

Our STORIES

A NEW START

Stuart recalls the support he has received from our HIPS service

INDEPENDENT LIVING

Supported housing has given Kate a first taste of independence

ALCOHOL FREE

Shabana is finding the power to help turn her life around.

TIME TO TALK

Tom explains his recovery from substance misuse, volunteering and a fresh outlook.

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

How Joanne's experiences help her understand the challenges people face

KHALIL ON BEING FORCED FROM HOME

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MORE INSIDE**

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Paul Gartland
*Horton Housing Association
Chief Executive Officer*

The work we do at Horton Housing Association is focused around the people we support and helping them to achieve their goals. Recognising that everyone is different and has their own story to tell helps shape our approach and allows individuals to reach their potential. We are very proud to promote people's diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

I would like to thank all my colleagues, volunteers and people we support who have helped contribute to this publication by sharing their empowering and fascinating stories. Some of their names have been changed but their stories remain the same. I hope that you find these stories interesting, inspiring and thought-provoking. Thank you.

FORCED FROM HOME



Survival is all Khalil has ever known. Bitter conflict has ravaged his homeland for as long as he can remember. Sweltering summers made way for bitterly cold winters and food and water supply were not always a guarantee. Danger lurked around every corner.

“Five years ago in Afghanistan, it was very unsafe because in every province there was war. This made finding a job really difficult. I got a job in a private bank in a different province that provided accounts for soldiers. I did that for two years but it was full of danger because working with the army meant that people who were against the government were against people who worked with them like me. Every day I was scared that something could happen.”

Khalil worked in the bank for over two years, but after becoming increasingly frustrated with the dangers that came with the job, he decided to continue his studies, this time abroad in India thanks to an education scholarship. After graduating with a Master's degree in economics, Khalil was soon to realise that home, as

he knew it, would never be the same again.

The withdrawal of coalition forces in the country marked the end of the UK's 20-year military campaign and quickly saw the Taliban, themselves ousted from power following the US-led invasion of 2001, make rapid gains across the country.

“I returned home to Afghanistan in 2021 and I saw how dangerous the situation was. Everywhere I looked, all the news from social media was saying that the Taliban had captured this place and that place. They were taking over every place day by day. At this moment I was really scared because for a person like me that had an education and worked where I had, it was dangerous. Everyone at this time was thinking about how to escape and find a way to leave the country to feel safe.”

Kabul soon fell and Taliban forces controlled the majority of Afghan territory. Fearful over possible reprisals, those on the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) scheme were included in Operation Pitting evacuations, offering a new life in the UK for those that had supported deployed British troops.



Khalil, along with other members of his family, were granted eligibility and quickly made their way to the airport. Thousands of citizens desperately gathered outside the terminal building, each frantically looking to escape the horrors that would soon become normality under militant rule.

“The airport was so crowded,” he explains, still visibly upset by the events. “You could not even find a place to stand, because everyone was trying to get out. My parents are over 65 so it was not easy for them. My brothers were with their family and kids. I went to the airport and I saw the situation was not suitable for my family. We did not know where we needed to go or which people we needed to see. People were running to every different place in panic.”

As night fell, Khalil’s family returned home whilst he stayed, hoping to find the correct personnel to speak to. After hours fighting through the crowds, he eventually spoke with the appropriate staff and presented the required documents. Told to wait until morning, Khalil spent the night in conditions so cramped he remained standing for a further eight hours until soldiers collected him.

“At this point, I started to feel like I was actually going. I called my family, told

them I was fine and had gotten through the queue. The soldiers took me to their base to look through the documents and make sure I was the right person and was eligible. The checks took a long time and were very strict. I saw some people were turned away because their documents were not clear. Everyone was just trying to find a better way for themselves.”

As crowds continued to gather, a devastating suicide bombing took place outside the airport, tragically killing 183 people. Khalil, going through the document checking process, heard the blast but initially was not aware of the attack. The chaos that ensued was unforgettable.

“I saw the soldiers were running around and shouting on their radios asking what had happened. My brother called me and asked if I was okay. He told me that there was an explosion outside the airport. My family and he had returned to the airport and they were stood very close to where the bomb had gone off. They were about to reach that place in the queue when it exploded.

“Many people died and many people were injured. It was a very bad situation and he told me that he was trampled on when people ran away but another family



member managed to grab his hand. When I knew there was the explosion, I was calling everyone I knew that was there asking if they were okay.”

Rushed onto a military plane, Khalil left the country he had called home for over twenty years alone, terrified, and clinging on to just a handful of clothes in his bag.

“When we landed, it was night and I remember how cold the weather was,” he laughs. “I only had a thin jacket because I thought the weather would be the same as back home. There was one woman who was airport staff that gave me her jacket and told me to take it, as it was a gift from her. I really appreciated that because it was so cold.”

Khalil completed the mandatory quarantine period in a nearby hotel and remained in temporary accommodation whilst waiting for updates on his case.

“I could not even leave the hotel but it kept telling myself it was okay because

it was much better than being in Afghanistan. I had internet, television and a safe place.”

The same could not be said for his family back home. The airport bombing had put a halt to emergency airlifts from the country and, despite having qualified for the ARAP scheme, Khalil’s relatives were facing the dangerous prospect of living under Taliban rule.

“At this time, the Taliban were telling the world that people who had worked for the government would be allowed to live in peace but that was a lie. Behind the media, they were arresting people and killing some.”

Whilst the military evacuations had ceased, eligible Afghan nationals were still offered safety in the UK should they come through a third country.

“The Taliban took the house from us because we lived there. They followed everyone that had worked with the government and knew we had worked with



British troops as well. They sent a notice telling my family they had to clear the house in five days so that is when they fled to Pakistan.”

After safely evading multiple checkpoints and crossing the border, his family reached the British embassy where they were eventually granted entry to the UK. The journey from the initial blast to this moment had taken months with Khalil feeling powerless thousands of miles away, but he remembers the feeling of relief knowing he would soon reunite with close family members he feared he might never see again.

“I was very happy at this moment because I was so worried about my family that were still in Afghanistan, so when I heard they were coming to the UK, I was so happy for them. When my mother saw me for the first time after seven months, she was so happy and was crying a lot. We were all so happy. All my family are here.”

Now reunited, Khalil and his family are being supported by Horton Housing Association in Bradford as they wait for suitable accommodation.

“When we got to the UK and saw the lifestyle and people, everything was different. All the people are so helpful, especially the support that we have been given.





“We really appreciate that help, it is the best thing we have seen in our lives. Setting us up with the NHS, finding accommodation, supporting us in every aspect of life, it has been great for us. These were the things we really needed. My parents have health issues so our support workers always check on their health and arrange appointments. All we need to do is ask for things.”

A speaker of six languages, Khalil is also looking to find employment, similar to previous roles back home. After attending multiple different interviews, it became clear to him that despite his qualifications, he needed more workplace exposure in the UK.

“I really want to find a job here because it is my time to give something back in return,” he explains. “I applied for many jobs and had interviews but I did not have experience working in this country, even though I had experience in another country.

“I realised that first I needed to get experience in this country, either paid or unpaid, it did not matter. This was important so I applied to volunteer with Horton Housing, doing admin work. I got this chance and I still do it. I am happy to be getting experience and learning new things from my co-workers and from my managers.”

Since being in Bradford, Khalil has taken the opportunity to explore different places both locally and nationwide, recently travelling to Manchester and London, and he is in the process of getting his driving licence. This environment has also afforded him the chance to reconnect with one of his favourite pastimes.

“Playing football is one of my favourite things to do. I used to play back in my country where I played in my local team. We had a great team but everything changed. With other people here from Afghanistan, we decided to find a place to play football because I knew they also

enjoyed it. The team was getting stronger everyday so we entered the Refugee World Cup tournament in Leeds. We really enjoyed playing and reached the quarter-final but we lost to a strong team. I really enjoyed it and found it very interesting.”

A world away from the terrors that unfolded in Afghanistan, Khalil feels settled in Bradford and is looking ahead to his new life in the city.

“If the situation was normal and we felt it was safe to go home, maybe we would. If you feel like your life is not safe, you would not go back. Here, it is safe.”

A NEW START

Meet Stuart, supported by HIPS

I lived together with my wife for many years in our home and then in a flat. Since she sadly passed away from Parkinson's disease and dementia, I wish to move to a one bedroom bungalow to also help with my mobility issues. My wife and I had been married for 40 years and I retired to care for her fulltime when she became ill. Over the 16 years before she passed away, I watched her go from a beautiful woman to see her become bedbound.

My dog Heidi is my companion and I wouldn't know what I would do without her since my wife died. I'm not a lonely person and I am happy being on my own.

I am 76 and the oldest person on my street. I cannot tell you the name of my next door neighbour. I would like people to know that it's nice when someone comes up to you saying 'hi, how are you?', this makes a difference.

I rely on my scooter and mobility van to get around. I've had a fantastic year this past year thanks to the generosity of a mobility charity that gave me a mobility van specially made for me. The colour of the van is maroon to remind me of my job as a chauffeur driver and the time I drove a maroon Rolls Royce (the chosen colour for the Queen's cars) to pick up the

parents of Princess Diana, Earl and Lady Spencer, from the courtyard at Buckingham Palace. I have also worked as a bus driver on the continent and used to drive the prison vans during my career as a Prison Officer. I have an ADI (Approved Driving Instructor) pass and I can drive anything apart from a tank.

I am looking to downsize and I have applied for a one bedroom bungalow through the council. The process for getting a bungalow is not easy. I am on the waiting list and there is a lot of competition. Ideally, I would like to get a house with enough space outside to park my mobility van.

I found it hard to get help before coming to HIPS (Horton Intervention and Prevention Service). Thankfully, both my support worker from the council and my HIPS support worker Joanne are very kind and helpful – they mean a lot to me. Joanne visits me once a week and she helps me with clearing out furniture and belongings that I no longer need. We offer the items to charities such as the Salvation Army or to other people who may want them. Joanne is helping me to get things for my new house, which are mostly cost effective or sometimes free. She is also helping me to sort out my bills and signpost me to other agencies. Joanne is going to continue to support me throughout the move until I am settled in my new home.





Independent Living



S

upported accommodation has offered Kate with the chance to live independently for the first time.

Kate has had OCD [obsessive compulsive disorder] since childhood. She has intrusive thoughts and displays compulsive behaviour. Her OCD creates high anxiety.

“It started with fire. I couldn’t lock doors and I had to check all the gas burners were off. I smoked and I used to put water in the ashtray to ensure the ends were out.”

Kate was diagnosed when she was 14 and dropped out of school due to her high levels of anxiety. She went to college to train as a chef and has worked since she was 13, working her way up to management positions but her compulsions made it difficult to work in a kitchen.

“It got worse in lockdown,” she said. “I became obsessed with not being able to access a dentist and I stopped eating and drinking so my teeth wouldn’t decay. I was worried I would hurt my young niece. I was worried I had gone into people’s houses and turned the gas heaters on.”

She started videoing everything she did to check she hadn’t harmed her family and

that she had remembered to take her medication. She stayed inside for sixteen weeks and in that time didn’t see family or friends because she was worried about hurting them.

“It was just easier not to be around people because I knew then I couldn’t harm them.”

Kate started exposure response prevention in a psychiatric hospital in London where she was exposed to items that triggered her OCD such as knives and bleach.

“I was in hospital for four months having high intensive therapy,” she explained. “In hospital, I decided, with my mental health team, to live on my own and have some independence.”

Kate was offered a place at Horton Housing’s accommodation in Skipton. Alongside her own apartment, she has regular sessions with her support worker to help her achieve her goals.

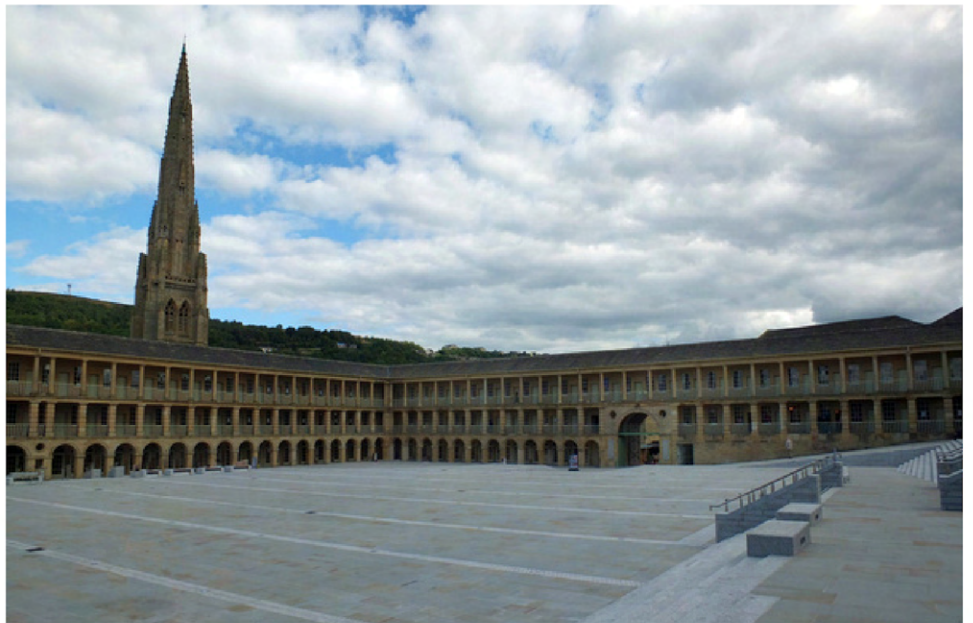
“This is the first place I have lived on my own,” she added. “I am ready to move on now and looking at properties next week. The staff here are fantastic, they don’t judge.”

Kate is starting a college course to retrain as a counsellor and help others.

From sleeping on streets to a place called home

ED'S STORY WITH STREET REACH





Left to right: Wainhouse Tower, Halifax; Gibson Mill, Hebden Bridge; Piece Hall, Halifax

E

d had been rough sleeping in Halifax town centre for three nights when he first came to our Street Reach service.

He was very disheartened, quiet, untrusting and distressed, only saying a few words. Staff made him feel comfortable, offered him something warm to eat and drink, and gave him a spare set of clothes to change into.

Ed had never slept rough before so wasn't aware of the services available. He had been living in his previous home for three years but, due to the pandemic, the shop where he worked closed down leaving him with a huge drop in income and meaning he no longer could pay his rent. He was evicted and turned to rough sleeping.

As a result of not being able to work, Ed began suffering with depression and extreme anxiety, to the point he didn't like talking on the phone, leaving the house, was crying frequently and constantly shaking and so shut himself away from the outside world.

When the shop was allowed to reopen, due to restrictions being lifted, Ed was unable to return to work due to his mental health. Ed was receiving a basic rate of Universal Credit but hadn't claimed for his housing costs at his previous address. He was also registered with a GP and had spoken with a mental health practitioner beforehand but wasn't aware of the current situation regarding other referrals and appointments.

The Council was aware of Ed and he already had a Keychoice application in place but was deemed not a priority due to not having a Community Psychiatric Nurse. Ed had a family court order in place which allowed him supervised contact with his child once a week and a video call, which he was happy to arrange himself. Ed had also been suffering with nose bleeds and light-headedness which he hadn't addressed.

Street Reach had no crash pads available at the time, but we were aware of a property becoming free the following week which would be perfect for Ed: quiet, affordable and in a location he was happy with. We found him temporary

accommodation and gave him some food to last over the weekend. When the long-term accommodation was available, Street Reach took him to view the property which was furnished. Ed was happy with it and signed the tenancy agreement. Staff made sure he had everything that he needed and picked him up an emergency food parcel.

We supported Ed to sort out Universal Credit, pay his rent, keep up to date with his medical appointments and prescriptions, and get access to support for his mental health, including telling him about groups he could attend if he wanted to.

Ed maintains his tenancy well and is eating properly, has good personal hygiene and whilst being involved with Street Reach has engaged well and built a positive working relationship. Ed is addressing his physical and mental health and is determined to get back to work when the time is right for him. He is hoping to secure a two bedroom property so that he can have unsupervised overnight access to his child. Ed is now looking forward to a brighter future.



SECOND CHANCE

In 2020, I stupidly committed a number of criminal offences that led to me receiving a 32 month prison sentence, of which I served 16 months inside. I deeply hurt my friends and family, most of whom understandably cut off contact with me, and of course, lost my livelihood.

I was released from jail on licence in November 2021.

The only place I had to go was the home of a relative who had continued to support me, but my background and offending was known to other residents of the street and so I felt continual anxiety and stress that I was causing problems for my relative and was concerned for my and her safety.

After matters came to a head in a confrontation with a neighbour, I knew I had to find alternative accommodation quickly.

I used the internet to search for organisations that could help people in my situation, and fortunately Horton Housing came up. I called them out of the blue, and received a sympathetic and non-judgemental hearing from one of their support workers who asked me to visit their office the next day. On visiting the office, I was again reassured by the calm and supportive attitudes of everyone I met.

Sarah, my support worker, instantly said she would work on finding me accommodation and would help me to handle all aspects of the process – finding a property, claiming the applicable benefits, and liaison with my probation worker and the police.

Leaving Horton's office even after that first visit, I felt my anxiety ease as I knew I had someone dedicated and competent fighting my corner. True to her word,

 **Andrew's story,
in his own words**



Sarah found a temporary property for me as quickly as she could, and was brilliant in ensuring that I could move in as soon as possible. On the day I moved in, she even accompanied me to buy essential home items like a kettle and cooking utensils that were all paid for by Horton.

The property I moved into was ideal for me, and although the previous tenant had not looked after it, Sarah ensured that damaged or missing furniture was replaced and that the property received a thorough deep clean – again, all financed by Horton. Within days, I felt that I was ‘home’, and my mental health and anxiety began to improve markedly.

Since moving in, Sarah and her colleagues have continued to support and encourage me, with weekly visits to help bid for permanent accommodation and to sort out any issues with bills and benefits. I know that Sarah is always available to message or call if I have any issues, and have been so thankful for her and the other Horton employees’ caring and dedicated approach.

As my anxiety became manageable and my mental state improved thanks to my new accommodation, I was able to focus my energies on applying for jobs – again with Sarah’s assistance to motivate me and help me get through tough patches.

I cannot say it has been easy to secure work with a criminal record, but after five months in my new home I succeeded in gaining employment and now have the satisfaction of being able to pay my own way and hopefully become a contributor to rather than a drain upon society again.

I cannot overstate the importance of the support that Horton Housing have given me. It has been absolutely key to my efforts to rebuild a life that I shattered through my own folly and I will always owe Sarah and her colleagues a huge debt of gratitude.

I would encourage anyone in any similar situation to reach out to them as soon as possible and to work with them in the constructive and positive manner that they employ at all times.

***I succeeded in
gaining employment
and now have the
satisfaction of
being able to pay
my own way***



TIME TO TALK

Tom discusses his recovery, volunteering and a fresh outlook.

“Talking is massive,” explains Tom, a volunteer at Horton Housing’s Young Persons’ Prevention and Support Service (YPASS). “With mental health issues, if you isolate them and they are stuck inside your own head, it will start to eat away at you. Connecting with people is a massive thing, as is having a select group of people that you feel comfortable enough to talk with. If you isolate your thoughts, they build up and come with side effects like addiction.”

These experiences are something Tom feels he knows very well. An “alternative upbringing” as he describes it, being surrounded by music festivals meant that drug taking appeared a normality. After demanding roles working in kitchens around Calderdale took its toll, substance taking began to have a huge impact on his life.

“I found it stressful working as a chef, working a shift of 250 or 300 covers. There was a free bar on afterwards so after feeling hyped up from the cooking, I quickly found myself drinking a lot, which over the years led to alcoholism and issues with substance abuse. It quickly became apparent that I weren’t able to just socially use substances and that led to breakdowns in relationships and jobs which ultimately ended up in addiction.”

Tom spent years in a “revolving door”, experiencing homelessness and continuing to misuse drugs, before a prison sentence was the wakeup call he felt was necessary to get back on track.

“That’s when something clicked”, he says. “I was thinking ‘do I really want to spend the rest of my life in and out of custody with no relationship with my mum or my loved ones?’. I started meditating whilst I was inside, doing yoga, started training and running. I really spent time working on myself, building a relationship back up with my mum and got clean. I really wanted to make something of myself and give back and maybe help stop people going on the same path that I have walked down.”

After his release, Tom checked into Alpha House, a Halifax-based organisation that provides recovery support and aims to help people settle back into the community. He was keen to use his cooking expertise and began volunteering at YPASS, a service that offers accommodation and support for young people who are at risk of experiencing homelessness in Calderdale.

“We have a cook and eat class on a Wednesday. It is really informal and about building connections with the young people. We are teaching life skills like cooking but in a laid-back environment to try to encourage them to come out of their shells a little bit. We put on a Christmas dinner which was fantastic. One of the other volunteers dressed as Santa and gave out presents.

“At the end of the day, I walked away from that really happy because we had put smiles on faces at Christmas and it had gone down well!”

As well as the cooking sessions, Tom and his fellow volunteers run outdoor activities with the young people such as themed walks, and are hoping to start sports, music and gardening groups over the summer. He hopes to use his experiences to help make a positive difference and is delighted with the progress he is making.

“My volunteering gives me a routine and structure, lets me feel like I am giving something back and I feel proud of myself, which I haven’t felt for many years. It keeps me on the straight and narrow but on the other hand, if I can connect even with just one young person and stop them going down the same path as me, I will feel like I have made a difference and given something back to the community that I took from for many years.

“It is a healing process for my life and I am really proud that I am doing something positive. A few years ago, I could never dream that I would be in a position like this. Volunteering here is a massive thing for me and has really changed my outlook on what I am capable of and not letting the past define my future.”

Through the connections he is making and by taking time out of his day to talk openly about his experiences, Tom is hoping to inspire the young people he works with to achieve their goals.

Tom was happy to share his story as part of our involvement in Time to Talk Day, the nation’s biggest mental health conversation.

GETTING TO KNOW

HORTON INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT SERVICE (HIPS)

KIRKLEES



Our Horton Intervention & Support Service (HIPS) in Kirklees works alongside people who are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, or are at risk of losing their home due to experiencing difficult times.

HIPS is a community based support service which helps people to transition out of difficult circumstances and take control of their lives. An important element of this is helping people to achieve their ambitions around housing, health and wellbeing, and employment. HIPS also provides 21 units of supported accommodation.

HIPS is part of Kirklees Better Outcomes Partnership (KBOP). KBOP is commissioned by Kirklees Council's Housing Related Support Team to deliver outcomes-focussed services. KBOP is a partnership of specialist providers delivering person-led, flexible, strengths based, trauma-informed support to people going through difficult times.

Unlike traditional floating support services, HIPS does not have a set capacity, and instead takes on a minimum of 25 new people every month. This is regardless of how many people may have left the service.



This has seen the service grow from supporting 90 people at any one time to around 470-500. This is possible because support is much more flexible, and people accessing the service have choice and control over how their support looks. People are able to co-produce their support in terms of frequency, type and location.

The service has a team of support coaches who work with people to find out what their ambitions are and what they want to change in their lives. Support is provided to empower and enable these changes. This can include helping people obtain and sustain their home, improving their mental and physical health, and finding and sustaining employment.

Once people have achieved their ambitions some are ready for full independence and some benefit from the 'checking-in' element of the service. This is provided by our team of engagement coaches who 'check-in' with people at an agreed frequency to ensure they are sustaining their home and / or employment.

The open ended nature of the support helps to reduce the number of people coming back round through services by minimising the impact of any subsequent crises. Working alongside the support and engagement coaches are our employability coaches. They will assist people with realising their ambitions around education, training, volunteering and employment.

Since the partnership began in September 2019, HIPS has delivered over 4,500 outcomes. This includes preventing or relieving homelessness for 270 people and achieving over 1,550 outcomes in relation to people sustaining their homes. The service had also assisted over 300 people to enter some form of education and supported 70 people to enter employment.

For more information about this service, visit our website or search for 'Kirklees Horton Intervention and Prevention Service (HIPS)'.
[Kirklees Horton Intervention and Prevention Service \(HIPS\)](#)



Using my experiences



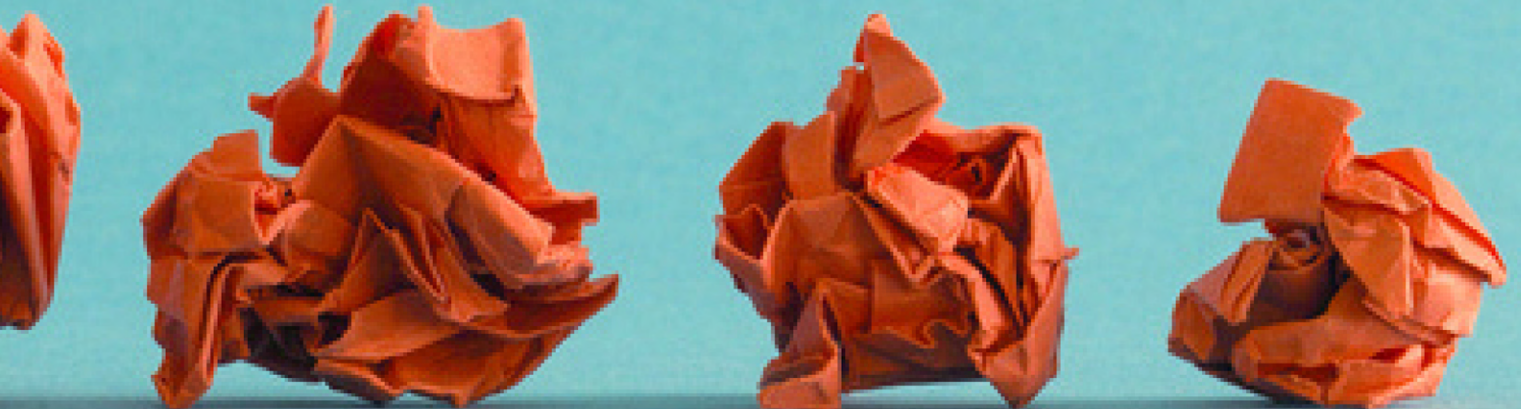
I see a bright future for the young people here. Sometimes, people can't see their own potential and

I want to encourage that, I really do," explains YPASS volunteer David, briefly interrupted by laughter and music in the activities room next door.

"That will be Just Dance on the Wii, but I'm not sure on the song! My role is to support the running of the groups, empowering the young people that we have to think outside the box, bring new ideas, be available and to give back. I help to get the group going; it could be bingo, playing on the Wii like today - as long as we are doing something because it gives people focus."

The initial excitement has died down, the song choice becomes recognisable, and a glimpse through the window offers insight into what is at stake. Eyes are locked onto the dancefloor as two of the young people Horton Housing supports face off to Katy Perry's Hot N Cold, one with a steely, determined look in their eyes after their previous unbeatable score just dropped down to second on the leaderboard.

"When I was young, these sorts of services weren't available," adds David. "I went through childhood trauma at a very young age and felt like I didn't have a voice. That resulted in self-harming. When I was around twelve, I had become quite disillusioned and quite damaged."



“I was getting in trouble with the police a lot and committing crime. They call it attention seeking but I was just really angry and I couldn’t say what was going on.”

Growing up surrounded by alcohol, David’s teenage years saw him in and out of Magistrates’ courts, failing at school and on supervision orders. Aged nineteen, tragedy struck when he lost his mum to cancer and, already struggling with addiction, the last few pillars of support and control in his life had all but vanished.

“Once my mum died, I pressed the button. I was taking recreational drugs like ecstasy, speed and eventually ended up in prison for it. Whilst I was doing this, my sister turned to drink. Unfortunately, my sister passed away when she was 34 to alcoholism.

“I did my first prison sentence at 22. I came out of prison and that is when I discovered heroin. Some drugs I could put down, but when I found heroin, it filled the gaps that I was missing. It covered all the feelings I had: the anger, the hate, the self-loathing; and it made everything feel alright. That was my story for the next 30 years, in and out of prison, homelessness etc. I have always been around services but I didn’t really engage with them until later on in my addiction where I had decimated everything, I was broken and had enough.”

David’s battles with addiction had taken control physically and mentally, leaving him in a crippling cycle of committing crime to fund his drug use whilst he bounced from service to service.

He spent eighteen months living in a graveyard and despite the wakeup call, as he describes it, of his sister’s death to alcohol, his dependence on substances still had a vice-like grip on his life.

“You would have thought ‘it’s killed my sister, it going to kill me’, but I could not stop. I think when you hit that final rock bottom, that is when you have had enough. I started selling the Big Issue





and they really helped me out. This was down the other end of the country and they actually bought me a ticket to get back up to Leeds. As soon as I got into Leeds, I accessed a homeless charity who got me on the housing waiting list.”

After visiting different detox centres and rehab services, David was finally able to succeed in getting clean and is under no illusions about the importance of making that first step.

“That saved my life if I’m going to be completely honest with you because I always thought that I was destined to die a using addict. It is horrible to feel that way but that is how I felt. After that, I came out and I wanted to give back.”

“I became a peer mentor at the first place I got clean and I soon discovered that I have a knack for engaging with others. They say brokenness attracts brokenness and I have been there. I know another person’s pain. I have been there, suffered it. I hate the phrase ‘I’ve got the t-shirt’ because I have a wardrobe full of them. It empowered me to better my life and turn it around.”

Horton Housing’s YPASS service offers accommodation and support to young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in Calderdale. Now part of their growing volunteers team, David’s experiences and positive outlook is helping shape the lives of those involved with the scheme. There is a cheer from next door as Hot N Cold draws to an end, before Survivor’s instantly recognisable hit Eye of the Tiger signals the start of the next dance battle. A smile emanates from his face as David takes a brief moment to reflect, perhaps a fitting song for a person who thought he was down and out many times before.

“This is a kid who left school with no qualifications,” he says. “I educated myself as much as I could in prison and when I came out I did a level two in adult social care and then I did a diploma. I have been trained up in complex needs and safeguarding, and all this has empowered me to do better in life and I want to do that with others. You don’t have to be broken, you just have to want help.

“Anyone that wants recovery can get recovery, with the right support, and that is why I am sat here today doing what I am trying to do for others, and I am enjoying it! I have been here for a short while but the future is bright!”

The future is indeed bright. One of the budding performers next door has just been accepted into university after passing their A-Level exams, and hopes to make a name for themselves in the world of performing arts. The activities YPASS helps run and the support it offers is helping young people use their strengths to build their futures, something David knows cannot be taken for granted.

“When I received support, what I loved about Horton Housing was that one-to-one, person-centred approach they had with me. They have helped me focus on my recovery. Without that, there will be no volunteering, nothing, so that is my priority. I have learnt that the hard way when I have put my recovery second, I ended up relapsing. I take a lot of strength from that.

“I want my pathway to be with Horton Housing because they have recognised my potential. Now, I want to give the people here that. I see a lot of potential and I want them to see it too. Volunteering is helping to build my self-esteem up because for many addicts when they first come into recovery, their self-esteem is on the floor. This for me is building me up and allowing me to build others up.”

WHY WE VOLUNTEER

Jonathan, Activities Volunteer

I provide support to a professional team and the residents at Fairmount. My role is as an Activities Volunteer assisting with a variety of supportive activities, ranging from simple things like walking with someone to the shops or just having time out with a coffee for someone that wants to talk. I help out in the allotment planting veg for the summer with the residents and also in the office at times with some day to day tasks and generally being on hand as a friendly face to help out. I work to support the staff and residents alike and see Fairmount as an evolving, positively charged community.

I decided to become a volunteer to give back my time that others once had kindly given to me and use my skills and learn new things. I wanted to gain confidence in myself and instil belief that help is available to anyone that wishes to make a change in their life. Looking to the future, I am going to college and to start learning again! So much has changed and I'm looking forward to updating my knowledge for the times ahead. I'm not sure where this is all leading for the future but I am happy with the journey. I'm just over 50-years-old, gratefully moving to another new chapter in life.

I have a person-centred, humanistic approach having attained a HNC qualification in counselling 12 years ago. These skills have proven to be very rewarding over time and something I value greatly. I've been working on my cooking skills for the last few months and trying to improve, and I enjoy taking short walks out and about. I love playing my rhythm guitar that has been next to me all these years, keeping me busy when busy was the best for me. Lately I have been practicing singing, though I am tone deaf unfortunately. But I like a challenge and I have improved a little!





UPCYCLING WITH CHRIS

What do you do in your role?

We will be repairing and generally sprucing up furniture that Horton Housing would otherwise be dumping. This includes beds, sofas, arm chairs, tables dining chairs and more. They will then be available for those moving into accommodation. So my role kills two birds with one stone, helping people get started in a new home and also reducing waste.

Why did you want to volunteer?

I retired from furniture making and teaching about a year ago and want to make use of my time and skills. I have long had an interest in homelessness issues, I am a host for Bradford NightStop, so this opportunity seemed appropriate.

Tell us a bit about yourself:

I worked in furniture making and teaching adults for over thirty years. Since retiring I have done a fair bit of volunteering in conservation work with Aire Rivers Trust and River Worth Friends. I also work with Ilkley Tools for Africa, collecting and refurbishing tools to send to craftsmen in Africa. Away from that, my hobbies are fly fishing and musical instrument making.

Shazia, Maths Tutor

What do you do in your role?

I am teaching basic functional maths skills to Afghan women. I am finding it very rewarding and enjoyable and I feel like the ladies are benefitting from it as well. They give me feedback saying that they want more and more all the time!

Why did you want to volunteer?

I have been working as a teacher all of my life and when I left and took early retirement, I had more time on my hands and felt like I could give something back to the community. It provides a real feel good factor that I am doing something for others, not just myself or my family. I bring my knowledge, skills, expertise and subject knowledge as a teacher. I have also brought good interpersonal skills because I regularly talk and chat with

the women. I know what they have gone through and how they are living in temporary accommodation. Some left their families behind so we do talk about important things. I have seen an improvement in the women because they do communicate more and we speak on a WhatsApp group about the classes. They respond and they tell me about their personal lives as well so I do think it is working.

Tell us a bit about yourself:

Away from my volunteering, I like to travel and I love to read. I am very much into developing my theological knowledge, my religious knowledge and my overall knowledge of the world. I love watching crime dramas and I am into my fitness, either going to the gym, swimming or fitness classes.



THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Joanne is one of our managers. Her own experiences have helped her to empathise with the people she works with and understand the challenges they face. This is her story.

I had a good childhood, a good upbringing. I did really well at school and went onto college to do nursery nurse training.

There was a lot of heroin around when I was a teenager and a lot of my friends were using it. Curiosity got the better of me, I tried it and I liked it. I liked the way it made me feel.

It started with using heroin on a Friday. I still continued to work which led me to living two lives. This went on for many years, I then started experimenting with other substances. Smoking crack and using prescription drugs that I bought from the streets. It then became obvious to everyone I was using.

I became pregnant with my daughter. I was scared to go to a doctor. I was afraid they would take her away from me, so I weaned myself off the drugs on my own throughout my pregnancy and she was born healthy.

After I gave birth, it wasn't long before I started using again. My manager would ask me why I was turning up late and I had the attitude that I was right, and everyone else was wrong. This continued until I became pregnant with my second child. I was 35 by this time and I needed to make changes, I wanted to change but had so many failed attempts at this. The power of addiction has great strength.

I eventually realised I could not do this alone and I went to the Ripple drug and alcohol service for treatment. I was one of the first people who was prescribed Subutex in pregnancy.

I also went to a one stop maternity programme for pregnant women who were on drugs and I weaned myself off again. My doctor at the time was amazing. I actually started working alongside him when I worked for the Substance Support Service. I found this very rewarding and he actually did too.

I applied for voluntary work at a scheme which Horton Housing took over and I was offered a job with the HARP scheme, helping people in recovery. Working there

give people a bit of your story, a bit of your life experience, then they trust you.

Denise, who is still my manager now, has supported me for many years. I have had many opportunities over the years. I studied a level three in housing management and I am now studying level five.

Horton Housing has been a part of my journey. It made me feel worthy and that someone could see something in me.

I found that if you give people a bit of your story, a bit of your life experience, then they trust you.

really opened my eyes and made me look at my life and the way I behaved. I didn't think I was causing any damage to the people around me, but I was throughout my addiction. I became the programme manager and thoroughly enjoyed supporting people on the journey of recovery and learning to live life without using mind altering substances.

My passion was to reach out and work with people whose lives were more chaotic, people who thought they were worthless. I felt like this for many years in my life. This is when I joined the Substance Support Team on secondment. I was working with people who had the same issues I had had. I found that if you

I don't see myself as a manager, but I do see myself as a leader. I understand the situations people are in. I have been homeless, I have sofa surfed, I have experienced violence. I have an empathetic approach but I also take a firm stance when people try to manipulate me. I've been there, done that!

I'm 16 years clean this year. People ask me if I have any regrets and I don't. If I hadn't lived that life, I wouldn't be who I am today. I wouldn't have the strength I have today.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has been a part of my journey at Horton Housing.

Alcohol Free

Shabana has experienced domestic violence, frequent hospital visits and a battle with alcoholism. Since her involvement with our services, she is finding the power to turn her life around. This is her story.

I had been drinking for 20 years. I'm 42 now. I went into detox in November 2022 when I came to HIPS (Horton Intervention and Prevention Service). I have now been clean for around four months and continue to recover.

I have lived a rough life. I fled from domestic violence and have been in and out of hospital. When I was younger I was often out partying and used to drink enough to blackout, didn't know who I spoke to, what I said or what I had done. I suffered from terrible hangovers. This gradually got from bad to worse. I also had depression and was always feeling down. Drinking didn't really make me feel better. I self-isolated myself in my flat for around four or five years and a few times I even felt suicidal.

My culture doesn't recognise mental health and alcoholism. I don't feel that I can reach out to others in my community because of this. I think that people shouldn't have to feel this cultural pressure and should instead feel able to reach out for help.

The support from Horton Housing and other organisations has been amazing. My support workers are non-judgemental, supportive and listen to me. I know it could be very easy to relapse after 20 years. I wouldn't have found it as easy to be where I am at now if it wasn't for them.

I am now focusing on my recovery and keeping myself busy. I am doing courses and have completed a few, including a Level 1 in Money Management and a Level 2 in Information, Advice and Guidance.

I have an interest in interior design and I am enjoying redecorating my flat which is something I can do with the money I've saved from giving up alcohol. I'm looking to start travelling and doing a calligraphy course after I've finished my current courses. I would also like to learn to drive.

I currently volunteer as a peer mentor. This is my best achievement. I enjoy helping people like myself. It gives me personal satisfaction knowing that I am helping someone to change their life.

I wish that I went for help a long time ago. I want to raise awareness and to make people from the same background as me to feel comfortable to ask for help.

I'm amazed at what I've achieved in the last few months. My relationships are better as I can clearly see who is good and bad for me, and have cut the bad people from my life. My general health has also improved. Through giving up alcohol, I have lost three stone. Coffee and cigarettes are my replacement of it.

I'm also looking after my mental health. Everything is positive now. I'm more capable of doing the things I thought I couldn't do. Everything I start I now I finish, which I'm proud of as I couldn't do this when I was drinking. I still battle with confidence and other issues, but I feel I will overcome this.

I am looking for full-time work and in six months there is a job opening as a peer mentor. I would like to be an inspiration and an example that changing your life can be done.



Craig Wilkinson, Housing Support Worker

Before I started volunteering with the HOP team, I had spent my life under the impression that I was worthless. I was nothing. I would never amount to anything. These were things that I had always been told. I was the lowest of the low in society because of what I did, the drugs that I had taken and the lifestyle that I chose.

I was in addiction from a very early age, which went on for a number of years until I was in my early twenties. That is when I started taking the harder stuff, heroin and crack. That soon progressed from smoking to injecting. I did that for 18 years until around six years ago when I decided I was going to make a change in my life and I was going to stop doing that.

I went on to methadone and I started volunteering. I did my Adult Health and Social Care Level 1 and Level 2 and shortly afterwards I started volunteering for the Hepatitis C Trust. In a meeting in Bradford, a staff member from Horton Housing and somebody from the Bridge Project were there and I liked the jumpers for the HOP team! I told myself, 'I want to work with them' so I started volunteering with them for four months before I was employed by Humankind and then joined Horton at our Fairmount service as a Housing Support Worker.

I personally think that I am progressing every day as a person, in strength both physically and mentally. They have given me every opportunity to better myself, which I have taken, and I am currently doing my level three diploma in adult health and social care.

I generally make pots of coffee for the lads that come up early and sort out medications. Any appointments that they need to go to, we arrange to take them there. We also do activities with them, we have an allotment outside and we have taken them on boat trips and to theme parks like Alton Towers.



Craig (left) volunteering

OWN IT

My life experience and everything that I have been through seems to be a common thread between substance users. They all seem to have come from a similar background to myself so when I sit down and have talks with the individuals, they seem to get me and I seem to be able to understand what they are saying.

In the way that I changed my thought process, it made me become a person that not only wanted to better myself, but also to better the lives of people who are in a similar situation to myself. In doing that, it really has changed my whole outlook on life. I began to understand that people do appreciate me and I began to appreciate myself at the same time.





HOME

Gareth and his pregnant partner were living in a high rise flat in Bradford before they received support from our services.

Gareth has a curved back which causes him pain and asthma which made climbing the stairs to his flat difficult.

Gareth has Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after suffering abuse as a foster child along with schizophrenia, anxiety and depression. He also has hearing loss and problems with his vision.

“At the beginning it was hard,” Gareth said. “I used to let what had happened to me hold me back. I had kept it secret for

I AM A SURVIVOR. MY PROBLEMS DON'T DEFINE ME.

He and his partner both experience mental health challenges caused by past traumas and learning disabilities. With concerns about his partner’s mental health and fear that she may harm herself and the baby, the couple wanted to find somewhere more suitable to live.

Our HACS 4-Men service in Bradford helped Gareth, his partner and their young son to find a home – directly opposite his mum. The new place has a garden for the youngster to play in and means that Gareth can get out more.

“It’s better because it’s not so high up. Now I have my mum close by for support,” he said.

ten years but then I had some counselling. It helped me deal with my issues and now I can talk about them. I’m a survivor and I don’t let my problems define me. Horton Housing has helped in every way possible.”

Gareth has been volunteering with the St John’s Ambulance and would like to start working with the youth team.

Despite his anxiety about being in crowded spaces, Gareth recently volunteered at a Bradford City football match where he watched the Bantams seal a spot in the League Two play-offs with a draw against champions Leyton Orient.



APPRECIATING





ACCEPTANCE

Greetings! I'm Lucas, a 24-year-old with a passion for creating unique fictional worlds and immersing myself in storytelling. Whether it's through world-building, crafting narratives or even playing Minecraft, I find joy in transporting myself and others to new and exciting places. Beyond my creative pursuits, I strive to connect with individuals who share similar interests and values.

Transitioning to Craven Homeless Hub marked a turning point in my life. Prior to my arrival, I faced numerous familial struggles that made each day an uphill battle. However, my experience at Craven Homeless Hub has been a game-changer, empowering me to overcome those obstacles. Here I will share how the unwavering support of the staff and their acceptance of me for who I am have created a positive impact on my life, fostering personal growth and opening up new opportunities.

At Craven Homeless Hub, I found a safe haven where my voice was encouraged and celebrated. The workers here, with their genuine acceptance and support, helped me regain the confidence to express myself authentically. This newfound empowerment has been instrumental in reclaiming my identity and navigating life's challenges with newfound strength.

Craven Homeless Hub has been a catalyst for personal growth in my life. Surrounded by individuals who accept and embrace me for who I am, I have been able to explore my potential and expand my horizons. The nurturing environment, combined with the diverse range of experiences shared by fellow residents, has broadened my perspective and enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the world around me. This newfound awareness has ignited a desire for continuous self-improvement and has opened doors to exciting new opportunities.

I am profoundly grateful for the acceptance I have received within Craven Homeless Hub and the town that I hold dear to my heart. Returning to the place where I was raised, I feared judgment and exclusion due to the difficult circumstances I faced with my family. However, the Craven Homeless Hub community, along with the town's residents, has warmly embraced me with open arms. Their acceptance and understanding have not only eased my concerns but also reaffirmed my sense of belonging and reinforced the deep connection I have with my hometown.

At this moment, my life goal is still unclear as I continue to explore and ponder various career paths. Whether it's

becoming a game developer, a cinematographer, or pursuing any other creative job, what matters to me is finding a profession that allows me to improve and explore the realms of imagination. I am drawn to creative jobs that nurture my passion for storytelling and enable me to express my unique ideas. As I continue to reflect on my aspirations, I am excited to embark on a career path that aligns with my creative inclinations and provides opportunities for growth and exploration.

Although I missed attending the Skipton Pride festival this year as it did not take place in Skipton, I am excited to share that I am eagerly looking forward to the upcoming Grassington Pride Event. Attending this event is not only an opportunity to celebrate diversity and inclusivity but also a chance to immerse myself in a vibrant and supportive community. The thought of being surrounded by like-minded individuals who share similar values and experiences fills me with anticipation and joy. I am eager to enjoy myself, connect with others, and feel a sense of belonging that will uplift my spirits and remind me that I am not alone on this journey. The Grassington Pride Event promises to be a positive and empowering experience and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a part of it.

I want to extend my profound appreciation for gracing my work with your presence. Your willingness to immerse yourself in my writing and engage with my thoughts and experiences fills me with immense appreciation. The depth of your engagement and the thoughtful consideration you give to my words truly astounds me.






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