

## Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme

In a joint bid with West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Black Country Housing was awarded funding through the government's Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), enabling us to purchase fifteen homes in Walsall, Dudley and Sandwell.

The new homes have been allocated to house customers with a history of street homelessness, giving them a safe and comfortable environment, whilst receiving intensive and specialist support to succeed in their tenancy. Black Country Housing's tenancy support coaches provide this service direct in Walsall and Dudley. The programme aim is to support each of the customers over the next two years to rebuild their confidence and work towards their personal goals enabling them to move on and secure long-term accommodation.

Case Study – Stephen M – In his own words with name changed to protect identity

### My past

I had a good upbringing with my family, who have always been supportive, but when my mum died my life crumbled and I began using drugs. I developed an addiction and this path brought me into contact with the wrong kind of people and I started to commit various crimes.

I had several spells in prison for the offences I committed and I would be released only to re-offend and be sent back. I wasn't bothered about going to prison as I didn't have a home to go back to anyway. The last time I was released, around 3 years ago, I went to stay with a friend but he asked me to leave as I was still taking drugs and he couldn't cope with my lifestyle

I was eventually placed in shared accommodation which seemed ok at first but then became occupied by people who were on the same path as the one I was trying to avoid. I couldn't cope with the untidiness or the lack of hygiene and lack of co-operation from the other tenants and became depressed. I actually wanted to return to prison and was on the verge of committing a crime so that I would be as it was more appealing to me than the place where I was living.

### My present

I had always wanted my own home. Somewhere that I could keep clean and tidy and feel safe and comfortable and I was delighted when I was accepted for the RSAP project. I moved into my current Black Country Housing flat under the RSAP project in the spring of 2022. The flat is lovely but I had nothing to move in with. No furniture or white goods, absolutely nothing for the kitchen, just my clothes and a few personal possessions.

My support worker from Walsall Council obtained white goods and my tenancy support coach from Black Country Housing has obtained furniture, a TV, a bed and everything else I need. I have a well equipped kitchen now right down to an ice cream scoop.

I do sometimes get lonely and feel a bit down as two people who are close to me have recently been diagnosed with cancer. However, I can call my tenancy support coach any time that I have a problem or need support. I am clean now. I don't take drugs. My only vices are tobacco and a very occasional drink.

### My future

I am supported with everything from managing my money to arranging for me to have 1-1 sessions with Click Start, another BCH project teaching me to learn how to get online. Because money has been a bit tight since I moved in, my tenancy support coach arranges for food parcels for me when I need them.

When asked about the RSAP project and how I feel about it, I can only say that it is brilliant. An excellent project which offers constant practical and emotional support and opportunities to improve my situation. I feel happy now that I have a comfortable home and am determined to make a success of this tenancy which will offer me permanent accommodation in the future. For the first time in many years, I have none of the every day worries and if this project can help me, I would like to see it continue to help others like me.