

IT'S MADE ME LOOK AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY IN LIFE

well
together

It feels like I'm actually trying to do something good. Which is obviously a good thing.

“ I smoked cannabis for about 24 - 25 years because when I was a young kid, I had loads of drama. I got savaged by a dog, as you can see. That's what's triggered all my mental health issues. Because I was so young at the time, I didn't know what it was. It actually didn't click until I was, like, in my 30s. It took a long time for me to actually figure out what was going on and then eventually it sunk in - obviously, yeah, you've got massive mental health problems. And then, kind of moving forward from that, I was homeless for about 5 and a half, six months. I got introduced to this place.

At first, I kind of struggled because I didn't know exactly what to do. I'd just turn up in the morning, maybe have a cup of tea, speak to a couple of people. I didn't really know what was going on, but then after a couple of months, I started making a few friends in here. Which made things a lot easier, made things a lot smoother. Met a few nice people here. Me and Graham - which is probably one of my best friends downstairs. I come in with him - me and him have a bit of banter, have a chat, maybe have a bit of pool. Try and chat to a few of people down there if possible. But normally just keep myself to myself.

Eventually, I did manage to get my own place - which is obviously a massive relief because nobody wants to be homeless. It's obviously not a great situation to be in. It's pretty poor, not having nowhere to stay. Living in a tent.

And then, going maybe a couple of months down the line, I was asked to come and volunteer in the drop-in and just help out in the drop-in. I've gone through the process of filling out the forms, and health and safety forms, and everything else that's required. And then I'll basically help out in the kitchen every now and then, making teas and coffees. If you get people coming in that are asking for tents or sleeping bags or whatever they give me the keys to go into the cupboard and get the tent or a sleeping bag or whatever else they need to sort them out.

Moving forward after that, about two or three months ago, they asked me if I wanted to come out and do volunteering for outreach. Outreach is where you go and verify all the homeless people in town, so we drive around the surrounding areas just going out to check people are where they are, if they're there. If they are there, we'd go and approach them. Say hello. Sometimes they would come up and talk to us. We give them some forms to fill out, which is basically the first step of the process to try and get you back into a property. If they come out, they fill the forms out, then they're verified. You verify them three times and then after that, the process is starting to begin. So then hopefully you can try and get into your own property, so to speak. Which is exactly what happened to me.

I think it's made my mental health a little bit better and I'm starting to feel a little bit stronger. And now obviously I'm giving back, I'm trying to give back to people that are vulnerable, like I was. It's making me feel a little bit better in myself. I'm feeling a little bit more happier, more comfortable. It feels like I'm actually trying to do something good. Which is obviously a good thing. Honestly, I just think like over the time it's changed my whole persona. So it's made me look at things differently in life. Basically, my whole life just revolves around my children. Everything is just for my kids.

What they're doing here is a massive, massive thing because there's so many vulnerable people in town. And this is probably one of the only places they can actually come to feel a little bit more secure, a little bit more safe. That's a really, really good thing. It's a big, big thing what they're doing here. It helps so many people. I think so many people in town would be completely lost if the drop in wasn't here. It seems to be working very, very well. Everyone here seems to like just work as a bit of a team or whatever. You know, I mean, they all seem to be on the same page. Just giving people a different opportunity and just somewhere to go, it gives them a little bit more freedom. They can come here, chill out, have something to eat, or a tea and coffee, meet some people, make friends or whatever. And just try to be more happy, which is obviously what I was trying to do.





To help us understand the impact of Well Together, for organisers and attendees of funded activities, we have used storytelling as a component of our evaluation framework. Storytelling is an approach based on the Most Significant Change technique that has been used by the Old Fire Station since 2017, who now offer training and support to partners across Oxfordshire.

The Well Together stories are being gathered from organisers volunteering or working for a range of groups and organisations, and from the people who take part in the activities provided by groups. They are being collected in 2025 by the Well Together programme team who have been trained as story collectors.

By telling their stories, participants taking part in this approach, have the chance to reflect on what has changed for them through their involvement in providing activities and / or participating in them. How has it affected their life? Why has it been important to them?

The stories were recorded, transcribed and then edited down to two pages each - aiming to use the teller's own words, retaining their "voice" and reflecting the teller's insights into the impacts and the significance for them.

*For more information about this methodology, and to read stories collected from a range of other projects visit the Old Fire Station's website dedicated to this approach:
[Storytelling: Human-friendly evaluation](#)*

With thanks to our story tellers

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