



## PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

We are currently welcoming our newest volunteer counsellors who will be starting with us in the coming weeks, and we wanted to showcase the impact this vital service has for our clients.

Arc have been working alongside Taunton and Bridgwater College for several years now, providing opportunities for students who are required to complete 100 hours of placement for their final year of Level 4 Counselling. These volunteer counsellors, although not yet fully qualified, make such a huge contribution to the lives of our clients and give them someone to speak to when they may otherwise feel alone. At the same time, the service also supports the students in their qualification and future career - it's a win win!

Accessing the counselling service is easy. Any client can request to meet with a counsellor, ensure that they are the right fit, and then schedule further appointments. This process often only takes a couple of days, meaning that those waiting for NHS services receive immediate support.

Since September 2021, 41 clients have received support from our volunteer counsellors. As this service takes place within Arc, it is easily accessible to clients. There is no limit to the number of counselling sessions a client can have - some may feel they only need a couple of appointments, whereas others may meet with their counsellor for several months. It all depends on the individual.



## MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

Unfortunately, there is currently a huge amount of pressure on mental wellbeing services. By providing a range of facilities and activities that may benefit mental health, clients have the opportunity to access support whilst on waiting lists for assessment and treatment.

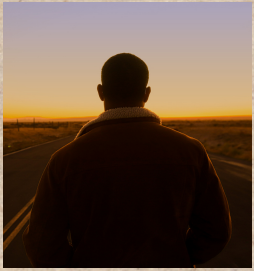
- Our wellbeing hub, the Reach Centre, is a dedicated space for external organisations to assist our clients with areas such as mental health. Being on site, the centre is easily accessible for clients and provides a working space for agencies such as Second Step, Nelson Trust, and the NHS.
- Our volunteer buddies provide 1-to-1 outings and activities with clients, reducing loneliness and isolation and improving confidence.
- Thanks to your wonderful donations, we are able to encourage activities that are known to improve mental health, by helping to provide items such as pushbikes, gardening equipment, art equipment, and swimming and gym memberships.
- Donations also help us to fund days out to the woods or beach, cinema tickets, transportation to see friends and family and visits to places such as Magdalen Farm where clients can work outside with animals - all great for mental health!

## MENTAL HEALTH FACTS

- It is estimated that 80% of those experiencing homelessness also experience issues with their mental health, yet only 45% were found to have been officially diagnosed
- According to studies, the prevalence of common mental health problems is over twice as high amongst the homeless population compared to the general population, including major depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder. In addition, it has been reported that cases of psychosis may be 4-15 times higher within the homeless community
- Mental health problems are often reported as the cause of homelessness, mainly through loss, trauma, or childhood experience
- Homelessness itself can also be the cause of mental health problems, leading to depression, isolation, and anxiety as well as loss of security



# "There's actually someone behind that homeless guy."



10 months ago, Chris was kitting out his car, preparing to sleep in it and face the difficulties ahead. But now, he's found his forever home, has an exciting job prospect and is feeling positive about life. In Chris' words, 'everything is falling into place'. We're thrilled to be part of this happy ending, and even more thrilled to have been welcomed into Chris' new home for a cuppa so we could hear his story.

"It all began in 2020, just before the pandemic started. I'd been quite ill and the property I was renting was cold. The landlady wasn't keen on me using the open fire which caused us to fall out. I was threatened with eviction, but then Covid kicked in and the eviction ban started so I was kind of left in limbo living there. Then the rules changed and all of a sudden, I got a letter from the courts saying you've got X amount of days to be out.

I set my car up, ready to sleep in it. But then I was introduced to Arc and met with Karen (Pathway Worker), who said 'I think I've got the perfect house for you!' That meant a lot - it meant I wasn't just a homeless guy, there's actually someone behind that homeless guy. That was massive for me. The ability to look past that is massive. I was housed before I had to be officially homeless, I didn't have to sleep in my car - it was a big relief. I felt really lucky.

My new place with Arc was central, clean, tidy, I was able to be private enough. There was a garden, it wasn't overly noisy. The nicest shower I've ever had! It was a bit of a life change to get used to, everything squeezed into one room, but it was a godsend. It was what I needed. I wouldn't have managed elsewhere.

Having the support from Arc was really useful - the phone calls, checking in, going out for coffees with Karen. I wouldn't count myself as overly vulnerable, so maybe I didn't need the support as much as others, but I knew it was always there. I did have to ask for a food voucher once because I was starving. I hated doing it - pride is not always a good thing. But Arc were able to help me in that time of need.

I was logging onto Homefinder at midnight every Wednesday to bid on properties for me to move to. After 6 months at Arc, I got lucky and was offered this place. I wasn't the top bidder but because I was supporting a friend in the area, the housing association knew my name and thought I was the right person. It all seemed to work out for a reason.

Getting this place was incredible. It feels unreal - it was weird when I was given it, it was still weird when I moved in and now inviting you guys in and you saying you've done really well - I think I have! I'm just on cloud nine, really. I wouldn't have thought I'd get a place with two bedrooms but now I can have the kids to stay - I haven't had the kids overnight for 2 years! Now they come over plenty, they absolutely love it, it feels safe, we can go in the fields and ramble. It's awesome, it feels like a forever home.

The help that Arc provided when moving out was great. To be able to go to Furnitrust and half furnish the new place was really cool. I still don't have curtains (I'm saving up for that) but the white goods were brilliant. Had I moved in without all that, I would have been better off staying at Arc. Just to be able to cook and wash and be clean every day is great, rather than looking around at a place I've got that I can't afford to buy things for. That was imperative, massively.

After I'd moved in, I received a call from the housing association to ask me if I was looking for work, and whether I'd be interested in having a conversation with them about a job. I had an informal interview and the job and company seemed great! I start in a couple of weeks and I'm really really looking forward to it! All the things I've been missing are suddenly falling into place!

What I'd say to Arc is 'keep up the good work'. Keep doing what you're doing, helping people that need it. It really benefitted me being with you, without question. I was nervous to start with but once we got chatting it was quite apparent that everything was great. Mine is a really positive story all round!"

# WELCOMING ANDY



"I'm Andy Price, I'm the new CEO. I wanted to use this newsletter to say hello. So 'Hello'.

I was asked to say a bit about me. So... amongst numerous jobs. I've worked in a night shelter, set up semi-independent living project for young people who were homeless or leaving local authority care, done housing campaign & advice work, been an Arts Development Worker. Spent 10 years working for local authorities - setting up a new youth service, managing a community services department, and before leaving was Director of Leisure and Cultural Services. For another 10 years, I ran a business, building partnerships across voluntary, public, and private sector organisations in housing, property, and ICT services. More recently I was founding CEO of a consortium of charities working with vulnerable groups and communities. I've also run a restaurant and wine bar, and wine import/export company. My first job was working in a factory making pit shaft gear and equipment for coal mines. OK no comments about my age please - I'm not yet quite old enough for a pension.

I love; music - with tastes that will also confirm I've been around a bit, wine (in moderation!) and food. I've been known to cook it, as well as eat it. I also support a football team that shall remain nameless! 'MOT' that's the only clue you're getting. And, because he would be seriously disappointed if I not mentioned. I have a cat 'Roary'. He thinks he's a tiger. No, of course he's right, he is a tiger, and who my wife thinks gets spoilt more than she does.

More seriously and importantly, I'm here to help lead and develop Arc, so that it continues to find ways to best meet at least some of the needs of homeless people. It's often a cliché from managers to say 'passionate about' - but I'm really passionate about providing the best services we can, running the best organisation we can, providing an environment where everyone of us feels motivated about coming to work. That we do things that help people going through tough times, have not had a roof over their head, to find for themselves a better way of living, whatever that may be. I know that a lot of the work we do at Arc would not be possible if it wasn't for our incredible community of donors and supporters, and I value very much the contribution you all make towards improving the lives of our clients.

PS. Whilst writing I answered a call from my wife. I read the draft to her. Whilst agreeing entirely re cat/spouse relations, she was somewhat unimpressed at being referred to as 'my wife'. So, to put the record straight, 'Anne-Marie, my very lovely, gorgeous wife'."

## Crescent Cleaning Services Volunteers

The Crescent Cleaning Services (CCS) team have been cleaning Arc properties for nearly a year now, and have caught the attention of several Arc clients. Employment can be a daunting prospect for those in our services, especially where someone may not have worked for a long time. By offering volunteering positions, clients can ease themselves back into a working routine and do something productive whilst they are on their journey with Arc.

Tom, a client from Victory House, has been volunteering for over a month, assisting the team with daily tasks alongside extra jobs such as window cleaning. He has inspired other clients to volunteer too, and is very keen to become an employee of CCS once he has found his own accommodation.

Tom also introduced one of his friends, Paul, to the project. Although not a former Arc client, Paul was struggling with employment, but we are delighted that Paul is now a CCS employee.

If you would like to know more about CCS, please visit their website: [www.crescentcleaningservices.org.uk](http://www.crescentcleaningservices.org.uk)



This beautiful mural was created by Aerosol Art in the outdoor space at Victory House, our Veteran's Project. Our veterans are thrilled, with one client saying:

"it bought a tear to my eye - we will remember them!"



# Donation spend

How your donations are helping Arc clients

Uniforms

Stock of emergency clothing

Several pushbikes

Plants and gardening equipment

BBQ supplies and house meals

Pizza workshop

For Crescent Cleaning Services employees & volunteers

For transport and mental health

Replacing important identification documents such as birth certificates

With Paul, our Fishing Volunteer

at Lindley House

**THANK YOU!**

# Room for a fresh start

Arc's property team have just converted a former office into an extra bed-space at one of our Taunton properties. A new client has already started settling in and is so proud of his new 'home'.

We asked him what he thought about it: "what I love most is the bay window. I love a bay window! It's light, airy, and I've enjoyed making it my own."



To create a welcoming environment for our clients, we ensure that each room has all of the basics, including a comfy bed and somewhere to store clothes. However, we are currently struggling with sourcing chests of drawers and single, fire-retardant mattresses. Do you have any spare? We would really appreciate both new and second hand items! Please get in touch if you can help by calling Alice on 07852 947954, or email [info@arcinspire.co.uk](mailto:info@arcinspire.co.uk). Thank you!

# A big thank you!

Arc are delighted to have been recently approached by a local funeral director in Taunton who want to support the work that we do. Dignity, locally known as Nigel K Ford in Taunton and Creech St Michael and Thomas Brothers Funeral Directors of Wellington and Galmington, are looking to offer employment opportunities and donations of certain items for the benefit of our clients. Alongside this, they have offered to print our promotional materials for us, starting with the printed version of this newsletter!



Being a person-centred business that focuses on individual needs, the Dignity team wanted to work alongside a similar organisation to help improve the lives of those within the local community. Jack Sargent, Business Leader for Taunton, Wellington and Bridgwater, based at Nigel K Ford, said, "seeing the passion from the team at Arc and what a difference the team make within the community for people and their animal companions is outstanding. Myself and the team at Dignity Funerals are delighted to be able to support the Arc family." We want to say a big thank you to all at Dignity in Taunton for your generosity!