

Introduction - Our Origins

HELP Counselling Services (HCS) was set up in 1983 by the local churches and town leaders of Trowbridge. They had seen the effects of solvent abuse on young people in the town and wanted to provide a safe place for users to come and talk and receive support. The service proved to be very successful and found that other people were starting to use the charity—those who needed support with their mental health. Over time HCS developed into the counselling charity it is today and, whilst we are no longer working with solvent abuse, the aim to provide a safe and supportive space, has remained at our very core.

The Support The Beer Harris Trust has given

The Trust has kindly paid for 5 of our young people to have counselling, with our specialist young peoples counsellors. I would like to tell you about 2 of those clients today, whilst we have changed their names, their stories are true and difficult. Please do keep them confidential and not use them in press releases or publicity.

Ahmed's mother had his sister when she was a teen and lived with her parents. Ahmed's father was a Kuwaiti student, who lodged with his Ahmed's grandparents during his studies. His mother and father started a relationship and had Ahmed but after his studies he returned to Kuwait, only returning a few times a year to see his son and stepdaughter. By the time Ahmed was 5, these visits had ended.. So the three of them moved from his grandparents to social housing.

His mother unable to manage, went into rent arrears and they were evicted from their home when Ahmed was 7 years old. They went into temporary accommodation for a year, and then were issues another home, now in Wiltshire. Again, his mother went into arrears and again they were evicted, this happened 2 more times.

Ahmed is now 17, he has been living in temporary accommodation for 2 years. His sister now has 3 children of her own and has her own home. But Ahmed and his mother live in 2 small rooms. They share a mobile phone, and do not have access to a computer. Ahmed, despite moving about so much is an intelligent young man, and managed to continue his education, and was at college, studying maths and cookery. Early this year he dropped out of college because he could not afford the ingredients.

I did this initial appointment myself, and I will be honest, this really was the hardest one in a long time. Here we had a young man, who had constantly slipped the net. In fact, when he applied for counselling, our IT system failed, and it was not until 6 weeks later that we found him. Needless to say, we got him into counselling immediately. We were determined not to let him down.

We placed him with Allen, who at 67 is retired, after being a student support worker in a school. Allen is kind, gentle and fatherly, and without overstepping the boundaries has been creating a safe space for Ahmed. Currently the work is over the phone because he lives outside of Trowbridge and cannot afford to transport costs, and sadly because he barely leaves his room.

The work will be slow, but our aim is to slowly help Ahmed re-enter the world, grow his hopes and dreams. One of the things we plan to do, because of your support is to pay for Ahmed to travel costs to us for his sessions when he is ready, we have already committed to extending his sessions from 16 to 24. We know this one will take time.

Our second client is Carlene. She has had an equally difficult start, and was in care for half of her childhood, and lived with her violent father for the rest. Carlene's child was recently put into care. It is difficult to be a parent, when you have no positive experiences of being a parent, and whilst she was not violent with her daughter, she failed to give her the safe, structured home that a child needs.

It is easy to judge a mother that has lost her child, it is less easy when you know the history and the levels of distress that Carlene is feeling, as she challenges herself to become a better parent and not see her child suffer as she did.

It has been difficult work, Carlene has had to re-earth painful memories, acknowledge her mistakes and at the same time make meaningful changes. However she has worked hard in sessions, she has learnt how her patterns and behaviours affected her life, and importantly she is learning something she never had, safe boundaries. These are what she needs to be a good enough parent.

Client Feedback

We asked the young people that have finished using the service in the last few months for some feedback. Here is Piotr talking about his experience. You are free to use as you wish.

Being able to talk about my problems with a real human being has changed my life drastically in the last couple of months. The HELP Counselling Services in Trowbridge have helped me gain a better understanding of myself, my thoughts and my feelings. The relaxed and personal experience I have been given has been invaluable to me. Having a set time frame and help with setting goals for self-improvement has helped me do just that, improve myself.

Thanks to the funding I did not have to worry about money which is one of my key anxieties through which I was able to work through with the help of my counsellor, without the funding I do not know if I would have engaged with the counselling as much as I have.

I would like to thank you for helping me overcome my fear of reflection and for allowing me to explore my insecurities and preparing me to be kinder to myself. Thank you for all the support and the funding has really made a world of difference to me personally.