



A heart full of hope after years of struggle

How Second Step's floating support service turned one woman's life around

Michelle's struggles began when she lost her home 13 years ago, following the death of her husband. Frozen by grief and with her world turned upside down, Michelle soon found herself unable to pay bills and accumulated a debt of £2000. Michelle was evicted and moved between the homes of various family members along with her children, including Alison, who is disabled – convinced her debt meant she had lost her entitlement to social housing.

When Michelle's sister became ill a few years ago, Michelle moved in with her in their mother's house. Both her mother's and sister's health deteriorated quickly so Michelle became their main carer and was left homeless again after their deaths, again deep in grief.

Sofa - surfing

When the North Somerset floating support team met Michelle, she was sleeping on the sofa of her daughter Alison's home. The scene that greeted them was grim: a three bedroom prefab house overcrowded with five adults and four children. All of them were ill, suffering with a bronchial infection, worryingly this included a new-born baby.

At first Michelle's anxiety meant that she struggled to open up about her finances as she believed she would get into trouble. With the support of Second Step they disentangled her problems and helped Michelle to prioritise.

Debt management

Lisa, Michelle's Support Worker helped her to set up a payment plan for her debt, as well as applying for benefits and successfully bidding on a new property close to her family.

Before working with Second Step, Michelle had forgotten what it felt like to be optimistic. Now she is feeling positive about the future for the first time since her husband died. She says:

“My grandchildren have got their Nan back which feels great”.

Names have been changed

Media Group Cath proud to share her story on BBC2

In September BBC2 ran a programme on depression as part of the series Trust Me I'm a Doctor. Cath, who is one of our Media Group members, talks frankly about her struggle with depression. To watch a six-minute clip from the programme presented by Dr Saleyha Ahson visit: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0479jq5

Cath said: “It pushed me out of my comfort zone, but I am so proud I did it and got the message out to so many people. I felt on a high afterwards, a nice high, it was a big boost to my confidence.”

Welcome to Second Step News



The theme of this year's World Mental Health Day was psychological first aid and it's precisely this approach that Second Step support worker Lisa Murfin applied to the chaotic situation which greeted her when visiting Michelle and her family for the first time. As you can read below, Michelle and her family of nine were crammed into a three-bedroomed house all suffering from serious chest infections. Lisa dealt with Michelle's most urgent issues and then helped her to disentangle her emotional and financial worries working through them systematically.

Read too about recent happenings with our Media Group, a new peer project launched called UP and about the Executive Management Team who will be visiting every team throughout November.

This is your Second Step News, the newsletter for staff, volunteers and people who use our services. Please do get in touch to share your news and stories for our next edition due out before Christmas.

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Media Group to the rescue

The Second Step Media Group turned around a disappointing situation last month when they arrived to speak during a slot on BCFM Community Radio. The station had double-booked Second Step's slot with their Healthwatch Bristol programme. Not only was there a double booking but their regular technician had been held up and didn't arrive on time. So our own Tim Day took to the control desk and looked after the mixing and smooth execution of their programme. The show was a great success and to say thank you, the Healthwatch Team have agreed for Second Step's service user-led group to have a special pre-Christmas show on Tuesday November 8th.



Expect to hear some exclusive interviews on coping at this time of year, tips for festive buying on a budget and some reminiscing of Christmases gone by. You can tune in at 93.2 MHz FM and on DAB digital radio in central and urban Bristol and online at www.bcfmradio.com

Volunteer Services launch the UP Project

A new pilot homelessness research project called UP (the United Peer project) has started at Second Step.

UP's mentors are unique; they have experienced homelessness or issues facing those who have experienced homelessness themselves and we are going to find out at what point of a person's journey peer support is most effective.

UP will look specifically at the value peer mentoring support can bring in a five year pilot which is being evaluated by researchers from Southampton University.

The project - which is led by Second Step's Volunteering Services Manager Steph Champion - has already recruited 10 peer volunteers. They will now be matched with current Second Step clients who are at risk of homelessness and work with them as mentors.

Psychologically informed approach

UP peer mentors will be trained using cognitive behavioural techniques to support their clients. The overall aim of the project is to reduce and prevent homelessness and to enable people with a history of homelessness to lead more independent fulfilling lives.

Second Step is working with partners Homeless Link, 1625ip and Golden Key. For more information or if you would like to get involved please email David Wright: david.wright2@second-step.co.uk

Golden Key debates homelessness with city partners

Last month Golden Key held a breakfast debate with other city partners including Marvin Rees to discuss how to end homelessness and make housing work for vulnerable people in Bristol.

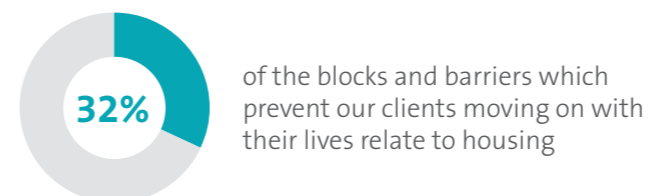
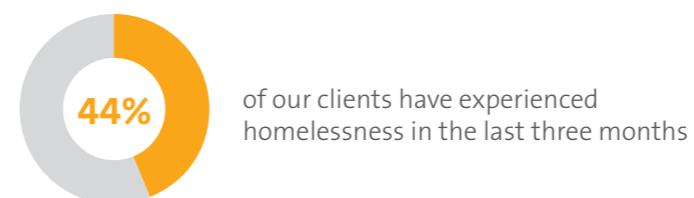
"Action on homelessness needs to be taken now before the winter hits, and for the longer term"

the Mayor told the packed debate on Thursday 29 September. Speaking to representatives of voluntary organisations, Bristol City Council, GPs, housing providers and business leaders, Mr Rees pledged his support for Golden Key's #nomore campaign.

The audience also heard from Professor Alex Marsh, Professor of Public Policy at the University of Bristol, Matt Griffith, Director of Policy at Business West, Adam Rees, Golden Key partner and Regional Director at St Mungo's and Darren Nuttall a founding member and former Chair of IF, a group of people with first hand experience of homelessness, mental health and drug and alcohol dependency which acts as an advisory group to Golden Key.

Laurie Stansfield, a local artist, came along to capture the outcomes in drawings, a powerful format for summing up the key points.

Our research shows that



Bristol has the highest number of rough sleepers outside London.



Later, representatives of key organisations discussed a plan of action to tackle homelessness as part of a radical new 'city office' which the Mayor has created to look at the city-wide issues.

The outcomes of the day-long debate are that Golden Key are in discussions with the Mayor to deliver on three different homelessness issues. One project is to create 100 more bed spaces for homeless people by Spring 2017. A second is to work with Bristol businesses to create new work opportunities for people who have experienced homelessness to ensure ongoing recovery. This Livelihood Programme will be done through buddying and will include mentoring, learning skills and work placements. Lastly, a partnership of diverse agencies will drive forward a Hearts and Minds Campaign to engage the whole of Bristol to reduce stigma and open minds around homelessness.

Join our #nomore conversation on Twitter @goldkeyBristol



Would you like to help us find out what other service users think of Second Step?

We are the Service Improvement Group (SIG). We are looking for a few people to help conduct interviews of Second Step service users. We will train and support you to prepare for this work.

SIG is made up of both current and former service users. We gather information which helps Second Step improve the services they provide. It is a great way to help you gain confidence; it supports recovery and will provide an opportunity to learn new skills, which can add to your CV for future employment.

If you would like to be involved, please contact us at sig@second-step.co.uk with your name and contact details, so we can let you know when the next training will be held.

After successfully completing the training, Second Step will offer you £7.20 per hour, plus travel expenses for any work you do with SIG.

Please note we would particularly welcome interest from people currently being supported by Second Step.

Taking action on our business plan

The Executive Management team: Aileen Edwards - Chief Executive, Paul Flood - Director of Operations and Chris Arnold - Director of Resources will be visiting each team during November to talk to you about Second Step's new Business Plan, the new brand and the Next Steps Project.

Invitations with the date will be sent to you shortly. As well as hearing about exciting things happening in Second Step, there will be time for staff to discuss how we all work to support the business plan.

Information, education and inspiration

Staff training at Second Step has stepped up a gear over the last few months. Every member of staff attends core training with Tash Jenner on hand to ensure the mandatory training programme is as inspirational as possible.

Feedback from staff has been positive. Golden Key's Joe Fisher recently attended Mental Health Awareness training. He said: "I just wanted to feedback that the training was great – well pitched, confidently facilitated and inclusive – I felt engaged throughout the day and thought Suzanne handled such a range of staff and experience impressively."



And trainers too are enthusiastic. Jo MacDonald teaches the Equality and Diversity Training and said: "It is exciting to work with Second Step, something shifts in people during the training. Employees are on the whole very engaged with equality and diversity, and the training helps people to become even more aware of their client group. I believe that this shift helps people to deliver even better services and be the best they can be in their work."

If you have any training queries please contact Tash Jenner via email: learning@second-step.co.uk

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