

"Now I walk around and my head's up high, I'm smiling"



I've experienced homelessness a lot throughout my life. My Mum and Dad got divorced when I had just turned 6 and my Dad left. No one sat me down and explained what was going on, I didn't understand it and I felt lost. I started acting up, I was really naughty for my Mum and she couldn't handle my behaviour so she put me in care. I was in care from the age of 6 until the age of 13 and then went to live with foster parents.

Whilst in care, I'd seen other children using drugs and from the age of 8, I started taking them. I didn't take drugs to get high, I did it as a life choice to help me get through because I had nobody. I stayed away from Class A drugs as I had friends who had overdosed and told myself I'd never touch them.

But later in life, things were going pear-shaped with my partner and I started using heroin. I kicked myself because I went into it with my eyes open, knowing what it could do and the effect. It gripped me badly. Personally, I used to take it to forget. I ended up losing my children, just after they turned 4 and that's what destroyed me. To this day, that's the only thing that's left outstanding for me to correct in life.

After breaking up with my partner I was sleeping in a derelict building for 3 months and someone told me about Arc. I met the Outreach Team at Westfield Church and I was housed at Lindley House the same day. I was nervous going into Lindley as all my life, in desperate times I've managed to help myself but I was so distraught this time. I was going through all these emotions that I didn't want to live any more. The drug taking had increased and I'd find myself waking up in hospital. Lindley pretty much saved my life. Had I not moved into Lindley when I did, I think I probably wouldn't have lasted much longer. I was just on a self-destruct mission.

At Lindley I'd keep myself to myself, I wouldn't ask for help. I didn't know how to. Being on my own all my life and fending for myself, having to ask for help is so difficult. Of all the stuff I've been through, asking for help has been one of the hardest things to do. Lindley supported me in ways I didn't even realise. They helped me to find who I am. It allowed me to release a lot of these emotions and demons and deal with them appropriately. Without that, I wouldn't be sat here now.

One day I woke up and everything had changed about my thought process. I felt that if I didn't make a move and change my life for the better, I would end up dying there. I didn't want that. Everything changed after that. I stopped craving drugs. Only we can change our futures. No one can do it for us. I just took a little bit of my own advice and made that change.

I was really nervous about moving out of Lindley into a satellite property but after the first night there, I really settled in and enjoyed it. Easing me back into society slowly but surely. Now I'm volunteering for Crescent Cleaning Services (CCS) and will work there once I've got my own place – the future is bright.

CCS has brought me out of my shell even more. It's helped me with my mental health issues. I always used to walk with my head down, struggling with depression. Now I walk around and my head's up high, I'm smiling, looking around. It's totally different and it's really nice. CCS are really understanding about everything – a problem shared is a problem halved and I am learning how to speak to people and communicate properly, rather than bottling everything up.

I'm now looking forward to getting my own place and focusing on my employment with CCS. I'm back in touch with my sons and will always be there for them. Something needed to change in me, something obviously wasn't working because I was stuck in the same cycle, and I got fed up of living that life. I want a peaceful ending to my life, I want to live it as much as I can and take every opportunity that comes my way. Getting back into society and doing things for myself, it's all derived from the help and support I've got from Arc.

WATCH OUR TEAM GROW!

It's not just Rhys who has recently joined the Crescent Cleaning Services team. We've been thrilled to see our social enterprise grow as many of our current and former clients join the team to take that next step into employment. CCS now has 5 employees and 6 regular volunteers who all work incredibly hard in their cleaning roles. As well as the team enabling us to grow, we were delighted to be awarded funding by the National Lottery Community Fund and Somerset Community Foundation to continue providing training and employment opportunities for those facing barriers, such as homelessness. Our growth means that we have now taken on external cleaning contracts with Taunton Open Door and The Collar Factory! We look forward to taking on more work and offering opportunities to even more clients.



Taunton's Big Sleep Out

FRIDAY 9TH JUNE 2023

Change Lives Whilst You Sleep

Our Big Sleep Out returns to Taunton in June and we're looking for participants to take on the challenge! Could you spend just one night sleeping outside and make a difference to the lives of those experiencing homelessness locally? Each year, we have an incredible group of 'sleepers' who raise vital funds and awareness and this year we'd love to make that impact even bigger. Join us on 9th June and let's make this the biggest sleep out yet!

What is the Big Sleep Out?

The Big Sleep Out is Arc's annual fundraising event where we ask participants to get sponsored to sleep outside for one night in June. The funds that our brilliant participants raise directly contribute towards changing the lives of people suffering with homelessness locally, by supporting Arc's work and ensuring we can provide the services needed. Sadly, homelessness is rising and so as a community we need to rally together and show those struggling that we're here!

Participants can choose from an in-person or virtual event.

Our in-person sleep out is held in our car park at The Crescent in Taunton and participants will enjoy live music, hot food and socialising before settling into sleeping bags for the night. If you choose the virtual option, you can sleep out at home or any other location and watch our live stream of entertainment. Whilst the Big Sleep Out shows some of the harsh realities of homelessness, we do not intend to replicate rough sleeping and so the event is safe and suitable for everyone to take part.

How do I take part?

So, you're ready to accept the challenge? Great news! The event is suitable for all ages and we often have children attend with family. You can take part on your own or as a group - why not rally your friends, family or colleagues?

To sign up, simply fill out our registration form online which can be found at www.arcinspire.co.uk/bigssleepout2023. There is a £5 registration fee per participant. Once registered, you'll receive an information pack and sponsorship details so you can begin your fundraising.

If you'd like more details or would like us to send you a registration form, please contact Rosie on: rhather@arcinspire.co.uk / 07736043403



"Dogs are not our whole life, but they make our lives whole..."

...And that's why we are so adamant to not let homelessness break that special pet owner bond! At Arc, we are one of only 10% of hostels that allow dogs to live in our services with owners. That means that in many cases, people who become homeless with pets are having to give up their furry companions, or face a life on the streets with their pets alongside them. We're so delighted to be working alongside StreetVet, who, like us, want to ensure that nobody has to choose between their pet and a roof over their heads.

From March 2022-March 2023, we were lucky to have a 'free trial' of StreetVet's hostel accreditation scheme, which gives Arc the confidence and capabilities to house people with their pets, as well as providing the support that pets owners need to keep their furry friends happy and healthy! With our re-accreditation on the horizon, we submitted an application for funding from the Pets at Home Foundation so we could continue with this fantastic scheme and vital work. It's safe to say we were thrilled when they awarded us with the funding and we have another year in partnership with StreetVet. One aim of Pets at Home Foundation's funding is to provide assistance to ensure pets can remain with their owners and so we'd say we're all a match made in heaven! A huge thank you to the Pets at Home Foundation - we know there will be many waggy tails and lots of hearts made whole by your contribution!



STREETVET

GWR gets clients on the right track!

As a supporter, we're sure you'll know that Arc's support and services go beyond just accommodation. We know that a roof above someone's head can just be a starting point towards their recovery from homelessness. One area we focus on is learning and development and providing opportunities for our clients to upskill, gain qualifications, build confidence or simply have fun and try out new activities! As you can imagine, the pandemic put a hold on much of this work and since returning to some form of 'normality' we've been slowly reintroducing opportunities but with limitations due to cost.

That's why we were thrilled that Great Western Railway (GWR) saw value in this service and find it important to invest in local communities. GWR provided us with funding to relaunch this area of work and with an incredible £5000 grant, we can provide short courses, activities, resources and transport that are tailored to our clients' aims and interests.

We're excited to refocus on this and help our clients to reach their goals and create positive futures! Thank you GWR!

GWR Business Development Portfolio Director, Tom Pierpoint, said: "Our Community Fund is a fantastic opportunity for us to invest in projects that really make a difference to our customers and communities at a local level. Arc does fantastic work to house, support and enable homeless people to maximise their potential and we're delighted to provide funding to assist with its ongoing projects."



COULD YOU VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME TO HELP THOSE EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS?

Volunteers are invaluable to our work, providing all the extra important services that help our clients in many different ways. We've currently got lots of opportunities available to join our fantastic volunteer team! We'd love to hear from you if you can help us fill any of these roles:



DONATIONS COORDINATOR

To help with the organisation and distribution of donations. Commitment: 1 weekday morning or afternoon per fortnight



VOLUNTEER HAIRDRESSER

A trainee or qualified barber or hairdresser to offer hair cuts for our clients. Commitment: Ideally once a month



KITCHEN VOLUNTEER

To help in our hostel kitchen with food prep, serving and cleaning. Volunteers needed on: Weekends, flexible hours



VOLUNTEER BUDDY

To help our clients to develop the confidence to tackle everyday tasks and activities. Commitment: Flexible



GARDENING VOLUNTEER

To help us turn our various Taunton and Bridgwater gardens into tidy and attractive spaces. Commitment: Flexible



FOOD COLLECTOR

To collect food donations for our busy hostel in Taunton, Lindley House. Commitment: Weekly collections, various days/hours



VOLUNTEER TRANSLATOR

Currently searching for a Russian speaker but other languages could also be of interest for future clients



COMMUNITY EVENTS VOLUNTEER

To represent Arc at Community Events, raising funds and awareness. Commitment: Roughly 6 events per year

If you are interested, you can find out more at www.arcinspire.co.uk/volunteering or contact Emma: edunn@arcinspire.co.uk

DONATION SPEND ROUND UP: A few areas we've used your generous donations this month!

We stocked up on duvets and towels! We get through these quickly!



It's been great to provide book-loving clients with new reads! A great aid for mental health.

A client was able to attend a family member's funeral due to transport funded by donations.



Clients were treated to fish and chips and roast dinner, yum!

