



Lived Experience creates the platform for change

Birmingham Changing Futures Together's Inreach Outreach team and the Jewellery Quarter BID working together to help rough sleepers in the area get the support they need to live fulfilled lives.

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Direct Support

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In March 2019, they began working closely with the Jewellery Quarter (JQ) Business Improvement District (BID) team. "Members of the JQ BID team were concerned about the number of rough sleepers in their area," explained Sarah Bruce, a member of the IROR team. "These people frequently combine substance misuse, mental health issues or offending behaviour with their homelessness, which means the problems they face are complex and their behaviour can be challenging. The BID team wanted to help, to connect them with the support they needed to get into accommodation but were not sure how."

The JQ Ambassadors, Matt Crawley-Alexander and Aaron Chow, were out and about all the time in the Jewellery Quarter and knew the people sleeping rough in their patch but didn't know how to approach them or link them to the right support. They asked Birmingham Changing Futures Together's IROR team to help. "Brian and I both have lived experience," continued Sarah. "It means we understand the vulnerable people living on the streets. We get it. We know what it's like to be let down by services. We understand where the mistrust comes from and so can quickly build a trust-based relationship."

Brian and Sarah from the IROR team pair up with Matt and Aaron to regularly go out and walk the length and breadth of the Jewellery Quarter. "Matt and Aaron tend to know where people gather and spend their time, so they lead the way. Once we meet someone sleeping rough, we stop and have a chat on the street or in a friendly café."

Building the trust

The team's goal is always to persuade people to engage with services, but in a way and at a pace they are comfortable with. "It might take a few meetings but once they start to trust us, we can begin supporting their engagement."



Our aim is to get them to connect. We might refer them to services there and then but are more likely to invite them to the drop-in facility. From there they can access other services like clothing banks, food banks, a café. They can also get really valuable benefits advice.



Sarah and Brian also have access to an office provided by the JQ BID. "It's a great, confidential space, ideal for taking to people who feel particularly vulnerable or anxious."

Matt and Aaron are out and about the Jewellery Quarter all the time. Working alongside Brian and Sarah they have learned how to approach and engage with people. It means they can directly refer people so instead of just coming across individuals on a walk-about, Brian and Sarah can go out specifically to meet them and begin the process of engaging them with support services.

The BID Ambassadors stay with the IROR team as they work with the vulnerable people sleeping rough. "Matt and Aaron know them, so their presence gives them an important bit of confidence," explained Sarah. "We really appreciate them"



staying in this way, particularly as it can take a long time to complete the referral. The individual may need to get a drink or a fix before they can give us the information we need and it's common for them to say yes quickly and want to get straight on with things or to be incredibly suspicious and reticent. But we need to get their informed consent every step of the way and with 18 organisations in the No Wrong Door Network, this can take time.

“Sometimes, they are just not ready to engage and can go off the radar. We often give them phones, but they can lose them. If that happens, the BID Ambassadors will continue to keep an eye open, checking on them as they walk the area and bringing us in when they are ready to change.”

The IROR team also makes use of the No Wrong Door Navigator service, which provides hands-on support for up to eight weeks. Most people who sleep rough want the support of a Navigator, who will help them get to appointments and stand by their side to make sure they are treated with dignity and respect. At the end of the eight weeks the Navigator will signpost them to the best option for them.

The approach is working. Of the 12 people the team has connected with so far, about half are in accommodation. For example, the team has supported a man using heroin. His behaviour was chaotic and he would try to flag cars down for help, which was dangerous for everyone. He told them he wanted to change. He wanted to quit drugs and get a home but past experiences of shared accommodation meant he did not feel safe there and would not go back. He also wanted to stay near his friends in the local area. After spending time with him in a friendly coffee shop, the team referred him to Housing First. He is now in his own flat and accessing addiction support services.

Real understanding being at the heart of this approach, the IROR team is now training the whole JQ BID team on life as one of the city's most vulnerable people and how to engage to help them lead more fulfilled lives.



Contact the BVSC Birmingham Changing Futures Together team for more information.
www.changingfuturesbham.co.uk

The Birmingham Changing Futures Together Programme

Funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, Birmingham Changing Futures Together improves the effectiveness of service provisions to those with multiple and complex needs (homelessness, substance misuse, offending behaviour and mental health) by creating a 'community of support' comprising organisations in the sector, identifying and sharing best practice and establishing new approaches.

The No Wrong Door Network

At the heart of the Changing Futures approach, the No Wrong Door Network comprises service providers committed to collectively working together so users benefit from better connected support. People experiencing two or more multiple and complex needs get the support they need 'in the moment'. Safe and looked after, they are able to move away from the immediate risk of crisis.

Inreach Outreach

Often the best person to talk to is someone with similar experiences so our trained staff with Lived Experience partner with Experts by Experience to take information to services directly where the clients are, crisis point organisations where they may fall through the gaps.

Every Step of the Way

The service is delivered by Birmingham MIND and is a service user involvement workstream, and part of the wider programme, Birmingham Changing Futures Together. The service provides encouragement and enables Experts by Experience to get involved in a range of opportunities within the programme, which in turn contributes to systems change.

No Wrong Door Navigator

The service provides hands-on support to service users, accompanying them to the right door, wherever they present. Standing by their side, the Navigators also support service users to attend their referral appointments and advocate on their behalf to ensure they are treated with dignity and respect.

