

Three case studies

St Mungo's

Bill

Bill was living in one of St Mungo's hostels. Bill is intelligent and well educated. But a life time of very heavy drinking has taken its toll and although he is in his 50's, Bill looks as if he's 70+. He has rotten and missing teeth and he is painfully thin. He has numerous aches and pains due to previous fractures.

His passion for bicycles and bike travel were key to his progress. Crucially for Bill, we were setting up a business incubator space and were talking to staff and service users about a micro business being run off the back of a bike trailer. One of our staff members had been briefed to build social enterprise and self employment. He pulled together various opportunities and set Bill up in a Community Enterprise Business, using vacant space on the ground floor of our premises.

Bill had originally been interested in being a bike mechanic operating from a trailer, but he quickly realised that running bike mechanic training for hostel residents would be more rewarding. We helped him negotiate to pay his rent in kind by offering the courses free of charge. The courses are pulling in excluded residents from some of our first stage hostels. They rebuild a second hand bike and take it with them at the end of the course. Very successful.

In between courses they rebuild and recycle second hand bikes as well as work with repairs to customer bikes.

The beauty of his project is that it provides a very real opportunity for excluded customers. They are inspired and see roles that they can relate to. They often start as volunteers. Helping out allows them to "feel useful". Many believe their face does not "fit" elsewhere.

Bill has set up a project that provides optimism and hope for excluded people. It generates referrals and real opportunities.

Trevor

Trevor had lived in the UK as a child but had subsequently spent much of his life in the US with his family. He was poorly educated and used to a street life. After a short period in prison in the US, he was deported to the UK because he had no visa. As he had not been in the UK for 40 years, he had no networks nor an understanding of how things work here. He is mixed race, possibly Afro-Caribbean, and came across the stereotyping and exclusions that are unfortunately common for someone 50+ in his position with no work references, a criminal record, and a lack of UK qualifications and experience.

He bounced around various agencies but was attracted to our employment team because of its reputation. He found a role and was accepted into a group of

volunteers who were repainting the social enterprise area in one of our premises. The team had its difficulties but he stuck with it and was invited to interview for a volunteer position with a team painting hostels. He was successful and, although he is not paid, he is now securely networked into a community from which he can find support and move forward on a secure footing.

Dave

Dave, who is over 50, is working class and of Irish descent. He was homeless and a victim of domestic bullying. Although he had experience of working on building sites, he had no formal qualifications. He had been finding it difficult to keep up the 50 and 60 hour weeks expected. We helped him work through all his issues and he slowly worked his way back to a position where he is heavily involved in helping with our social enterprises Initially as a volunteer and then as paid locum work, on a regular basis.

All three of the customers featured in the case studies above are strong advocates of our projects and they help draw in excluded residents. Their advocacy is infinitely more powerful in drawing people in than leaflets and briefings.