



On the frontline at Toll Court

In an occasional series looking at our services from the viewpoint of our frontline staff, we talk to support worker, Alex Sinclair, about her role at Toll House Court, part of Second Step's High Support Accommodation Service.

Toll House Court consists of 20 flats occupied by men and women with complex needs that include homelessness, mental health issues and addiction. Half of the flats are allocated for people coming straight from psychiatric hospital and the other half for people moving on from homeless hostels. Generally people stay between four to six months.

Alex (pictured above) said: "We work with tenants on goal setting, time management, assertiveness and positive relationships as well as more practical matters such as benefits claims, seeing a GP for medication and linking in with drug and alcohol services. The service is psychologically informed and supports some of the most excluded and vulnerable people, including people with complex trauma.

"The main challenge of the role, and also what makes the role so interesting, is supporting such a broad range of service users with a wide range of issues, I have learned a lot in a short time and continue to learn a lot."

The secret to its success

Alex believes the layout of Toll House Court is part of its success. "There is one front door for both tenants and staff which means that everyone can be greeted and is great for communication. We can easily remind people of things or ask a quick question. If someone is acting unusually, then this is picked up straight away.

"The project is built around a courtyard garden where staff and tenants mix together and share informal chats; these

chats mean that strong relationships are formed quickly. There is a weekly art group and coffee evenings as well as a Sunday morning breakfast club where many of the tenants come together to share breakfast.

"We have a skilled team here and the team have different areas of knowledge and lived experience, so we learn from each other to support the service users in the best way possible."

Alex builds trust with the tenants and she is proud of the fact that in the last two years Bristol City Council statistics show that no-one has returned to the homelessness pathway. She puts this down to the fact that the team works hard to ensure people are ready to move on at the end of their time at Tollhouse Court and they are therefore set up to succeed in their progression to independence.

Statistic Box

- 3 projects in the Service – Tollhouse Court, Wayland Court and Homefield Court
- 10 out of the 39 flats are specifically for people who are leaving psychiatric hospital
- The staff team is made up of support assistants, peer assistants, peers and support workers, night staff and senior staff.

Welcome to SecondStep news



Welcome to Second Step News - the newsletter for staff, volunteers and people who use our services.

This Spring issue highlights the work of Alex, one of our frontline staff at our Toll House Court project. Alex now works with the Golden Key Programme supporting the programme's advisory group, IF.

We also talk to Samaya (who is with our High Support Accommodation Service) about being part of a recent hustings event for Bristol's mayoral candidates. There's an events round-up, some interesting statistics from our Volunteering Service about why our volunteers volunteer for us and much more.

Do get in touch if you'd like to share your news for the next issue due out in June.

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Talking to the candidates first hand

Samaya Rafiq, one of our service users from our High Support Accommodation Service, recently attended a Mayoral hustings event run by the Supported Housing Forum – a group of organisations including Second Step which run supported housing across Bristol.

All the main candidates attended the event at the Compass Centre in Stokes Croft - George Ferguson (Independent), Marvin Rees (Labour Party), Charles Lucas (Conservative party), Kay Barnard (Liberal Democrat Party), Tony Dyer (Green Party) and Paul Turner (UK Independence Party)

The candidates were asked to talk for three minutes about themselves and also to address the key question for the event which was: "Despite challenging budget constraints, how will you ensure that Bristol has the services it needs for homeless and vulnerable citizens?"

Samaya said: "It was a really interesting event. I felt the Mayor George Ferguson tried to dodge the question I was asking. But it was interesting to hear what he and the others had to say. Marvin, the Labour candidate, seemed to be more understanding about what is going on than the others.

"I didn't get the chance to ask them about what they would do about the fact so many homeless people are suffering from mental health problems, which was a shame."

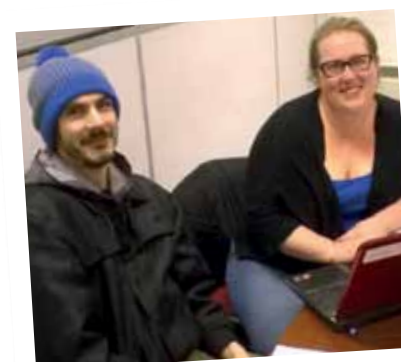
The views expressed here are our service user's and not Second Step's.

Sleeping bags for smarties – thanks to our staff in Weston.

An inspired fundraising idea from our Second Step's Weston team resulted in more than **£150 for the Salvation Army**. Louise and Paulette collected empty Smarties tubes and filled them with 20 pence pieces with help from their families, friends and colleagues.

The funds were used to buy much-needed sleeping bags. Well done to you, this was a great fundraising effort from everyone in the team!

Stepping Forward Group's Positive Influence



The Stepping Forward Group at work

The Stepping Forward Group (SFG) consists of current and former service users and we meet once a month. The SFG has been running for over 10 years and is involved in several different areas across the organisation.

We meet with key members of staff to produce and deliver presentations and training as well as policy/strategy work. This included co-writing the Service User Involvement Policy and we are currently reviewing the Complaints Policy with members of staff.

As a result of this Second Step will now receive training in recruitment practice, all services report on service user involvement monthly and we are currently reviewing the complaints procedure with members of staff.

Members of the SFG have also been working in several mixed membership groups with staff, including the Operational Policy Review Group and the Business Plan Development Group.

Second Step have agreed to work with us over the next year to create more involvement opportunities for both current and former service users. Second Step has also signed up to the National Involvement Standards and most of the senior managers have been trained by us about the best practice in service user involvement.



Success at Speedwell

We recently held a successful drop-in event for the neighbours of our proposed new development in Speedwell – the new accommodation part of the Community Rehabilitation Service. People were invited to view the design and plans for a brand new building which will stand on the site of the old Speedwell Centre in Whitefield Road, Bristol. (This part of the service is currently provided at Wellbridge House in Brentley).

Reaction to the plans – which were carefully put together with input from clients and carers at every stage – was enthusiastic. The final plans were due to be submitted to Bristol City Council in early March. Construction is due to start in Autumn 2016 and is likely to take around nine months to complete.

Events Update

Second Step has been involved with three events this year: Blue Monday at The Galleries in Broadmead in January, our own Time For You event at our Brunswick Square offices in February and supporting Homelessness Awareness Week at a stall in the Bearpit. The 'Time for You' event was very popular with staff who took time out for coffee and cake as well as sharing top tips to keep healthy at work.

Thank you to everyone who has helped and volunteered at any of these three events. Your support is really appreciated.

Volunteer Survey - the results are in!

In November, we undertook a survey to see what our volunteers think about our service. These are some of the results.

Over 70% of our volunteers said they volunteered to give something back, with more than 60% wanting to gain experience in the sector and develop their skills. 40% want to build their confidence and meet new people.

This is important information as it enables us to focus on the areas of support that meet the needs of our volunteers.

We also asked how much impact volunteers feel they make. Most people said some, and this is something we would like to increase. Volunteers are so valuable and appreciated within Second Step by staff and service users alike.

100% of volunteers feel supported by the Volunteer Coordinator Team. We are really pleased to see that so many of our volunteers value the support and supervision given as part of our commitment to volunteers.

Being psychologically informed

Throughout the survey, many of you highlighted your interest in volunteering in clinical or therapeutic environments. Many of our services work within a Psychologically Informed Environment and we will be working with our Psychological Therapist to help volunteers understand what we mean by 'Psychologically Informed Environments', or PIE, and reflect on this. Volunteers will be able to book onto sessions in the coming months.

In response to so many volunteers wanting to gain experience in the sector and develop their skills, we are offering volunteers the opportunity to shadow staff or volunteers and try other roles to learn new skills and about a variety of our services.

Thanks to all who completed the survey, your thoughts and input have been so valuable and are helping to shape our service.

If you would like to say thank you to our volunteers, or share your experiences of working alongside volunteers, email volunteering@second-step.co.uk

In The Mind Mental health has been prominent on the news and on our screens in February. BBC One have dedicated two weeks of their scheduling to explore this important subject in closer detail across a range of programming from news and drama to documentaries and features.



Starting on Monday 15 February, the season included stories of life and death, hope, scientific discovery and much more helping raise public awareness and understanding of issues relating to mental health.

Charlotte Moore, Controller BBC TV Channels and iPlayer, says:



Ten years on since Stephen Fry's Emmy-award-winning film about manic depression, it now feels like the right time to bring this important subject to a mainstream audience on BBC One. To find out what has changed, what progress has been made and what the future holds for people living with mental health conditions in the UK. Over the last decade, we've broken down taboos, and medical advances mean we have a greater understanding of the brain than ever before, but we're not there yet. There is still so much more that needs to be done."

The documentaries on Stephen Fry and bipolar disorder as well as on Life After Suicide and around Postpartum Psychosis are well worth watching.

SecondStep
Working for Recovery and Wellbeing

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