

Better Outcomes Better Lives

Alice's persistence pays off and 71-year-old George finally has a home...

Celebrating you
Alice Bates



George has been homeless, on and off, for almost 20 years. He's 71 years old, has no drug or alcohol issues and in recent years, has been sleeping at Manchester Airport, spending his days in St Ann's Square or the Library. Despite attempts, he was distrustful of services and wouldn't engage.

Social Worker, Alice Bates tells us... About six months ago I opened George up as a case for myself. **I tried to more proactively engage with him**, going to find him at the library or in the airport. I tried to tell him the housing options that were available to him, but he'd always just say "I'm sorting it". George has some health problems and was registered with Urban Village, but even when the GP bus was outside the library, he wouldn't go in.

I kept persisting, and finally, a couple of months ago, I bumped into George outside the Town Hall. He said, "**Could you help me a bit?**"

George's worldly belongings were in one bag-for-life. I went straight Tesco and got him a phone. It wasn't suitable for him to go into homeless accommodation – he'd been before and didn't feel safe there, so I put him in a Travel Lodge for a few days. I then managed to quickly get him into the Over 55's accommodation in Openshaw, in a neighbourhood apartment. It was fully furnished and free for six weeks. **This was overwhelming for him.** For the first time, **he started to open up and trust me.** George told me how he'd been severely sexually abused as a child. He said he'd always lived with his mum but when she passed away, he lost the family home.

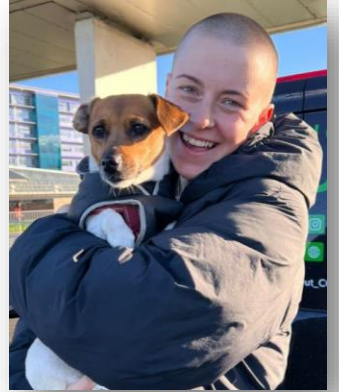
A few weeks later I managed to secure a permanent tenancy for George at the same accommodation! I liaised with our homeless charities in Manchester and MCC Welfare Provision and we furnished his apartment with everything he needs - including a brand new fridge and cooker. This has been a huge transition and he's had some ups and downs, but he's now settled and has friends there he likes to have breakfast with.

He rings me every day and keeps saying "**Alice, I'm just smiling my head off!**" George is also now going to the GP every week to get his health sorted.! He's organised his own bills and a bus pass – he's self-caring and loves to cook. **He said he gets in bed every night and just chuckles.** ❤️

Alice's Manager, Ellie Atkins reflects... It takes a special kind of social worker to be able to make a difference in the field of rough sleeping and homelessness. Alice works with some of the most traumatised people in society.

Alice has incredible levels of emotional intelligence, she meets people where they are at, without judgement. This creates the foundations of epistemic trust. This is the gateway for hope and change and positive outcomes, such as George, this is what impacts our citizens to have better outcomes and better lives"

As Alice's manager, her value base and moral compass makes me beam with pride.



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Briody's story and a trauma informed approach...

Celebrating you
Sam Thinnesen & Phil Doherty

Briody's story

Phil tells us... I became aware of Briody a couple of years ago, following a safeguarding referral from GMP and Centrepont, who had seen her rough sleeping. Briody was in her early 20's and had travelled to Manchester from Ireland with her partner. He was domestically abusing her.

I had to go looking for Briody. She didn't stay in the temporary accommodation she'd been provided with. Occasionally she'd turn up at Centrepont. **For months I'd look for her, drop notes off for her at her last known address, or leave my number with other agencies so that they could tell me if she'd been seen.** At one point the police saw her in Oldham. She'd turn up when she needed support – but would only accept minimal help. I managed to gather information about Briody from different agencies and found out she had a son who was living with her mother, back in Ireland.

The partner she'd travelled with was arrested and Briody was soon mixing with other people – and spiraling. She was sexually abused, beaten up, there was lots of drug use... **We'd chat. I listened to what she wanted and talked about her options.**

Sam and I started to work closely with the Irish Community Centre and with Change Grow Live. Briody had talked about returning to Ireland and working together we managed to get her a passport.

Sam tells us... **Briody's life was chaos. Over time, Phil and I managed to build trust with her.** We took the same approach, and I was there for Briody too, when Phil wasn't available.

We saw her once at Mustard Tree and she told us she wanted to see her son. We made sure she knew that if she did return to Ireland, our support would continue. We also said we would contact their support services and back her up. We then heard a couple of months ago that she had returned. Before she left, she said to her drugs worker "Can you ask Phil to call my mum and let her know how well I'm doing." (Phil tried but couldn't reach Briody's mum).

Phil continues... Over the last few weeks, Briody's aunty has phoned me and sent emails. Briody had obviously told her how much support she'd gotten from our services, and that **even when she was at her lowest ebb we were listening and not making judgements. When she was making really unwise decisions we were still there.** Briody had previously been in trouble with the police in Ireland and actually handed herself in when she returned, which indicates how she's matured. She now has the support of probation and I talked to her Aunty about safeguarding processes and what we'd do in the UK.



Cont...

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Briody's Aunty (via Email to Phil)... "Wonderful talking and laughing with you just now. Briody is just a beautiful person, and she had a magnificent singing voice, which hopefully she will be heard in many places soon." *Phil continues...* She's also invited me to go and stay with her and the family! I've asked her to get Briody to give me a call – just so I can check in with her.

It's been challenging at times, but I think the presence of having another woman around to ease her into certain conversations was **powerful to build rapport**. Sometimes I wasn't available and Sam was there. Sam knew the history and what not to press.

Sam concludes... The two of us approached it from a trauma informed way. It's been about putting Briody at ease.

A trauma informed approach

"Liberation is always in part a storytelling process; breaking stories, breaking silences, making new stories. **A free person tells their own story.** A valued person lives in a society in which their story has a place." Rebecca Solnit, The Mother of All Questions

Phil continues... When working with Briody it was clear that it was going to be a long, drawn-out process in which **there would be steps forwards and a few steps back**. She was struggling in the community, being in a place she did not know, there was drug use, sexual, psychological and physical abuse. She was homeless and socially isolated. By using a trauma informed approach we would "hang in there" so that **we had a plan in place for when the time was right for Briody**, and the motivation for change was at its optimum.

A traumatic and highly adverse environment may lead the child to close down to the social world around them; there are adaptive, protective reasons for adopting this stance, but it can leave the person unable to function in relation to the social environment in a way that is ultimately beneficial. I was able to **draw on trauma informed training which gave me the skills and knowledge to adapt to Briody's ever-changing circumstances and to instil in her that she had the power and the strength to remove herself from the chaos that surrounded her**.

Sam reflects... **Trauma can be triggered by environmental factors.** We have to plan in a trauma informed way prior to meeting with people. Meeting Briody, having the presence of both of us to sit with her, make her a cup of tea and drink it together created a relaxed atmosphere. **We made sure she felt no judgement, to help her feel safe.** We met in a large, open café space in Mustard Tree, where she could feel free to leave on her own volition. We used **open and relaxed body language and just kept providing her with the opportunity to talk, so that we could listen to what she wanted to achieve.**

"I always like to ask people how they see their world as they are the professionals in their story, and they are the ones to prioritise their care and support needs." Phil

