

# P3 PERSPECTIVES

**Sara's Story:**  
Surviving the  
system

**Day in the life:**  
Mobile support  
in Wolverhampton

**ACTion Glos:**  
Putting clients at  
the centre of their  
support

## Our Mission

To improve lives and communities by delivering services for socially excluded and vulnerable people, to unlock their potential and open up new possibilities.



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**P3rspectives** is the bi-annual newsletter from P3 Charity, bringing our supporters all the latest news and views from around P3's services.

## Welcome to P3rspectives, issue 2!

We're pleased to bring you another look 'behind the scenes' @P3Charity with our biannual magazine, P3rspectives. We've tried to focus on lived experiences in this issue, bringing together stories of homelessness, domestic abuse, addiction and - ultimately - hope from the people who have been through that journey themselves.

You'll also find a good helping of news, photos and fun from around P3's services, from crafts in the Cotswolds (p9) to a ride on P3 Wolverhampton's brand new bus (p5)!

We hope you enjoy reading; remember to get in touch with the Communications team if you have any feedback or comments using the contact details on the next page.

Louise, Laura & Alice  
P3 Communications

1 Get in touch!



[www.p3charity.org](http://www.p3charity.org)





### On the cover

Maitland takes the lead in the Guitar Group at P3 Cirencester, after being a member for four years. "Everyone seems to enjoy my teaching style and learning new things to help them improve, like using a metronome."

- Photo taken by Robert Tims

### Who we are

We're a charity and social enterprise, made up of passionate people, who care about people. We run a variety of services all across the UK that aim to give everyone the chance to be part of the community they live in and feel connected to society.

We think that everyone is unique, and with support and confidence can unlock their inner potential, opening up a world of possibilities.

### The key areas that we work in are:

- Homelessness
- Mental health
- Employment, education and training
- Criminal justice services
- Youth services
- Children and play
- Community-based support and advice

## Want to feature in the next issue?

We're always looking for people's stories, photos and opinion pieces from clients, volunteers and staff at P3, both for the magazine and for our other online and print materials.

We want our communications to reflect our clients, and we are striving to involve the people who use our services when we're spreading the word about P3 and what we do. Whether you know someone who's skilled at visual arts, wants to share their insights on an issue relevant to P3 or would just like to tell their story, in their words, please get in touch:

Email: [comms@p3charity.org](mailto:comms@p3charity.org)

Tel: 0115 8508 190 and ask for Communications

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@p3charity



# **"You're not listened to any more; because you're on benefits, you're nobody"**

*Sara\* was a Community Psychiatric Nurse, who was forced out of her job when she became seriously ill. Here, she talks about fighting for benefits, and surviving the 'system'.*

I worked for 36 years. I have mental health officer status. I'd paid all the benefits in I could for my pension, I had two years left to go. I was terribly unwell, that year, 2016, but I carried on going to work for three months because I was terrified of going off sick. I was on my last warning and I ended up in casualty on 31 March. I was then referred to a chest specialist. I had emphysema – I've had asthma all my life and I'd got sleep apnea.

Four nebulisers and IV steroids later, the A&E doctors said you should go home, go to your doctor and don't come back to work! So, I did, I was off sick, then in the June work wanted to meet up with me regarding their system, their 'three points and you're out'.

So, I went back to work, but I was still struggling with my own health as well as my personal life because my daughter was also mentally unwell.

My granddaughter has lived with me on and off for most of her life, but this is her home now and she will continue to live with me until she is old enough to make her own decisions.

I had all of this going on and I asked my boss if I could take a week of annual leave to sort things out. She said yes, but then later said I was too mentally ill to be working, I couldn't have the holiday, it had to go as sick, and sent me home.



I kept trying to come back and she wouldn't let me and then they told me they were going to let me go on ill-health. On 8 November, I was dismissed.

It was like a bereavement of the worst kind; it was all I'd known from the age of 17. Work gave me kudos, it gave me friends, it gave me a car, it gave me a decent wage. When they took that away, I was completely lost. I was in shock for a month, absolute shock.

If it wasn't for my granddaughter I would have signed out. She is an angel, a very sensitive young girl and she can see straight through me so I have to put a face on. She saved my life, coming to me, because it gave me a purpose.

### **I wouldn't treat my worst enemy the way I feel I've been treated**

The person who came to do my PIP assessment...it was horrendous. It wasn't me that she was assessing, she was in for a matter of minutes. I was coughing, I vomited, I had to go outside and was physically sick twice, but there was 'nothing wrong with me'. I don't know who she was writing about, but it certainly wasn't me!

I didn't qualify for mental health because I wasn't seeing anybody. I'd been halfway through therapy when I lost my job.

What could I do? When I lost my job, I'd lost my access to therapy – I couldn't receive sessions from someone I knew, someone I'd worked with.

She didn't listen and didn't want to take the time needed to understand my situation.

So P3 lodged a written appeal for me which got the decision overturned straight away and it was one point off so we appealed again and they overturned it again so we didn't need to go tribunal. The payment was backdated. That was brilliant, as the money got me through the next three months and I received a lump sum after my ESA medical assessment and that has kept me going.

### **I'd say "Give up" and my support worker would say "No!"**

Without P3, I wouldn't have got through it. I came along and I really didn't think I'd get very far because I've worked 36 years, I have got my own house and I didn't know enough about P3, about whether you would take me on.

But my support worker is fantastic, she's put up with me being a mess, sobbing... I didn't get dressed for months.

My support worker, she came religiously, listened to me, she didn't judge me and was always determined that I would get my benefits even if it killed her. She was like a dog with a rat! She would not let it go, when no one would answer the phone I'd say, "Give up," and she'd say, "No!"

It was a fight to get it and I wouldn't have kept fighting. I felt I was treated abysmally. Utter disrespect, seriously - disrespect and prejudice actually.

I do believe people can kill themselves over this. I wouldn't treat my worst enemy the way I feel I've been treated by the benefits system. You're not listened to anymore; because you're on benefits, you're nobody. They're judging you,

before they even see you really and if you don't fit into one of their little boxes ... they'll make you fit the box!

They say all manner of inappropriate stuff like: "In the scheme of things it's not a long time." Yes it is! It was going on for a year when I finally got the payment. How do people survive? When you've got no money and you're living on £143 a fortnight.

I call it foraging for food. You've got to shop around, you've got to know the times that supermarkets reduce, so actually that becomes a bit like a full-time job. But it feels like drudgery. I was a woman who went out to work five days a week, bought ready prepared veg, ready prepared chicken, but it was convenience, after a long day at work I was knackered. Looking at this now I'd roar at myself. I never looked at how much things cost because I could always pay for it.

### **I cannot survive on the money they give me**

I cannot survive on the money they give me. I've always been sensible but the benefits they give me aren't enough to cover food and bills and there's nothing more unless there's a real miracle or my pension comes through. They're saying I've got to wait until I'm 65 and I just can't fight them at the moment. I have enough battles.

**We want our stories to look beyond 'labels' and reflect the reality of people who are socially excluded. Look out for more #ChangeTheConversation stories coming soon.**

*\*Name changed to protect identity*



## Mobile support @P3WestMids

*We take a ride on the Wolverhampton Floating Support team's mobile advice vehicle as they go out into the community connecting people with P3's housing support service...*

It's hard to miss the P3 bus as it rolls around Wolverhampton's suburbs, getting the word out about P3's local advice housing support service.

Designed to be a mobile information stall or (when parking is limited!) simply an eye-catching means of transport, the bus is taken by P3 staff to a range of community settings like supported accommodation, local hospitals and the Job Centre. The aim is to inform people about how the service could help them manage their housing situation.

Today, Service Coordinator Candice Gordon and Support Worker Sulmaan "Sully" Azhar are on bus duty, visiting sheltered accommodation out in the Bilston area.

"It's a wide variety of issues that we deal with," explains Sully. "People might need to know what benefits are out there, or need support to respond to letters or we might attend appointments with people if they feel nervous."



Once a person has been referred, the support can happen anywhere that's comfortable for them – even over Skype or text message.

"We can advise, support, guide and point you in the right direction," Candice tells residents who've gathered over a cup of tea to learn more. "It's not a mental health service, but a lot of the housing and tenancy issues people are facing play havoc with their mental health, so if we can help reduce that anxiety..."

Sue is a resident at the Bilston accommodation, and received regular support earlier in the year because of housing-related difficulties.

"I needed support with my dyslexia – reading letters back to me, filling out forms and things like that. It was my finances that really needed sorting out; I was in debt and wasn't on any benefits. My sister used to do it all for me but she lives out in Wednesfield (two miles from the city centre). I didn't trust anybody. It took me a long time to put trust back in people."

Candice and Sully tell Sue and other residents about the Friday social group at P3's Wolverhampton Navigator, which offers regular guest speakers such as people from Thrive Into Work and the fire service, cookery sessions, arts and crafts and a warm, friendly welcome to anyone looking to drop-in for a cup of tea and a chat.

Sue added: "I've started crocheting now, and I'm really looking forward to the social group on Friday. We can have a drink, have a natter, I don't even mind washing up!"





# "I HAD AUTISM AND NO ONE KNEW"

Artwork by Janina

**Janina, a resident at P3's Eaton Court supported accommodation in Cheshire, tells how an autism diagnosis and the right support helped her turn her life around.**

I was in a really abusive relationship for almost nine years. When I first came to Eaton Court, I was eight stone heavier. I'd just been diagnosed with autism. I never went out by myself; I was isolated. I had no hope really.

I've been in and out of hostels since I was 14 – I'm 31 now. I have this complex version of autism and you wouldn't tell by looking at me. I was quite hyper when I was young, I had things called meltdowns where people didn't understand so I'd raise my voice and shout. It is just not a nice side of me, and I think I was judged because of that. I never had any drug or drink issues. It was mainly because I had autism and no one knew.

To this day I'm still waiting for treatment, though I've managed to learn a lot myself. Everything is really down to me, and getting the right support. And here is the first time I ever got proper support in my life, for my condition, for things that I've been through.

The benefits – they were not listening to me, so with support from the staff, we got all the paperwork together to fight my case. That instantly got me my independence. Because I had my own money. Before, my partner was controlling all my money and I didn't have any benefits in place because he wanted me to have nothing.

## The change started with me

When I came here, I had a meltdown. How I try to deal with it is, I walk away and get away from the situation. Linda (Eaton Court's Service Manager) came after me, and it was just the way she spoke to me, she made a massive difference. I've never had anyone get through to me while I was having a meltdown. In that moment, I realised that finally someone understands me.

It's just how the staff do things here; if they're doing room checks they'll ring me an hour before and let me know and if

the fire alarm is going to go off they ring me first.

They brought out a lot in me, like my creative side. I do lots of drawing, painting, jewellery boxes, canvases, we've done claywork. We're cooking tomorrow for everyone. I play piano and sing. I'm learning guitar, I've started that since I've been here.

The staff just treat you like, you're not homeless, and you're not autistic, you're just you. It's a really nice feeling.

I'm ready to move on from here and I'm moving on to become such a strong person. I've taken positive action from my negative experiences and I've turned it around. They can't do it all for us, we've got to help ourselves. The change started with me, I think.

But I'll never forget Eaton Court and how it made me feel like I was worthwhile, and that I have got a future.

# P3 partnerships in action: Inside @ACTionGlos

Funded by the government's Social Impact Bond scheme, the ACTION Glos project allows P3 to offer up to three and a half years of wraparound support to people who have been recurrently homeless and are experiencing other complex issues.

"Link workers just try to be the best support they can be, in a really holistic way," says Service Manager Ella Hawkins.

Accessing accommodation is a priority, in order to create a secure base to address other needs, like getting into drug or alcohol treatment. During this process, link workers continue to support clients wherever they need it, including on the streets.

"Chris did one of his assessments on the steps of P3's Montrose House because the client just didn't want to engage, and felt uncomfortable inside," Ella continues. "Many people have been round all the services, they're sick of telling their story."

CCP (Caring for Communities and People) and ARA (Addiction Recovery Agency) are partners on the project, bringing in specialist workers like Chris Holmes who was seconded from ARA for his knowledge of addiction support.



*ACTION Glos Link Worker Chris Holmes*

"You don't judge people, because they've all had journeys, their own reasons for addiction," he says.

"I know what a hellish place it is to be in. Recovery doesn't happen overnight. But I know that people have got the potential to do great things with their lives. It's a job that I value very much."

**"A decision made by the client is always going to last longer"**

Chris got into support work 15 years ago and later completed a degree in Addictions Counselling. He also spent six months in residential rehabilitation himself.

"The first thing I do is try to build a relationship with a client, to build trust. I listen with empathy, to uncover underlying issues

and behaviours, and identify their needs.

"I use CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) with some clients, exploring their thoughts around a particular issue. We discuss strategies that clients can use to help break that cycle of addiction, and help them to replace their addictive triggers with coping mechanisms.

"That trust, you can't do anything without that really. Once this is established, we can empower them to reach their goals - the client has always got to be central to this process. A decision made by them is always going to last longer."



## Martin's Story

**Martin lived on the streets for 20 months, and suffered physical and mental trauma from being attacked while rough sleeping. He was referred to ACTION Glos by the P3 Street Outreach team and negotiations with a landlord managed to get Martin and his dog Sasha housed in a one bed flat.**

"The flat is secure, it's homely, we've both settled in really well.

"Now that I've got all the right benefits, I've been able to buy things for the flat, so I've got my own bed. The back payment I got, I don't waste it.

"I'm quite focused on my recovery now. When I was on the streets of Gloucester, I was on 80ml of methadone, which is a lot. I started reducing by 5ml every two weeks. Now I'm on 20ml.

"I'm still drinking, but I'm never above the legal limit. I know I'm using it as crutch, to get off the methadone. But I haven't used hard drugs since last September. When I get my methadone prescription from the drug treatment service, I don't have to take it away supervised, so that's a big thing. Because I've reduced down so much, they trust me.



"The sooner I can get off that, the sooner I can get off the drink, and start volunteering. That's what I want to do.

**"Because I've reduced down so much, they trust me"**

"I've also been asked to do the storytelling project '[Un]heard Voices' with Everyman Theatre. We're telling our stories, about some of the stuff that's brought us where we are today. It's quite an emotional thing, I'm performing my bit myself.

"I isolate myself because of the attacks; I walk the dog late at night and early in the morning so I don't go out a lot in the daytime, but doing this project I've met three or four people that I now class as friends.

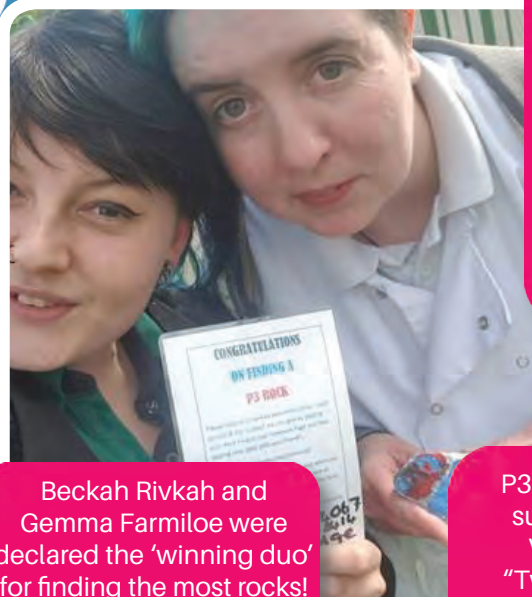
"I've started counselling; I saw a psychiatrist and they said I might have a form of

post-traumatic stress disorder, because of when I was attacked.

The other week we walked down to the Everyman Theatre, and I've done that in the middle of the day, when normally I wouldn't go out because there's too many people. So that suggestion of doing it by my support worker all those months ago, has really helped my confidence.

"I'm slowly building bridges... I'm being more sensible with my money. I've still got a long way to go but it's getting easier."

# Social media round up



Beckah Rivkah and Gemma Farmiloe were declared the 'winning duo' for finding the most rocks! Find out more at [www.facebook.com/p3stroud](http://www.facebook.com/p3stroud)

P3 Rocks took over the Cotswolds in a giant treasure hunt this summer! Painted and distributed by social groups at **P3 Stroud**, the idea came from a client who said: "As a craft activity, which also encourages people to go out and walk, and provides distraction that helps with pain and social anxiety, it seemed the perfect P3 project."



P3 celebrated all our volunteer superheroes during National Volunteers' Week in June. "Twenty years ago I was street homeless. The reason I'm volunteering is to put my experiences to good use, to turn what was a negative into a positive." - Debbie, volunteer in South Glos

@VolunteerP3



BBC Newsnight @BBCNewsnight · Jun 14  
"You feel aggravated in the beginning but then you kind of know that they're in a better place." - 13-year-old Jeanette lost friends in the Grenfell Tower fire #newsnight



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There was some poignant, candid coverage by BBC Newsnight of the young people affected by the Grenfell Tower fire, who have been supported by Rugby Portobello Trust over the last year.



Remarkable acts of kindness happened across P3's services during the 'Beast from the East' cold snap this February/March. The Lincolnshire Street Outreach Team were named 'Snow Heroes' by the local police. Challenger House in Hillingdon took their young residents to help people sleeping rough in central London, and staff walked for hours in the snow everywhere from Wolverhampton to Yorkshire to reach their clients.

@RugbyPortobello

@P3\_SOT\_lincs



# A day out with...

Be <sup>P3</sup>  
Well

Bewell supports people to reconnect with their community and regain independence through one-on-one support, social activities and trips, like this one to Chatsworth House in Derbyshire...

Personal Support Assistant Lauren Dewey said:

"I feel the trips allow our clients to develop friendships with people who have a similar understanding, whom they may not meet otherwise. Several clients have suggested trips to us based on their interests and we look forward to taking them to many more places!"



"The house was very good. We've also been bowling, to the cinema and to a wildlife park as a group. It takes your mind off how you feel about yourself and your illness, and gives you a bit of camaraderie." - Diane



"This is the first time I've ever lived on my own and I've got a history of mental ill-health so having this support is great. Chatsworth was fascinating, I could have spent all day in there!"

- Jane

"You get to the stage where you're reclusive; I live on my own so it's a chance to be sociable." - John

"I'm not so good with busy towns and public transport. With support, I've come a long way, travelling to Bolsover from Langworth on the bus the other week. There's no way I would have been able to do that last year. These trips are good for me, because they're things I wouldn't do otherwise." - Tony



Photo by Tony Witham



**P3 provides services in communities across the UK, supporting people with housing and homelessness, mental ill-health, drug and alcohol addiction, offending behaviour, social exclusion and more.**



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