



“Clients were willing to talk because she’s bought the t-shirt”

#walkthefrontline



“The Peer Mentor’s intuitive understanding of the person on the street along with embodying the potential for change made a positive difference in every interaction.”

John-Jo Von Johnson is Street Operations Manager at Colmore BID.

“My job is to run the team that goes out and engages with rough sleepers. Starting at 8.30am, we offer help and direct them to the support services best suited to their needs.

“After about 10am our focus shifts to engaging those who are begging, street drinking and taking drugs. We also liaise with businesses to understand the issues they may be facing with, for example, people sleeping in their stairwells.

“Our job is to keep the streets safe and clear for the businesses in the BID, but we know the best way to do this is to find out what people need and offer support.

“I decided to #walkthefrontline because I wanted to understand how we might do things differently to improve the outcome for everyone, the person on the street, the local businesses and the visitors to the BID area.

“The Lead Worker Peer Mentor model was really inspiring.”

Going out with a Peer Mentor, John-Jo was impressed by the bond she had with her clients.

“It was exactly what’s needed. She’s been through lots of problems and challenges herself and overcome them. Her clients were willing to talk with and listen to her because she’s bought the t-shirt.

“One of the clients we met was not in a position to talk. I was impressed by the way the Peer Mentor listened and respectfully backed off. Her understanding and empathy meant she didn’t over-react, so the relationship is still in place for the next time.

“Doing #walkthefrontline gave me the chance to engage with the human being. Along with my team, I often see only one side of someone, not the whole person. We don’t know their history and don’t intuitively understand them in the way the

peer mentors do. I saw the difference of real understanding. There’s respect in the relationship and situations get de-escalated not fuelled.”

John-Jo is an advocate of Peer Mentors being integrated into the teams of all those who work with street homeless, as well as there being close collaboration. “We all encounter the same people. It would make a big difference if we could share information. Peer Mentors in every team would also spread their catalytic effect on change.”

The Birmingham Changing Futures Together Programme

Funded by The Big Lottery, Birmingham Changing Futures Together improves the effectiveness of service provision 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.

No Wrong Door Network

At the heart of the Changing Futures approach, the No Wrong Door Network is a group of organisations working together to ensure service users can access a whole system of support through one referral.

Lead Worker Peer Mentor

Our dedicated Lead Workers, skilled in helping people navigate the support services available, work alongside Peer Mentors with lived experience. This unique combination creates a tailored and empathetic approach, which bridges the gap between services and those who use them.

The No Wrong Door Navigator Service

The No Wrong Door Navigator 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.

