

BRIDGE BULLETIN

A BRIDGE FROM HOMELESSNESS



BRIDGE
TRUST 

AUTUMN 2018

A day in the life of The Bridge Trust

In this edition of our Bulletin we have dedicated the first two pages entirely to a case study of one of our clients. There are no photos or frills, just saying it how it is, to show something of his two year journey with us and the scope of what we do at The Bridge Trust. We hope that this shows how your support can help our client's move out of homelessness into independence.

Case Summary

This client was sofa surfing before he came to us. He moved into independent accommodation with floating support from The Bridge Trust just over two years later. We agreed with the client to withdraw floating support six months after that. He continues to reside in independent accommodation.

Initial Support Needs Identified

- Anxiety and depression
- Chronic history of alcohol misuse and poly-substance misuse. Attended four day detox course
- History of self-harming and alcohol related aggression against property and other persons
- Dyslexia
- Minimal IT skills
- Poor cooking and tenancy maintenance skills
- Estranged from majority of family
- Unsure of housing register and benefit entitlement status
- Socially isolated as feared peer pressure to drink
- Requested support with mental health issues, improving literacy and finding employment

Actions Undertaken in Response to Identified Support Needs

Mental Health Problems – Anxiety and depression. Supported him in reporting same to GP and consequently received formal diagnosis with appropriate medication. Engaged him with Tunbridge

Wells Mental Health Resource Centre – The Hub. It later became apparent that he had further symptoms indicative of schizophrenia. Staff therefore supported him in engaging with the Community Mental Health Team which enabled him to receive a further formal diagnosis. Staff liaised with Community Psychiatric Nurse and a substance misuse support organisation. Engaging the client with CMHT also facilitated access to support to enhance his engagement with the wider community. We helped him to reduce his substance misuse, join a gym and eat more healthily.

Learning Disabilities – We respected the client's decision not take up support for his dyslexia as he felt he was able to cope without additional interventions.

Alcohol and Drug Misuse Problems

– The client had a long history of substance misuse and during his stay with us there were a number of relapses. The most significant was within the first month of admission when the client spent a weekend at the home of an ex-partner, on an alcohol binge; leading to him being arrested and charged with criminal damage and sexual assault.

On another occasion he was out of contact for almost a week, when we found that he had been staying with a new partner indulging in alcohol and drug misuse again to the point where he had to be admitted to A&E.

His new partner had largely taken control of his life; he had given her written consent to act on his behalf in any dealings with benefits and support agencies and she

tried to be his advocate when dealing with the Trust. Staff agreed with the client that this was not in his best interests and that he would disengage with her. To assist with this we provided emotional support, assisted him in cancelling permission for his partner to speak on his behalf and assisted him in informing other agencies of the situation. We then supported him in re-establishing engagement with relevant agencies.

The client also received 'peer mentoring' support from the Trust's Service User Involvement Officer (SUIO). As a former addict himself the SUIO discussed and empathised on issues around chemical dependency using both theory and practical experience, which proved to be a great help to him.

We successfully advocated for the client to access a residential detox programme.

Offensive Behaviour – The client had a history of violence towards both other persons and property when intoxicated.

As previously mentioned, during his stay with us the client was charged with criminal damage and sexual assault after a weekend of substance misuse. We liaised with him and his solicitor and were instrumental in providing evidence in response to the second charge which was later changed to common assault.

The Trust subsequently supported the client in attending court and subsequently complying with requirements of sentences, such as ensuring he attended probation appointments.

Risk of Harm to Self –

The client self-harmed by cutting himself and he was therefore supported to engage with mental health services. He attempted suicide after moving on from the Trust but whilst still in receipt of our floating support. We provided emotional support as he was then appropriately supported by mental health services as well.

Risk of Harm from Others –

The client allowed his ex-partner into our accommodation where she assaulted him. He was supported by staff in reporting the assault to the police and having her charged with GBH.

He was also supported in cutting off contact with ex-partners as he agreed that this pattern of relationships had consistently resulted in self-destructive behaviour on his part. He was also moved a number of times to different Bridge Trust properties to support him in breaking contact with those individuals with whom continued association was detrimental to him, allowing him to move his life on and ultimately be able to live independently.

Resettlement –

Client had minimal experience of running a home and none of managing his own tenancy having always relied upon his partners. He successfully acquired relevant skills through our in-house Pre-Tenancy Training Programme. He was supported in joining the local housing register and in bidding for his future accommodation.

The client originally failed his affordability test with a local housing association as he lost his entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) one week before the test. With the Trust's support he eventually once again received ESA and Personal Independence Payments and so passed the affordability test at a later date.

The housing association had further reservations since it was under a year since his last criminal conviction. We successfully advocated on his behalf by evidencing that with our support the client now: had a correct mental health diagnosis; was in receipt of appropriate support from substance misuse and mental health agencies; was in receipt of the correct medication; had been abstinent for a significant period; was financially responsible; and was guaranteed six months floating support from the Trust.

Employment and Training –

The Bridge Trust sourced two appropriate IT courses, which also allowed him to make new social contacts. We assisted him in contacting his former accountant and supported him in communicating with HMRC regarding his tax affairs. With our support the client came to accept that he was no longer physically strong enough to return to his former labouring work and that he should therefore pursue other avenues. As part of this process we facilitated access to a work coach. Whilst considering his options his mental health deteriorated and he was unable to take up employment; he was however supported into carrying out some voluntary work, including some with us.

Maximising Income –

We provided support in applying for Housing Benefit on entry. He was taken by staff to his Capability for Work Assessment and we spoke on his behalf. As a consequence the client continued to receive ESA.

Increased Safety / Safeguarding Actions

Throughout his stay with the Trust the client was at risk of abuse from whoever was his then current partner.

Actions taken by the Trust:

- the client was moved to other accommodation at very short notice to reduce the risk of contact/harm by his ex-partner, who we also banned from our accommodation.
- he was supported to contact police and express his desire to press charges regarding a physical assault upon him by his ex-partner. We also supported him in requesting a court injunction against her
- we supported him by encouraging him not respond to text messages from his ex-partner
- we supported him in rescinding permission for his ex-partner to speak with the Trust, benefits agency, mental health and substance misuse support agencies on his behalf
- we informed his mental health and substance misuse support agencies of his ex-partner's malign influence and they were therefore able to take appropriate action

- when the client broke off meaningful contact with appropriate support agencies, we expedited the process of re-engagement
- we advocated that the client engage with Victim Support, but respected his decision not to do so.

Sustainable Changes to this Client's Life

The client is now in independent accommodation and his landlord is fully aware of his support needs. He has received a formal diagnosis of mental health problems and is in receipt of appropriate medication and support. He is now in receipt of appropriate benefits and therefore able to afford to pay his bills. Since he moved into independent accommodation the client has maintained a good payment record for rent, council tax and other bills – evidenced by information received from his landlord and staff reviewing utility bills. He continues to engage with substance misuse support and has sufficient life skills to maintain his tenancy. He has a greater understanding of his rights and responsibilities, issues around costs of accommodation, and general skills such as cooking for himself and decorating (learnt from his peer mentor at the Trust). He also received from us sufficient furniture and other household items to make his accommodation a home rather than an uncomfortable and empty box.

He now attends a gym three times a week and understands issues around a healthy diet. He is able to deal with stress resulting from actions of neighbours. He has been empowered to take control if and when he relapses into previous harmful behaviour patterns as evidenced by a recent episode where he again went on a short term substance misuse binge. Afterwards he was able to contact the agencies already engaged in his support, explain what had occurred and request appropriate help; he then took advantage of that support. Previously after a relapse the client had relied upon the intervention of staff to remedy the situation that he had created for himself; something he no longer needs.

We hope this case study has given you an insight into the difference we can help make to people's lives. Without your support, people like this client and many more would have little hope of changing their lives for the better.

Marks & Spencer At Home Garden Makeover

On a very hot Summer's day, a team of volunteers from the Tunbridge Wells M&S at Home, gave up a day to turn the back garden at one of our properties into something, ...well something that can actually be used by our residents at last! M&S also donated £500.00 towards the cost of the makeover and, along with Stephen Taylor, our Support Services Manager and Becky Butterwick, our Fundraiser at the time, they took just one day to dig, weed, membrane and gravel the whole garden and what a difference it made.

Our wholehearted thanks to Chris and the team from M&S for their dedication and hard work – you made a real and lasting difference.



Fundraising Ideas

Earlier this year 'John' donated two Odeon cinema tickets he'd won in a raffle as he could not use them. We held our own raffle for one of the residents to win them. This gave someone the opportunity to do something that would normally be too expensive for them – a real treat that brightened up their day no end.

Could you donate a couple of cinema or theatre tickets for our residents to enjoy?



We recently got the following donation and accompanying message from a supporter:

Donations of £105.00 + £26.25 Gift Aid

“My son and his two friends held a toy sale at school to raise money for The Bridge Trust. They sold their toys to raise money to help others less fortunate than themselves.”

What a great idea from three young lads, and what an amount they raised! Do you have any children who you could encourage to do something similar?



Do you have any odd earrings, broken chains or other jewellery you don't want any more? Pop them in the 'Recycling for Good Causes' envelope that came with this Bulletin and make us some money.

The Tonbridge Daily Calendar 2019

We are hugely honoured to have been chosen as one of three local charities to benefit from the sale of next year's Tonbridge Daily Calendar. The Calendar, produced by a team of Tonbridge residents, will be packed with great photos of Tonbridge, so please do look out for editions of the calendar on sale throughout the town. Buying a copy will benefit us and two other great charities supporting the Tonbridge community.

We will put an announcement on Twitter and Facebook when it is available.





The Bridge Trust Annual General Meeting October 11th, 6.30pm for 7pm start

We're very pleased to announce that this year our AGM will again be held at Tonbridge Old Fire Station. Free drink for a donation of your choice.

Please RSVP by Friday 5th October, for catering purposes.

Tonbridge Lions Support The Bridge Trust



Over the years the Lions Clubs have been very generous in supporting many local charities, and the Tonbridge branch showed their support once more for The Bridge Trust when their current President, Tom Simmons presented us with a cheque for £500.00 from this year's Tonbridge Triathlon.

We are so grateful for the continued encouragement and support that this brilliant organisation gives.

Tonbridge Christmas Festival 25th November, 2.30pm-6.00pm

Once again The Bridge Trust will be present at the Rotary Club Tonbridge Christmas Festival.

We will be running a tombola stall in the High Street and probably trying very hard to keep warm!

Last year we raised £350.00, and this year we are determined to do better. So come along and support the work we do for local homeless people and have a good time. The night includes the switching on of the Christmas lights, stage entertainment, lots of stalls, plus a firework display at the end. What's not to like?



Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who has donated. Here are a few since the last Bulletin:

Toureen Group whose team of ten raised £1,744.75 in sponsorship for the London 10K

St Andrew's (Paddock Wood) Fairtrade shop – £300.00

St Mary's Church, Speldhurst – £600.00

St Luke's Church, Sevenoaks – £60.00

St Peter & St Paul's Church, Wadhurst – £189.50

Tonbridge Evangelical Free Church – £220.00

Rotary Club of the Pantiles – £1,000

Underriver Horticultural Society – £300.00

Tonbridge School – £522.16

Tonbridge Lions – £500.00

The Eric Smith Memorial Fund – £777.00

It costs approximately £450,000 a year for us to provide a home to the homeless. These donations, from both groups and individuals allow us to continue to make a difference in people's lives

Pass it on...

When you have finished with this Bulletin, perhaps you could pass it on to a neighbour who may be interested. If you do, you can ask them to contact us if they want to be added to our mailing list.

CONTACT US

17A Quarry Hill Road, Tonbridge, TN9 2RN.

T: 01732 368363 • E: Info@thebridgetrust.org.uk

 Like us: facebook.com/thebridgetrust

www.thebridgetrust.org.uk

 Follow us: @bridgetrust1

Reg. Charity No. 1050291.

DATA PROTECTION: If you do not receive our Bulletin directly and would like to please let us know in writing, specifying your address or email address. If you already receive information from us and no longer wish to you can opt out any time by letting us know in writing. Any information you give will be used for The Bridge Trust purposes only.