



Befriending and activity coaching changing lives

Building relationships based on trust, the Befriending Service has had a big impact. People with the most entrenched behaviour patterns have connected with befriender, Sarah Bruce, and through her received the respect and support they need to change their lives.

Direct Support

At the start of the pandemic, 70 people previously sleeping rough moved into accommodation. Frequently with a challenging history of negative interactions with service providers, they find it almost impossible to trust services. Birmingham Changing Futures' Together's Befriending Service had a big impact, building trust and fostering their engagement.

Funded by the Protect Programme, the Befriending Service was extended until 31 March and integrated with activity coaching opportunities. Sarah continued to deliver the Befriending Service and Matt Inniss and colleagues at Fitniss – Wellbeing in Care delivered the activity coaching, which ranged from football and personal training to yoga and life skills.

The aim was to support some of the city's most vulnerable citizens to transition into independent living while improving their physical and mental health and boosting their confidence.

Explaining the success of the Befriending Service, Sarah said: "The impact of befriending has been amazing. The people I talk to appreciate having someone who's been where they are, to chat to about their week. We talk about the highs and lows. We talk about what it feels like to sleep rough, the isolation and loneliness they experience. We also often have a giggle!"



"I have no agenda," continued Sarah. "There are no strings attached. I'm not selling anything or trying to persuade them to do anything. It's just an equal, confidential relationship they can depend on."



The team are now exploring ways to develop the Befriending Service, creating a network integrated with community and faith groups.

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