



YOU CAN JUST SEE  
PEOPLE GRADUALLY  
BEING PULLED IN

well  
together

It's lovely being here and actually working on the ground.

“ I've been here for about 7 or 8 weeks now but feels longer, already settling in. You just get to know people and you get to know what sort of mood they're in and can have a chat. I think having the consistency with me as the coordinator, every day - you do get to know people and it's very, very rewarding. Nobody wants to be homeless. Nobody wants to be vulnerable. Nobody wants to be in these situations and through - whatever reason - they are there.

I mean, obviously, I haven't been here that long, but even seeing the people that do come in, there are days where people come in and they're very quiet and you can tell when they're off. You can go and have a chat with them and just make sure they're OK and ask if they need anything. A lot of people do plan their time around coming here. They know when we're open and their days are planned around coming here. You can set your timings by some people - you know the order that they're going to walk through the door.

But, at the moment, we're only open four days a week - so we've got Friday, Saturday, Sunday where they may not eat for those three days or get anything warm. But it's the space as well. It's just that safe space. Some people only come in and have a coffee and a game of pool, but it's just somewhere that they can come and just sit and just socialise for a little bit or get out of the cold - or heat, at this time of year.

I think a lot of people just wouldn't have anything if they didn't have this place to come to. There's just nothing else like it around town, really. We've got food banks and there are larders to get things, but a lot of homeless people just don't have anywhere that they can cook. The food vouchers only go so far, or if they've got benefits and buying food, you're buying stuff that's already prepared, and you know the money doesn't stretch. You can't buy sort of bulk products because you don't know whether it's going to be there when you get back to where you're sleeping rough.

When they first come in, they sort of go and sit on the little table in the corner on their own because they're new and don't know what's going on, and then - all of a sudden - they're up playing pool with everybody else and joining in, suddenly part of the little groups that tend to get together. You can just see people gradually being pulled in. I'll come out of the kitchen with the spray, ready to start wiping tables down, and they'll jumping up and say, "Well, let me help you with that", and folding the tables up for me and helping put away. I think they just feel at home here.

The pool table - that sort of attracts people. There's always a laugh going on around that and I think they make their own rules up half the time because they pot the white ball more than anything. People come back - there's a guy who just literally comes from a game of pool and a cup of tea. He's at his house now and sorted, and he's OK. But he just comes back to see the people. There's a few people that I know now, that I didn't know at the beginning of their journey, but that are popping in and still doing well.

We've had a guy here who came in about a week after I'd started and was just really down and rough sleeping and had lost everything. He got his own flat this week and just seeing the smile on his face and he just looks healthier, you know, coming in and having that hot meal. It's just watching his journey over the last sort of six weeks or so – it's amazing. It makes you realise why you want to be here doing this job.

We had somebody in who's got a disabled partner, and he was just being asked to go over to Universal Credit and was panicking about that. And just by sitting and having a chat with him we realised that he didn't know anything about the carers elements and that he was looking after his partner. So, we just had a chat with him about that. So now he's getting all that extra element in his benefits that he wasn't before.

I think it is that importance of the face-to-face service - because I know, especially after COVID, a lot of stuff's gone remote or digital or phone advice. And I think it's just still having that face-to-face service where people can drop in and actually see somebody. I know it is to get something to eat, but there is just that other support around. That is just so important, and I think it's lovely being here and actually working on the ground and doing that. People are vulnerable because they don't have the ability to do everything digitally and on their own. They need that backup.





*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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