

Case Studies of groups benefitting from City Council Community Grant funding

Cambridge & District Citizen's Advice

1. Client arrived at the Cambridge Bureau in early January 2017; having recently divorced from his wife and having had to move to a new property. As a result of the separation, he was suffering from depression and anxiety and incurred a number of debts and decided to request advice on what to do. He was deemed eligible and so applied for a DRO, which resulted in a total debt of £15K being wiped.
2. Client is 69 years old, married, in receipt of benefits. Client has physical disability and husband has mental health problems. Following a move to a different council, client got into council tax arrears and received Magistrates Court summons. When she tried to negotiate with the council, the member of staff was rude to her and told her she had to pay all the arrears in full to avoid liability order. Client could not afford to do this. CAB contacted the council and spoke to a different member of staff who was more helpful and confirmed that once a liability order had been granted, client would at that point be able to negotiate a more realistic repayment schedule. CAB also able to advise client on claiming CTR and getting it back dated, as well as considering switching energy suppliers to get better energy deal.
3. **Client is a vulnerable single lady who lives alone in a private rented property and was referred to us by another voluntary group.**

Client has extensive health problems. She had a heart attack in August 2016 and also suffers from anxiety and stress which are increased by her money worries. Client also has limited mobility and suffers chronic pain as a result of injuries to her back and shoulder. She is unable to work and has no assets or savings.

Knowing that vulnerable clients often do not attend appointments booked in busy Citizens Advice offices, we have met her in the familiar surroundings of the local voluntary group. Adviser carried out an assessment of client's income, expenditure and debts and explained all the debt strategies available to her.

As she had no way of repaying her debts, client chose to apply for a Debt Relief Order. Client was able to include the £200 fuel debt and other credit debts so that she could make a fresh start with her finances. Adviser checked that client had already applied for the Warm Homes Discount and applied to a local charity for help to pay the £90 DRO Fee.

It was not possible to switch energy supplier at this time as this may have caused a problem with receiving the Warm Homes Discount. Instead it was agreed to review client's tariff after she had received her £140 credit in the spring of 2017.

After client's DRO was approved, adviser identified that Fiona might be eligible for Cambridgeshire County Council's "Stay Well" fund. The fund tackles fuel poverty by promoting the availability of grants to assist with heating in winter months. Adviser submitted an application to ensure that client could keep the heating on during winter. The application was successful and £150 was sent to client's energy company.

Client says "I'm much less stressed now and very grateful for all the help and advice I have received."

SexYOUality – now The Kite Club

X, 19 year old male, pansexual.

X has been involved with our service for some time.

X struggles with anxiety, depression, insomnia, heavy reliance on cannabis, and his own self-image. His lack of financial resources leads him to eat very little, often only once a day.

X expresses that the regular one-to-one contact with our service is a “lifeline” and is the only place where he feels safe enough to get everything off his chest and express what is happening for him. He regularly attends two of our youth groups, and over time we have observed his progress from an extremely introverted member of the group to one who regularly contributes, joking and laughing with the other young people, and developing new bonds and friendships.

Through the one-to-one work, we have worked through various mental health and relationship issues, and have also signposted to other medical, mental health, and social services. As a result, he is now in the most stable situation he has been in since he joined the service. He acquired and is maintaining a regular job as a housekeeper in a hotel. He has placed himself on a waiting list for accommodation in assisted housing, and is meticulous about keeping his appointments. He expresses that his mental health (particularly the personality disorder) is the most manageable it has been in a long while.

While he still struggles with extreme depression and anxiety, he reports that the groups and one-to-one work help him immensely to feel connected, cared for, and supported

Homestart Cambridgeshire

The Homestart group has helped me become a much more confident mother and a happier sociable person, feeling less isolated. I love that I feel I can talk about anything from general motherhood to more specific life events. I trust the staff completely - they are absolutely brilliant, and have formed invaluable friendships with other mothers. I have also seen my son really enjoy interacting with other children, as well as learning essential skills such as playing and sharing nicely. I have seen a huge change in his confidence too.

We have really enjoyed all the activities, such as seasonal crafts, which the children have really enjoyed, as well as the mothers spending quality time with the children, and have also appreciated the activities for the adults, such as having guest speakers who have been incredible useful and helpful. I have also found it incredibly helpful to have a lot of information given to us in at group, and always feel very well informed of all the activities that are going on in Cambridge. It is a fantastic group, and I am so grateful for the support I have received. I choose this group over any other activities that may be taking place on a Thursday.

Headway Cambridgeshire

I met with S 4 times. S is currently unemployed, but is keen to get back to volunteering before eventually doing an NVQ in Social Care. S had a difficult upbringing and was heavily involved in drugs and alcohol before his brain injury set him on a new trajectory. He has lots of enthusiasm, but needed some help to steer his energy in the right direction. We worked on his life map, identifying a few actions for him to work on over the coming months, particularly trying to drill down into 2 or 3 that were achievable and important to him. Since the mentoring, S has run his own charity fundraising night at Wintercomfort, a local homeless charity. He is now also a volunteer Youth Worker for ChYpPS (Children and Young People Participation Service).

Cambridge Gymnastics Club

X is a 15 year old Youth Night member that attends our sessions regularly, he is a keen freestyler and has been able to not only progress in his skill work but also become a teacher to the younger members in the club, he is a kind individual that has been in trouble before with community workers for practising gymnastics outside, since coming to the club this has stopped and attends near to every session. Attached are some video's of his skill work alongside some friends that also attend the evening.

Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum

Specific examples include a worker who was falsely accused of very serious allegations that would have led his prosecution and banned from working in care. For the period that the case was pending the individual could not work and had no income but with CHESS representation, we proved that the allegations were made up by a member of staff and collaborated by managers and was paid compensation after we took the case to tribunal. Another worker was dismissed without investigation into false allegations. When CHESS intervened by representing the individual, the employer paid the worker compensation as worker was unwilling to go back due to breach of trust. In disability welfare, disabled people who were denied PIP awards were represented by DC/CHESS and had the awards reinstated. Without representation, they have been left with no livelihood and the consequential impact of losing other related benefits such as housing and council benefits and losing their accommodation.

Arts and Minds

I just wanted to write you a little letter, as although I saw you in person on Thursday, I'm not very good at speaking face to face. Thank you so much for all your help, support and time. I know you put in so much work behind the scenes that we aren't really aware of. I really appreciated your e-mail contact throughout the time I was on the waiting list and I am ever so grateful that you let me attend the group even though I was still in hospital.

Arts on Prescription has helped me in so many ways. I nearly didn't come to the first session and even had doubts about the second one, but I am so glad that I carried on. I honestly wouldn't be where I am today without Arts on Prescription. I've made friends, none of whom I would have met without these sessions. I know there is an age, yet it didn't feel like that. Everyone there has had their own experience of mental illness, so it gives them an understanding which others do not have. I think that is why the group is so great and it is easy to feel at ease. Nobody there is going to judge you because they can empathise with what you're going through.

Janet, Caroline and Anna are all wonderful, so talented and very supportive. Caroline has an amazing artist ability but never made us feel inferior, quite the opposite. She has built us and our confidence up. I'm so grateful to her for that. Janet really cares and always has time to listen. She was a great support and without her I would not have made it to the Ramsey trip. I'm glad I went because it was a huge turning point for me. I felt like a part of the group and it was the first time I spoke to any of the others, rather than just nodding or smiling. Anna is also a really talented artist but is also interested in each and every one of us. She was really easy to talk to and had so much patience. The questionnaire I filled in at the end of the series, did not reflect how much I have grown and developed thanks to you all. My answers mainly reflect the fact that I've just been discharged from the hospital after 10 months and I am now having to deal with the transition to a supported living flat, where I feel scared and unsupported.

A month ago my answers would have been different and a lot more positive. The occupational therapist took me to the supermarket for the first time in two years and I started talking to the other patients more. I felt happier and more comfortable being myself and that was all down to attending your sessions. Now I know I can do these things and once I move to University I will live in supported halls which is especially designed for students with mental illness, physical disabilities or learning difficulties. I will feel much safer and have better support. I'm sure I'll be able to join a club and feel less anxious in classes.

Jessa, everything you do is amazing. You make such a positive difference to so many lives. You have certainly changed mine for the better and I am very grateful. Without Arts on Prescription, there is no way I would have been able to apply for uni. I hope you feel proud of yourself for all you do to help people to achieve.

If there is ever anything I could do to help please let me know. I really mean that. I'd love to be able to give something back, even if it's just a review or something to promote the charity.

Romsey Mill Trust

During a golf session, one young father opened up to the group of 4 to say that he had recently separated from his partner and was concerned about contact. Within the group was an older young father who then began to share insight into a similar situation he had faced and gave some advice.

Within a separate session a young father who was seeking employment mentioned this to the group, prompting another young father to share the details of his place of work who had current vacancies

Cambridge Women's Resources Centre

Case Study 1 (CS1): Following some personal cultural challenges and being keen to become involved in her community, use her qualifications, skills and secure some independence, CS1 approached the centre in to find out what activities may be available to her.

Accessing the employment activity has helped her identify a strong direction in career development, consolidate her aspirations, set clear goals and connect with other women in the community. CS2 secured a voluntary position as a classroom assistant, this was culturally acceptable to her family. She was able to receive support with reviewing her CV and explore job application and career development.

Attending the centre, and specifically to this activity, has provided CS2 with social interaction beyond her family and cultural identity. CS2 has valued the support she has received from the CWRC and feels reassured that we are here for any help she needs. She is currently waiting to hear about a job she applied for and secured an interview for. CS2 has also offered some mentoring support to a young woman who is experiencing similar difficulties.

Case Study 2 (CS2): Came to the centre to receive support following a two year period during which she experienced complex mental health difficulties. During this time she had become socially isolated, lacking in confidence, self-

esteem and reliant on health benefits. Initially accessing the centre in a bid to connect with community and access what she felt to be a safe, supportive environment. Through this experience she was able to explore, identify and develop therapeutic creative skills, this directly increased her self-worth and motivation.

With changes to the health benefits system and following medical assessment, it was decided that CS1 should be transferred from ESA to JSA. CS1 was highly anxious and quite distressed initially, however through accessing our employment activities we were able to create a volunteering opportunity which met her needs and abilities. This activity built up confidence, provided structure, facilitated goal setting and routine, this contributed to stabilising mental health and emotional wellbeing. Following a period of volunteering, CS1 received 1:1 receiving careers guidance support in to build an up to date and relevant CV, receive ongoing careers coaching and support with job applications. In January 2017 CS1 secured part time employment through an agency, she is now working with children at nursery/reception stage – her dream job.

We were also able to support her with understanding financial transition from JSA, ensuring that the changes were not perceived as detrimental. This was supported by positive partnership relationship with the CAB. She values the continued support CWRC has provided.