. “My son would tell me ‘I’m hungry’ but there was nothing I could do.” Through the Circles Project Nadia received food parcels, nappies, electricity tokens, housing advice and help to access benefits.

Mick Quigley, team leader for the Circles Project and Nadia’s case worker, said: “When we first met Nadia she was living in very dangerous conditions. She had no food or income and none of her children were accessing education.

“The support we were able to give Nadia means she is now in affordable accommodation, her children all attend school and are doing very well and she has access to health care.”

***Article from Birmingham Mail June 2012**

Supporting People Citizens Panel

Who are we and what do we do

The Citizens Panel are a group of former service users from all different walks of life, backgrounds and ages who meet regularly to discuss how best to develop Housing Related Support Services. The thinking behind the panel was members that use or have used the service have enough experience and knowledge to have influence and be involved in the running of these services.

The aim of the panel is to improve the quality of the services commissioned, to have a say on how they work and run and to enable the services to work together and improve contact between them.

Why get involved?

“The people using Housing Related Support services in Birmingham are the experts in the services they receive...”

They know what works well and what doesn’t, and they know what improvements need to be made. That’s why the voices of service users need to be heard and why they should be able to influence the support they receive. If you are using or have used Housing Related Support Services you should ‘*get involved*’.

(For more information contact the Service User Involvement Team on 0121 303 6135)

Service Users

Service Users are people that use services or receive Housing Related Support. For example someone living in sheltered accommodation with an onsite warden or someone living in their own home but using support to help them maintain their accommodation.

There are lots of ways that service users are currently involved in the delivery of Housing Related Support services in Birmingham. Examples are the Citizens panel, mystery shoppers, Editorial Panel and Lay Assessors.

Mystery shoppers are trained service users who check that providers who are funded by supporting people are doing their job in a professional, friendly and competent manner.

Lay Assessors are service users that have been trained and work alongside service user involvement officers to review services and check that providers are delivering the correct service and support.

The Editorial Panel meets fortnightly to design and complete ‘The People’s Choice’ newsletter.

Iftab Khaliq previously lived with his mother, sister, two brothers and other extended family. Iftab and his younger brother Iftar both have learning disabilities and suffer with haemophilia. According to his social workers and nurses Iftab has managed his illness extremely well and has done so since childhood and from a very early age, he learnt to self medicate on a daily basis. Unfortunately during Iftab's time of living in his family home he was subjected to emotional, financial and neglectful abuse, by his mother, brother and sister. A series of fraudulent situations were orchestrated using Iftab and his younger brother's identity. This included benefit fraud and fraud within the property market.

Iftab would have left the family home years ago (with his brother Iftar) but was constantly made to believe that he would never be able to look after himself without the help of his family and occasionally was threatened if he left. Iftab was also emotionally torn to stay as his brother was too afraid to leave and Iftab would not leave without his brother. Iftab became very reliant on his social worker as he was his only source of help and was able to turn to him for emotional advice and general guidance. As Iftab's situation deteriorated, Iftab came to the decision that it was time to move out of the family home, regardless of the consequences with or without his brother.

Fortunately Iftab's social worker eventually found supported accommodation through Birmingham Rathbone Society for both Iftab and his brother. Iftab had many household items that he bought from years ago in preparation for when he finally moved out. With much persuasion from Iftab, his brother also decided to take the offer of supported accommodation through Birmingham Rathbone. Iftab

and his brother decided not to let any of their family know that they were leaving the family home until the actual day of them moving out. On the day of the move Iftab and his brother told the family that they were both moving out. This was upsetting for their mother but according to Iftab this was because of losing out on their benefits, which supported a lot of the family bills and luxuries. Iftab was threatened with physical violence if he left the house and continuously emotionally blackmail as his brother was beginning to change his mind and told that he would never make it without them. This did not sway Iftab's decision and he proceeded to move out.

Iftab has now been living in supported accommodation for the last two years and has made excellent progress both with his independence and his social skills. With support from staff at Birmingham Rathbone, Iftab has been able to take responsibility for his finances, personal health and well being with minimal support. Because of Iftab's increased independence he is now looking at leaving supported accommodation to live on his own and is currently viewing properties in Birmingham along side his brother, Iftar. The two brothers they would like to move at the same time and live close to one another in separate flats. And with support from his social worker, support staff from Birmingham Rathbone and Housing Pathways it is hoped that Iftab will be able to move within the next six months.

Birmingham Rathbone

"enabling people with learning difficulties to achieve their full potential"

"My personal journey towards Independence..."

"I moved into Reach (then Trident Housing Association) in 2003. When I first arrived I was really ill and on heavy medication. I use to self harm and overdose. I lived in a high needs 24 hour hostel and I used to have my room searched for sharp objects which were removed for my safety. Sometimes I would be taken into hospital twice a week for overdosing. My key worker would try and talk to me but I would not even listen to her. I used to kick off all the time, drink and take drugs to help me with my problems. I basically didn't care what anyone was saying to me - I felt like giving up. I would lock myself away and not eat. If I did eat I would then make myself sick.

Then I met the Customer Involvement Officer from Reach. For the first time he started to get me involved with the Reach PAG (Project Advisory Group) where I eventually became Chairperson. That really built my confidence I then became a Lay Assessor for Supporting People and went out on interviews with Supporting People Officers. This made me progress even further. Over time, I worked with staff to find about and do further education and volunteering. I did a Train the Trainer course, Public Speaking, Confidence Building, Anger Management, IT and others at Fircroft College. I moved from the hostel in March 2009 to a

flat in Sandwell which was a lower needs Reach supported service to help me become more independent.

A year later I moved to another service which was even less supported and not 24 hour. Now, July 2012 I am living in general needs accommodation with floating support. I am now a volunteer within Reach Mental Health services and have a range of certificates including Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Basic Food & Hygiene.

I am a founding member of the Reach Customer Strategic Group and also a representative on the Group Scrutiny Panel for Trident Housing Association. I helped organise and present Reach's first Customer Conference along with other Strategic Group Members which was a massive success. I am now hoping to become a paid member of staff. I also received an award last year at the staff conference for being an Inspirational Volunteer.

I have had a lot of encouragement from Reach. A lot of my anger was based on my past – now I talk about my feelings. I do not kick off anymore and I can put my point across in a calm way without shouting. I do not let people get to me anymore. I can challenge in a calm way.

I am going to do NVQ Level 2 in health and Social Care shortly. I do not take drugs or drink anymore. I have accepted support to live independently and I do not need drink or drugs to help with my problems. I hope very much to support other customers as I have been supported"

Written by Kimberly Cartwright.
(Ex LD Service User)

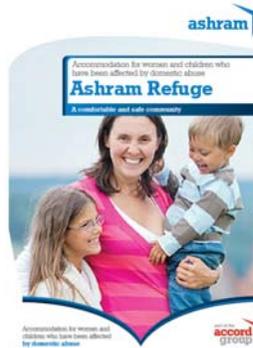


Trident reach
the people charity

The service user came to stay at the refuge last year. She had experienced abuse at the hands of her husband since she had come to the UK 3 years before.

Her husband suffered with mental ill health and was very depressed due to abuse that he had experienced from his mother from when he was a child. When he was well, he often told his wife to leave otherwise he knew that he may end up killing her.

On one occasion when the service user was 8 months pregnant with their second child, she was attacked by her husband and she was almost strangled to death. A relative intervened and stopped the attack. That's when the service user realized that she had to leave.



The service user arrived at the refuge with her 2 children. She had an infection in her ear which needed operating on, which was a consequence of being beaten by her husband. He had hit her so hard that it had burst her ear drum which later became infected caused even more damage. 2 weeks after the service user arriving at the refuge, we received a phone call from the police who had been looking to get in touch with the service user. When the police arrived, we learnt that the service user's husband had doused himself with petrol and set himself on fire. He was critically ill in hospital and as the service user was the next of kin, they needed her to visit the hospital as the hospital wanted permission to switch off the life support.

Staff supported the service user to deal with the impact of the abuse that she had received from her husband and then also helped her to deal with the suicidal death of her husband. It was a very traumatic time for this service user. Staff supported her access bereavement counselling.

Eventually the service user came to terms with what had happened and realized that the death was not her fault. She joined the classes held at the refuge and involved herself with all the activities and attended workshops and activities. She is now living in a flat which was offered by Birmingham City Council with her 2 children in a lovely part of Birmingham and is happy and moving on with her life. She was supported by the RDVP (Reducing Domestic Violence Project) team to settle in her new home and now she is fully independent but remains in touch with staff. She has recently started taking driving lessons.



I KNOW

*I know what it's like to stay in random places because you're trying to avoid the heart ache and the same old faces
I know what it is like to take drugs just to numb the pain
and I know what it feels like to look in the mirror and always feel plain
I know what it's like not to respect yourself and I know how far in life you have to go to neglect yourself
I know what it feels like to feel dirty and even when you wash yourself you feel unclean
and I know what it feels like when you are crying and there's no shoulder for you to lean
I know what it feels like to have a broken heart and a mashed up head
and I know what it feels like to live on a diet of driedmilk noodles and bread
a young mind thought drugs and alcohol would be the answer
but that just lead me to police cells and constant disaster
and when I was younger only ever wanted to be a midnight raver
but on most typical days*

*couldn't even afford a daysaver
and when I left home I was used to no gas or electric
cause when I lived at home there wasn't any so I was prepared to expect it
and I vowed to move away from my 16th birthday
and I heard that hostels were bad from experiences and hearsay
but I didn't want to live on the street's and I defiantly didn't want to stay at home
and when I left home I had no material possessions to take with me like a TV a DVD bed sheets or a phone
so I'm going to tell you of the dangers and the consequences and how vital them
20ps become and those 50 pences each letter that gets sent is a bill making you ill
but I wanted to make a positive out of a negative
make up for the education I missed out on in school
cause when I was high on the drugs*

*I thought I was the class clown but I was the class fool
look at me now I'm slowly trying to make a difference
so if I ever hit rock bottom again I'll carry on with my persistence because every body needs anger release
I just write down the lyrics to keep the peace
performing in front of people looking out into the crowd
and now instead of hating myself I feel proud
but I'm saying this to you quite politely
make something of you're life whether or not you like me
do it for yourself
find some inner pride
and respect yourself*

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Beth Abbott • November 2007
(Ex Service User)



NO Postcodes event

Bromford Support held a customer led event called **No Postcodes**, it was this is due to the gang culture in Birmingham which is based around which post code you come from and rival post codes fighting gangs from other post codes. We organised a panel of seven young service users and asked them to arrange an event where we could attract 'hard to reach' customers and get them involved in the local community.

The customers decided that they would like to put on a show displaying the talents of Birmingham's young people and to display a positive image of young people and to defy negative stereotypes that are generally held about young people and to break down barriers.

The young people who are supported by Bromford Support put on a show which involved a talent competition, local musicians, singers, live drummers, DJ's and young comedians. The show was performed at the theatre in Birmingham central Library.



Funding

To fund the event the seven young people on the panel successfully applied for a Princes Trust (a youth charity that helps change young lives) grant of £1200. They had to go through an application and presentation process which impressed the Princes Trust panel. The grant was used for promotional material, food, T-shirts with the No Post code logo on for the organisers and a banner for the day of the event. The local library donated the use of the theatre for free

Outcome

To Promote the event the customers with support from Bromford Support made a video with support from major music stars and professional footballers to promote their anti gang and violence message which they posted on YouTube

"The site currently has nearly 4,000 hits and generated a lot of media coverage for the event..."

The event was covered on television by BBC, ITV and Sky news. On radio it was covered by BBC WM, BRMB, Heart FM, BBC 5 LIVE, Capitol Radio. The event was also extensively covered on line. The Sunday People and Best magazine also did articles on the event.

We feel that the panel of organisers greatly benefited from planning and organising this event by developing organisational skills, knowledge of working within a team, networking skills, budgeting skills, media skills all of which will be able to be put on a CV which will improve their employment prospects.

They also gave a very positive image of what young people can achieve given the right support.

The event gave a very powerful anti violence message which was very pertinent at the time as event was held just after the August 2011 riots.

Client A was referred to the service by CMHT (Community Mental Health Trust) having



recently released from prison. We liaised closely with Probation staff to support the transfer. A has a dual diagnosis of alcohol dependency and anti social personality disorder as well as a brain injury. Within agreed timescales we conducted a comprehensive person centred needs assessment, which identified further complex needs. We worked closely with A and their CMHT to contact relevant external agencies to meet these needs. We addressed the mental health needs by working in conjunction with the CMHT.

We referred A to Compass for a needs assessment on the alcohol issues. Due to the brain injury A has speech impairment, a referral made to a speech therapist and it subsequently emerged during the initial assessment that A's inability to read or write was due to the brain injury. We contacted a group called Conductive Education which has a specialist team to support people with a brain injury to begin to read and write again.

We worked with DWP, DLA and the benefit service to reinstate all entitlements. We supported A to apply for crisis loans to fulfil daily living necessities.

Staff also supported A to re-establish a relationship with his daughter. With our support and A's engagement we have jointly achieved outcomes that A thought was never achievable, and is continuing to be active within the community.

The supporting People service at Midland Mencap worked with two sisters who were living with their parents but wanted more independence and a place of their own.

They were supported to find a property in the Tysley area of Birmingham. The house was exactly what they wanted and they were supported to settle into their new home.



Nearly a year on since they started receiving support, they are two different people! With support to maximise their independence and manage their finances they now access a wide range of social, recreational and vocational opportunities that have helped them to develop new skills and develop self confidence to lead independent lifestyles.

This maximised independence has allowed them to achieve their goals and aspirations through receiving Supporting people support and thus reduced their vulnerability and preventing the need for them to access other statutory services





Stuart moved to Newell House a Supported Accommodation with Fry Housing Trust on the 5th September 2011. Stuart had experienced a disrupted way of life. On his arrival Stuart was assigned a key worker who created a support plan and identified a number of support needs. Over the coming months Stuart would begin working in earnest to achieve his goals.

Stuart said that on his first day of introduction to the project "he was nervous, did not know what to expect and my confidence was low". In Stuart's first week with the encouragement of staff Stuart participated in a house cooking lesson where he met other residents. Not only did this help Stuart settle in to his new surroundings but the cooking activity appealed to him and he decided he wanted to volunteer in a catering capacity.

Stuart made an appointment with the BVSC - The centre for Voluntary Action and was referred to change kitchen. Stuart was given shifts as and when he was required. He was tasked with preparing food for all events from business meetings to birthdays and even funerals. Stuart said "I got to know all the staff, meeting and interacting with new people was a big confidence booster for me. In April Stuart was given a boost as he was offered permanent employment by Change Kitchen to carry out cleaning duties two hours a week. "This showed me how much they appreciated me".

At this point in time Stuart was starting to realise that he was starting to achieve things. "I started to notice that in my key work meetings that things were being ticked off my support plan every week. "At three months we did a support plan review and I was amazed at how much I had achieved in such a short space of time, the staff were pleased with me and I recognised I could start aiming higher".

Stuart was referred to Fry's Skills and an Employment Advisor. Stuart started to meet with his advisor once a week and benefit from the expertise in identifying and applying for jobs, support with his CV, covering letters and mock interviews. Stuart applied for a volunteer cleaning position at the Jericho Foundation and started working two days a week as a contract cleaner. It was not long before Stuart was offered permanent employment at Jericho working 4 hours a week. **"Getting that contract was a massive breakthrough for me, I had been applying for jobs for months and months and not hearing anything back, but to get actual paid work was a bonus and I knew my hard work was paying off"**



He was just 18 thought he knew it all decided to leave home and try to stand tall He had dreams he wanted to become reality but fell victim to what we call the community He didn't realise the real world was cold and the problems faced wasn't for told ended up in a hostel until he signed his tenancy then due to peer pressure an depression ended up in HMP He realised he did wrong and wanted to turn around so he gave up on previous friends that he used to think were sound started to look within to find the strength and discipline to continue the tradition that his family had passed down to him He started to use his initiative learnt from the past he adapted to his own opinion at last reflective because now he was been assertive rather than passive or aggressive Getting back on track was harder than he thought he had family but there was a means to there support probation shrugged him off from the time of his rebirth making him unsure again of his worth Then he was introduced to the link they helped him and reassured him he wouldn't sink they helped him in every way that

they could they saw the stereotype but didn't judge like most normally would Soon after he moved into Edmonds court he was seen as an individual he was seen as an equal he started to progress put his mind to the test and get involved in things he thought were of interest He committed to a course called life skills and learnt how to prioritise and how to pay his bills he was able to adjust find his creativity he was able to do what he wasn't initially Soon after went on to the European youth exchange where European countries come together to put on a play about the lives lived in a typical day after that he knew he was on the right track he decided he wanted to give something back He decided he wanted to be more involved and mutual people wanted him to evolve he attended a interview with the youth advisory board expressing his views his views were no longer ignored The person I am telling u about isn't flawless but remains to do his best his name is Conscious...

(Ex Service User – St Basils)



Mr E is a 51 year old man diagnosed as being HIV, HEPC positive and has COPD . Mr E has a history of substance misuse from his time in prison. His overall health was poor and he experienced limited mobility with a number of ongoing emotional issues following the death of his son and following his life within organised crime.

Vulnerabilities

Having left Bristol to start a new life following the death of his son, Mr E approached Freshwinds for support. At the time the client was on a methadone prescription and was also using alcohol as a way of blocking out a number of emotional issues. The client recognised that living with his friend was going to put him at risk of returning to crime which he was determined not to do and he was committed to making positive changes so that he would not return to his former life. Mr E had served several custodial sentences as he had been part of a gang involved in serious crime since he was 19, during his spell in prison he became addicted to Heroin.

Housing

We supported Mr E with his homeless application and he was placed immediately within emergency accommodation due to his poor health. Mr E remained in emergency bed and breakfast before a suitable property was identified that met with his housing needs.

Health

Mr E now actively engages with his GP and HIV clinic to assist him in maintaining a quality of life. The service was able to support him with medication adherence and in adopting a healthier lifestyle. He has not used alcohol for over a year and he made the decision to come off methadone after many years. He has reunited with a number of his family members who have provided him with positive emotional support.

Education

Mr E's educational background had meant he feared using a computer and support from our service assisted him to access a local scheme that allowed those on low incomes to purchase a second hand computer.

These skills have assisted the client to access to the internet and to continue his active role within his community. Mr E's wish is to use his own experience to offer support to others by becoming a peer mentor working with those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in particular young men.

Conclusion

Mr E has improved emotionally and physically as a result of the intervention we have put in place, without them it is likely that he would be in a much worse position than he now is. He has the confidence to work with professionals and the independence to manage his own tenancy and finances. He is a regular attendee of our client involvement group and has settled well into his specialist accommodation. Due to the ongoing health difficulties Mr E makes his positive contribution by getting involved with initiatives that help other vulnerable adults.

JM moved into Shaftesbury House in July 2008. **JM** was a self referral to our Link Information centre, she had been told about St Basils through her neighbour hood office.

JM was 22 years old and always lived at home and had become very depressed that she was always going to be in the same situation, her parent were very protective and wrapped her in cotton wool, which had contributed to **JM** feeling more than ever she wanted her independence.

“JM came to visit on her own in a taxi; she used a white Cane but did not see her disability as a barrier”

Discussions took place with my self and another member of staff around her history and where she had lived. We also discussed her life skills and needs. **JM** felt she was more than ready for independence and could cook basic food and budget her finances. We took **JM** around the building and the grounds outside and asked her what the issues or concerns might be for her moving in.

JM pointed out the uneven paths and plants pots on the path but these were all minor things that we could sort out. We established that **JM** could see bright lights and having bright lights in rooms helped her move about easier. We contacted 'Focus for the blind' who came out and done a risk assessment of where **JM** would live, they explained that every risk assessment had to be individual to each person and there requirements, we invited **JM** along to this meeting. They talked through every thing with **JM** and walked around her bedsit with her and looked at what needed doing.

“Braille was put on the cooker so JM could work out what was on or off and at what temperature, the lighting was all changed and the furniture positioned so JM had easy access around the room. JM had a talking laptop; staff was able to send through any letters or important information to her by email. We got her support plan done in brail has she needed to read and sign to agree”

Before **JM** come to us she was assigned a social worker who helped her with her claim for benefits and any care requirements. We contacted them and they said they also done a route finder, they would come out and show **JM** how to get to the local shops and get on a bus to certain places. When **JM** first came she was attending College but because she had missed so much due to her moving she deferred for a year, but started doing voluntary work for the partially sighted, which staff supported her with.

While **JM** lived at Shaftsbury House she had cooking lessons from staff up to 4 times a week for the first 3 months and was helped to cook different meals which she was then able to do on her own. **JM** went shopping with staff the first couple of times and then felt confident that she could go on her own has the staff in the local super market got to know her and helped her when she got there. **JM** paid her rent by standing order which she sorted out with her key-worker.

At Shaftesbury House all the Young people have to do chores to be able to use the Laundry room free, I spoke to **JM** about whether this would be a problem to which she said it would not, she had her own ways of doing house chores, such as vacuuming, she would take her shoes off and feel with her feet and if she could feel any bits she would vacuum them up.

JM is a very independent and intelligent young Lady who does not see problems but challenges. She wanted to do what all the other young people did but felt it might take her longer, she is in the process of writing a book with tips to help people with every day life and terminology. She won Woman of the year for her art work **JM** was also encouraged and supported by staff to apply for the St Basils Youth Advisory Board and was successful in gaining a place, she also won a Star award at our AGM and done the St Basils Sleep out doing an interview for the press.

JM also helped to fundraise for the project with staff to put on activities for other Young People.

When **JM** first came to Shaftesbury her family were not happy about her leaving home and did not feel comfortable with **JM** living independent from them but as **JM** developed her skills and became more independent her parent's became more supportive and came and thanked staff for all there hard work with there daughter and said how proud they were of her.

JM has since moved into her own tenancy with the help and support of staff and is doing really well.



I am a very grateful ex resident of the William Booth centre in Birmingham.

Firstly I would like to explain how I found myself homeless.

I was married for 21 years with five beautiful children yet myself and my ex wife drifted apart. I moved from Sunderland to Blackpool in Lancashire as work I was doing at the time was plentiful.

I then met a girl from the midlands whom I moved in with, however this did not work out and I was basically cleaned out and found myself for the first time in my life homeless at 44 years old, a very daunting experience.

I was living in Kidderminster and found myself in Birmingham in somewhat of a daze, I just didn't know where to turn.

I was directed to The Salvation Army and was thankfully offered emergency overnight accommodation. The next morning I was interviewed and offered a room within the centre and thought thank god for that.

I received support from my support worker, he was very approachable and understanding. After 3 months, I was interviewed and allocated a self contained flat within the centre to help me live independently.

whilst in the flat I engaged on regular weekly support sessions. My support worker helped build my confidence and suggested I apply for Snow Hill, which although is still supported housing it enables me to live away from the centre more independently.

I've been at Snow Hill just over 2 months now and I regularly call into the centre to chat with what can only be described as the most lovely people I've come across. The staff at the Salvation Army, especially the manager, always have time for me and make me feel so welcome, he's non judgemental of anyone's situation and treats people with so much respect, a total credit to the centre and The Salvation Army as a whole. I feel I must thank the deputy manager from the bottom of my heart for what they did for me not only in the past but today, as I approached them on any kind of funding to allow me to purchase a digital tachograph card and they helped me without hesitation of which I will be always grateful to them both. The manager makes me laugh and as I say, he always finds the time in his busy schedule to ask how I am and always with a handshake.

I am now able to look positively ahead and should be working very soon. The Salvation Army do an amazing job and had it not been for the kindness and support of the William Booth Centre in Birmingham then I dread to think where I may have been, my sincere thanks prayers and gratitude to you all thank you always from the bottom of my heart.



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 presenting to the Board of Trustees. 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.