

## Update for the Beer-Harris Memorial Trust, May 2025

*“One of the biggest differences is being able to live without a cockroach running up and down you and going to bed without being bitten by bed bugs.” “I felt completely fobbed off by the system, so I felt isolated, and my mental health really suffered” (Justlife Clients) “I’ve got a client who’s in TA right now—she’s been beaten up really badly there... her blood is all over the walls. That is the space she’s made to live in.” (Justlife Mental Health Engagement Worker)*

These quotes reflect the harsh and often hidden reality of life in temporary accommodation. With your generous £2,000 grant, doubled through the Big Give Christmas Challenge, we’ve been able to continue providing vital support for people in these circumstances, helping them feel safer, more stable, and more connected.

Since December 2024, your support has helped us:

- Support 137 people living in temporary accommodation in Brighton to improve their physical and mental health, find permanent accommodation and maximise their income;
- Provide dedicated mental health support to 35 individuals through our Mental Health Engagement Worker and Psychologist placement;
- Enable 56 people to engage with our Social Connection Project, which combats loneliness by matching TA residents with local people in befriending relationships, organising community activities, and hosting a peer support group

Of the people we supported in Brighton, 81% reported improvements in mental health, 100% reported feeling less socially isolated, 53% felt more resilient, and 59% said support helped them better manage their tenancies and reduced their risk of returning to homelessness.

The impact of this work on individuals with mental health issues can be seen in the following case studies:

***Tom’s\*** life had been chaotic for as long as he could remember, but things took a sharp turn for the worse after he was cuckooed and physically abused in his emergency accommodation (EA). The eviction that followed left him struggling in yet another temporary placement, where his ADHD made even the most basic tasks, like keeping his room clean, overwhelming. His hoarding habits spiralled. On top of this, Tom was battling drug and alcohol use, which made managing his ADHD and emotions even harder. Depression loomed over him, and when things became too much, he found himself consumed by suicidal thoughts. He had even made a plan. In moments of crisis, he would seek help at A&E, but before any real support could reach him, he would leave, walking away with the same sense of hopelessness. Money was another constant struggle. Impulsive spending and a lack of budgeting skills left him broke for most of the month, forcing him to go without food. His weight dropped, and his nutrition suffered. Parking tickets, bills, and mounting debts were ignored, even when they escalated to court threats.*

*Beneath it all lay a history of trauma he couldn’t bring himself to talk about, a past that seeped into every part of his life, keeping him stuck in a cycle of crisis. When Tom was introduced to Justlife’s Mental Health Engagement Worker, things began to change. The first step was stabilising his finances. A successful Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim meant he could finally clear his overdraft, and his bank agreed to stop charging him interest while he worked on managing his money better. With Justlife’s help, he also faced the debts he had been avoiding. When bailiffs came knocking about his unpaid council tax, he didn’t have to deal with it alone. Together, they set up a realistic payment plan to get him back on track. Food became less of a worry, too, with a food bank referral ensuring he had enough to eat. Justlife helped Tom access appropriate healthcare. He registered with Arch GP, a homeless-specific GP practice and started attending appointments with a mental health nurse and was encouraged to join a trauma recovery group, a space where, for the first time, he could start working through the experiences that had shaped so much of his life.*

*Building a sense of connection and purpose became the next step. Justlife encouraged Tom to step out of isolation, to find structure in his days. Through referrals to Evolve, Assert, Southdown, and the Justlife Social Connection Project, he started engaging with support networks. He even joined a football group and the Choir with No Name, discovering new ways to connect with people and enjoy life beyond survival mode.*

*The biggest turning point came when Tom was finally offered his own council flat. After years in the social housing system, he was finally moving into a permanent home, substance-free and ready to begin a new chapter. This move could have been overwhelming, but he wasn’t alone in sorting out bills, council tax, and all the admin that*

*came with it. Justlife helped him secure funding for essential items like a bed and white goods, and we liaised with Southdown Resettlement Service to provide ongoing support with managing his home and finances. Now, Tom's life looks very different. He's independent, managing his own admin, and has built a strong network of friends. More importantly, he has taken the step of actively seeking therapy, determined to work through his trauma and develop the tools to manage his emotions when life feels overwhelming. As his time with Justlife came to an end, Tom celebrated his 30th birthday, a milestone that, not long ago, he wasn't sure he would reach. Reflecting on everything he had overcome, he said: "I'm moving into a new phase of my life now. Thanks to Justlife I have a home and the tools to move forward as an adult."*

***Jenny\*** was evicted from her previous accommodation, leaving her in a difficult and unstable situation. She was struggling to navigate the next steps, had no housing plan in place, and found it challenging to manage her medication consistently. On top of this, she was dealing with a complex relationship that added to her distress. "I am all over the place, I feel confused with my situation, I am constantly blowing up." To support Jenny through these challenges, she was allocated a Health Engagement Worker from Justlife. The worker was able to find out who Jenny's housing officer within the local authority was and liaised with them and Jenny to co-produce a clear housing plan. Understanding the steps involved in securing accommodation has given Jenny greater control over her situation, reducing the anxiety she felt about her future. Beyond housing, Jenny needed support to process her emotions around her eviction and relationships. When asked what would help, she expressed a desire for a space to talk through her feelings. Justlife facilitated a referral to a counselling service, allowing Jenny to attend weekly sessions at a reduced cost. Jenny was supported in managing her medication by sending text reminders for telephone appointments with her GP at Arch Health CIC, a homeless specific GP practice. She was also accompanied to face to face GP appointments to help her overcome anxiety about addressing her health issues. She was encouraged to start making appointments for herself and to gradually manage her health issues independently. With a structured housing plan in place, access to emotional support and a more proactive approach to managing her health problems, Jenny has started to regain her independence. She is now actively bidding for council housing and has built a positive relationship with a befriender through Justlife's Social Connections Project. She is also managing her medication and health appointments independently. "I tell people all the time, I am so glad I am awake now. I am getting better at saying what I want. Now that my medication is correct, I am able to take a breath when I am overwhelmed. I don't explode anymore. Having a health engagement worker helps hold me accountable. I have the confidence to finish jobs and move forward!" Jenny was evicted and found herself in emergency accommodation, struggling with her mental health, unstable housing, and an emotionally difficult relationship. Justlife supported her to create a housing plan, access counselling, and manage her medication. With gentle encouragement, she began taking responsibility for her health and reconnecting socially through our befriending project. "I am so glad I am awake now. I don't explode anymore. I have the confidence to finish jobs and move forward!"*

*\*not their real names*

This year, we also hosted a trainee Clinical Psychologist, who worked intensively with 11 individuals over six months. Her presence was transformational, not only for the people she worked with directly but also for the wider team who benefited from training and supervision. We are now working to secure another trainee to continue this vital work as therapeutic support for people with multiple and compound needs is so difficult to access.

Finally, earlier this week, the Social Connection Project ran a Wellbeing Day for the people we work with to mark Mental Health Awareness Week. The theme this year was "community", and participants were encouraged to reflect on what community means for them and we have displayed their thoughts in our café window. Feedback from the day included: "You're my lifeline at the moment." "Thank you for a lovely day. It was fun and lovely to meet so many people. It is easy to get caught up in your thoughts when you sit alone all day." "I get to meet lots of different types of people here and it makes me feel much better about myself."

**We hope this update gives you a good overview of how the Beer-Harris Memorial Trust's kind support has enabled us to continue to provide high-quality community-based support for people experiencing homelessness and mental health issues in Brighton. However, if you have any questions, or would like any further information, please let us know. Finally, thank you again for your support, it is really much appreciated.**