



BOB'S STORY

Living rough can become the norm for some men.

There is usually a set of tragic circumstances that has forced them onto the street and keeps them there. They like to wander around certain areas which become familiar to them, knowing where to bed down in undergrowth, old buildings, or doorways and where to beg for money, food or alcohol. Often they become alienated from people and the agencies that could possibly help them. Some rough sleepers have chaotic, abusive and anti-social behaviour and this makes life unbearable for them and difficult for local communities where they hang out.

We recently worked with such a man who had been referred to us by a local agency. He had been put into temporary accommodation because he was sleeping rough during severe winter weather conditions and his health was deteriorating.

Street Life was asked to find more permanent accommodation for him. We supported him in this accommodation and made sure he had clothing, food and toiletries. However it became apparent that Bob was not coping with a life away from the streets. He wasn't looking after himself or his flat and he started displaying anti-social behaviour. His Street Life support worker continued to visit him, cleaning up the flat and helping him as much as he could. Bob's health was still a concern and we registered him with a local doctor and an assessment on his health was made shortly afterwards.

At the beginning of December we made one of our regular visits to Bob's flat and found him collapsed on the floor in a very bad way. We rang the ambulance and he was rushed to hospital. We continued to visit him in hospital where he was in a very serious condition for a number of weeks. As his health improved bit by bit we were able to offer support and be there for him when he wanted to talk to someone as he often got confused about his situation.

Over the weeks Bob's condition continued to improve and during that time our worker spoke with other agencies to explore his options once he left hospital. Arrangements were made for him to go into a nursing home. We continued to

support him during his time in the nursing home, taking him for a bus pass and shopping for clothing, footwear and toiletries. We also liaised between him and the nursing home staff when his behaviour became abusive in order to defuse the situation.

Although Bob was getting stronger his behaviour became disruptive and unacceptable. He wouldn't abide by the rules, often smoking and drinking, didn't respect other people's property and would stay out all night without letting the staff know. More suitable accommodation for him had to be found. On a positive note his health was very good and he was walking much better.

Bob was moved from the nursing home into temporary bed and breakfast accommodation whilst we waited for a property to be made available. During that time he wandered off and slept rough on the streets endangering his health yet again. He ended up at accident and emergency. Street Life was notified and we went to visit him. He was in the high dependence unit and his condition was deteriorating. We helped to notify his next of kin and we continued to liaise with them during his illness, and recovery. When he eventually left hospital we arranged for him to go into a temporary bed and breakfast until his permanent accommodation was ready.

At the end of March Bob was able to move into his own flat and he was very pleased to have his new home, complete with carpets, curtains and furniture. We were able to get some additional items for him with the help of local charitable organisations.

Bob's life is completely different now from the life he lived on the streets. His health has improved. He is cooking for himself and keeping himself clean. He is happy with the things he has in his flat and spends time cleaning and washing up. He is successfully maintaining his tenancy, and the Street Life worker has been able to reduce the frequency of his visits to a low level, offering support and help when needed.