



# TheHarveyProject

2011-2016

# Introduction

From September 2011 to April 2016, The Harvey Project provided first class housing support to people who are at risk of social exclusion due to substance and/or alcohol misuse. Additionally clients may have mental health issues, physical support needs and risky lifestyle factors such as sex working. The service was commissioned by Liverpool City Council and provided by The Big Life Company.

The service model is strongly influenced by best practice in that it aims to provide housing as a basic need, from which people can address other issues. It is based on Dr Sam Esember's Pathways Housing project in New York City (founded in 1992) which considered housing a human right. Harvey aimed to address the most significant barriers to people at risk of homelessness and rough sleepers accessing and maintaining stable accommodation as defined in the report 'Streets Ahead'<sup>1</sup> such as drug and alcohol issues, discrimination against couples and service users feeling unsafe in traditional hostel accommodation with shared facilities.

The service provided female only and generic accommodation for single people and couples with no dependent children. Service users had to be aged 18+ with no access to stable accommodation, and have needs that could be met through a supported housing package. Harvey was delivered from two Victorian buildings with a total of 20 of self-contained one bedroom and studio flats in the Liverpool 6 area (near Newsham Park). The service was staffed 24/7, including waking night support; staff members were trained to recognise overdose and administer first aid. Each resident was assessed on referral and allocated a key worker when they moved into the property. Key workers supported residents to identify goals and changes they wished to make and then supported them to achieve them through practical and emotional support. All residents had to manage their own bills and cook independently, although a range of activities were provided each week in the communal areas. Residents were encouraged to work together to deliver activities in communal areas, including cooking and eating together.

## The service aimed to:

- Support service users to maintain contact with specialist agencies (substance misuse services, mental health services; specialist wound care nurses etc.)
- Support access to, and accompany services users to appointments for screening, testing, GP, GUM, needle exchanges, benefits agency etc.
- Provide access to a range of services and activities internally, through external agencies and within the local community (information and advice; brief psychological therapy; harm reduction and aftercare; therapeutic interventions such as relaxation and aromatherapy);
- Deliver interventions to minimise risk of overdose and diversion of prescription drugs including relapse prevention; attendance at AA and NA; peer self-help groups for anxiety and depression
- Deliver interventions to reduce risk of blood borne viruses; safer injecting; sharps boxes; Hep B vaccination
- Provide safer drinking advice
- Deliver interventions to prevent harm from lack of self care e.g. assistance with meals; help with hygiene
- Facilitate skills based training activities
- Maximise service user income through claiming correct benefits; debt repayment plans; effective money management
- Deliver interventions to minimise harm from street drugs such as information on dangerous supplies when known and encouragement to receive and adhere to treatment services

*“Harvey has really, really helped me getting my life back on track”. - Alice*



## Alice – Female Resident

Alice is a 48 year old who moved into The Harvey Project (HP) after she made the decision to change her life by moving to Liverpool. “Prior to [moving in] I had been in rehab, then a dry house and a variety of hostels. The hostels were terrible – it was chaos after chaos. Awful! ..... and I got into really dangerous and vulnerable situations. From previously smoking drugs, I went to injecting speedballs in my neck!”

Alice is very clear about what makes HP so different from other places she has stayed at over the last few years. “The hostels I stayed at were chaotic places. There was constant arguing and fighting. People would come around offering you drugs and then expect you to sort them out the next time. There were no locks on the door which made me feel really vulnerable, lying with my eyes open at night wondering if anyone would try to come in. There was non-stop borrowing of money and thieving. I lost lots of weight because you could not leave any food in communal areas without it being taken. So I couldn’t believe my luck when a room became available for me at Harvey. Especially because it was a room with a secure lock on the door and my own bathroom. Harvey has really, really helped me getting my life back on track. It gives people a second chance. And I really like that it’s pretty quiet and chilled out.”

Once Alice made the decision to change her life she found that the staff provided her with the necessary support. “The permanent staff are great. I couldn’t praise them enough. They are always positive and wanting to help. They clearly really care and look out for the residents. My only criticism would be that sometimes the agency staff aren’t quite so good. Sometimes they just don’t know what needs doing and that worries me. It’s a fantastic place to sort your head out and get clean. Before, every time I got clean things ended up worse. Here, there are no dealers or punters waiting for you outside. Instead we’re situated close to the college, a GP practice, a drug clinic – it all helps that it’s so close.”

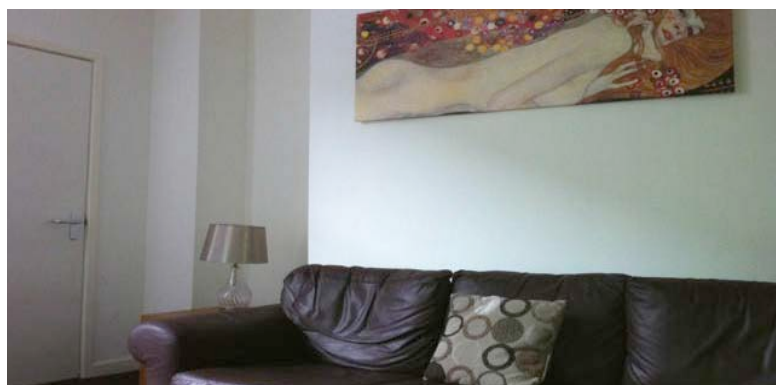
Since Alice moved to HP, things have improved greatly for her. “I’m not using drugs anymore. Especially not injecting! I’ve had the odd relapse – don’t get me wrong but those days are getting few and far between. I’ve become involved with the Pearls Project and met some really nice people. It’s great to have a bit of normality and meet new people. I had a difficult relationship with my parents growing up and then a string of abusive relationships. It’s nice now to have great friendships with women through Pearls.”

Alice hopes that she will continue to move forward during her stay at Harvey. “I hope to get my own place in Liverpool. It’d be great if my daughter also came to Liverpool but this may not happen. I hope to get into education and do some voluntary work.”

# Development of the Service

The service was commissioned by Liverpool City Council Supporting People in 2011 on a 3 year contractual basis. The Big Life Company worked in partnership with New Start Homes on securing, developing 20 units of self-contained accommodation in the Liverpool 6 area.

Over a period of 12 months, 2 abandoned Victorian buildings were developed into 20 units of self-contained studio style accommodation with additional office and communal/training area. The flats were furnished to a high standard and include fully-fitted kitchens, bathrooms with shower facilities, and intercom systems. One of the main objectives of the accommodation design was to ensure that it was representative of mainstream accommodation and as different from hostel living as possible. To ensure clients were prepared for resettlement into the community, the flats were fitted with utility meters to empower clients to learn to budget in preparation for unsupported accommodation. Great care was taken to ensure all furnishings were modern and homely with sofas, bedroom furniture, white goods coming from the high street and not from traditional bulk suppliers of HMO services.



Communal areas were furnished in the same way as any living room with quality leather sofas, flat screen TVs and finishing touches such as art work, glass based lamps and throw cushions to create a welcoming environment (see Figure 1). It was important that the concept of trust with the client group was evidenced from the start and nothing in the communal areas and or offices of the service such as TVs/DVD's and computers was secured or fitted.

Figure 1: Photograph in one of the communal rooms at The Harvey Project

## What we achieved

Since it opened in September 2011, The Harvey Project accommodated 104 women and 84 males (including 5 couples) – 60% of those accommodated were street homeless. Up until 2013, The Harvey Project managed its own referrals, and on average 15 agencies made referrals each quarter. Since 2013, all referrals came through Mainstay, a centralised point of access to manage referrals across a number of supported housing projects in the area. As described above, The Harvey Project has 20 flats of self-contained accommodation; since 2011 occupancy has been 97%. When a tenancy is surrendered it is logged as either an unplanned or planned ending (see Table 1 below)

Table 1: Reasons for termination tenancy at Harvey

Tenancy Termination Type	Reasons
Planned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborative decision for resident to move onto housing that can offer a different support package</li><li>• Collaborative decision for resident to move onto private rental housing.</li></ul>
Unplanned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Resident abandons property</li><li>• Eviction</li><li>• Resident dies</li><li>• Resident taken into custody.</li></ul>

Since 2011, 48% of all tenancy endings have been planned. The average length a person stayed in the project was 6 months, with the longest residents staying 18 months. In about a third of all planned endings, the resident moved into a private tenancy. It was particularly difficult for residents to obtain housing association tenancies due to previous rental histories.

Residents met their key workers regularly ('Key Worker Sessions') to review progress on their support plans, ensure they are still relevant and identify actions to help residents move change. On average, 155 'Key Worker sessions' were held each quarter (every resident meeting a key worker every one and half weeks). Quality of Life measures were used to assess progress, and each quarter an average of 15 (75%) of residents reported improvement in at least one of the domains.

In addition to Key Worker sessions, external agencies facilitated a range of 'in house' activities – with an average of 14 activities taking place per quarter. Most people accessing The Harvey Project had issues with drugs and/or alcohol and the project supported residents to access a range of drug and alcohol treatment services. Over this period an average of 3-4 clients each quarter became alcohol and drug free. This was often not maintained, but the project encouraged residents to try treatment and abstinence and celebrated every time they sustained it. The Harvey Project also supported residents to access employment, education, or volunteering. Over this period 3-4 people per quarter accessed one of these opportunities. Many of the female residents at Harvey were sex workers – which was often a barrier to obtaining other accommodation. Between 1-2 female residents were supported to exit sex work each quarter.

The Harvey Project aimed to be flexible in meeting people's accommodation needs, particularly filling gaps where other accommodation providers had less flexibility. In addition to accommodating 6 couples, 3 pets were accommodated and The Harvey Project accommodated 1 person on an end of life plan. As a result of this experience, Liverpool City Council specifically commissioned accommodation and personal care support for people with complex needs.

## Brian – Male Resident with a pet dog, Charlie

Brian is a 48 year old man who has been living at the Harvey Project with his three-year old dog, Charlie for approximately a year. "Charlie has been really lucky for me. He saved me from a chip pan fire last Christmas. He nipped me in the face until I woke up to find my room full of smoke. It wouldn't have been much longer before I would have died!" Unfortunately, the incident on Christmas 2014 led to Brian becoming homeless. "I stayed with a couple of friends for three months or so. But it wasn't a situation that could continue long-term."

"I moved into the Harvey Project early in 2015 and it's made a big difference. I'm now also involved with other organisations that help people on drugs. I've been to do yoga at Genie in the Gutter three times and I really enjoy it. I've been able to start sorting my health out. I have breathing difficulties and leg ulcers on both my legs and I've been able to access health treatment." It is not only his health problems that Brian has started to address while at the Harvey project, he's also made great progress addressing his drug dependence. "I'm clean now! Harvey has given me the security that helps you move on in life. The staff have been really helpful getting me to sort things out. Without them I would probably be in the gutter or in prison now. If I'm on my own I don't have the will to do anything."



One of the big benefits for Brian has been the fact that he was able to bring Charlie with him to the Harvey project: "I was scared I would be asked to leave Charlie. Friends offer. They say: We look after him while you get yourself sorted. But I wouldn't have trusted anyone. Charlie's saved my life. He was there for me now I will be there for him."

Brian is very proud of the progress he's made since he's moved into the Harvey Project. "You can see that I've changed. I recently spent £150 on a big TV and I'm buying myself jewellery – that wouldn't have happened before I got here."

# Client Experience

In early 2014, Community Voice was commissioned by the Harvey Project to interview the residents about the service. Community Voice is a user led group that is run by people who have been affected by drug or alcohol use; they are an independent group that undertake service evaluations. Community Voice interviewed residents one-to-one in the common rooms using a standard questionnaire comprising 15 questions (13 of the questions sought an open and closed response, 2 of the questions sought an open response). This exercise was repeated in December 2015 by two Social Work students on placement at Big Issue in the North; the same questionnaire as the first exercise was used. In total 23 interviews were undertaken.

## Interviews

A summary of the closed responses is in the table below.

	Percentage of positive responses
Do you feel safe living here?	96%
Are you satisfied with the standard of accommodation?	87%
Is it important to have self-contained accommodation that you don't have to share?	100%
Would you know what to do if you were not happy with a situation that you felt was abusive?	91%
Do you have a support plan?	91%
Were you involved in creating this?	91%
Does the service encourage you to do things for yourself rather than have to rely on staff?	95%
Are you given the opportunity to read assessments and other documents about yourself which the service keeps on record?	73%
Do you agree what is recorded?	92%
Have you been encouraged to access services outside the Harvey project?	90%
Do the agencies work together to co-ordinate your support?	86%
Are you invited to residents meetings?	95%
Are you asked for your comments, feedback on the service you receive?	86%

When asked about what approaches the staff use to encourage the building or maintaining links with friends and family, residents responded by saying that staff members ask about links with family and friends in key worker sessions, and provide practical assistance when required, however the issue is not forced.

When asked where they would want to move on to, most residents stated that they would like their own tenancy; a few tenants specified that they would like to move to supported housing with floating support.

*“We really enjoy having a flat just for us with a kitchen.  
It's safe here. Without Harvey I might be dead. Or in jail.”*

- Dave and Emily

## Overall the following themes come out of the clients responses

- The Harvey project is a safe place to be and stay. This is primarily because of the 24 hour, 7 days a week staff coverage and restricted access.
- It is important for residents to have a self-contained flat.
- The staff from the Harvey are encouraging for service users to do tasks themselves but are there to support them. The staff facilitate links with family and friends but do not push the issue.
- Most residents are satisfied with the standard of the accommodation, however a few felt the accommodation could be improved, and 1 resident felt isolated because of having to give notice to have visitors.
- A number of residents reported that they had not been given the opportunity to read their recorded information. It should be noted however that no-one reported being refused access to this information.

Below are some general comments:

'best place ever lived in - not like a hostel. Staff support to move on'

'Stayed in other hostels, felt they just cared about the money [but at HP] the staff care about me'



## Dave & Emily– Couple

Dave (44) and Emily (38), originally from Chester, have been living at Harvey for seven months now. Both were rough sleeping in Chester and in Liverpool before E got a place at the Harvey Project. "Dave continued sleeping rough when I got my place and he kept sneaking in to try and stay with me. So they gave us a room together here at Harvey. We were the third couple to live here at the time." Dave and Emily have been a couple for six years and **do not to be apart**. "We are planning to get married once we've sorted our lives out." Dave says. "So it's great that they accept couples here. I'd not heard of other places letting couples share rooms."

Dave and Emily first heard about Harvey through The Whitechapel Centre where they were accessing help for their drug dependence. "Our drug use has gotten a lot more under control since we've moved in here. In fact, Emily is due to start on a script today." Dave says. "On the streets it's just 'beg and score, beg and score'" Emily explains. "Here, we have somewhere nice and secure to help you stay away from the drugs. It really helps that many of the staff who work here have personal experience of what we're going through. They can get you on the right track. There are no barriers between staff and residents. They really try to get you back to normal, human life"

Dave explains: "With the help of staff at Harvey I'm now attending Genie in the Gutter and Emily has joined Fallen Angels (Dance company). We're doing a lot more positive things. I used to be in and out of jail a lot." Emily adds: "And we both lost kids. It's not a happy life using drugs. I started injecting heroin when I was 13 and Dave when he was 19."

Both Dave and Emily are sure that Harvey has been a really positive influence on their life. "We really enjoy having a flat just for us with a kitchen. It's safe here. Without Harvey I might be dead. Or in jail."

For the future both hope to be stopping their drug use altogether. "I'd like to go to college to learn English" Emily says. "I'd love to work with kids in the future. But I'm not sure if that's possible with my criminal record." Dave hopes to get back into art: "I am really good at drawing. I started art-college but then everything fell apart six months on. But we have already much improved."

# Staff Experience

In December 2015, an anonymous staff survey was undertaken. In total, 15 staff members (including bank staff) were working at the project at this time. All of the staff members were asked to complete a questionnaire on their experience working at the Harvey Project; 7 staff members completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire comprised 15 open ended questions.

Overall Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is unique about working at Harvey?</li> <li>• If you have worked at other supported housing projects, how does the Harvey Project compare?</li> <li>• What have you enjoyed most about working at Harvey and why?</li> <li>• What have you enjoyed least about working at Harvey and why?</li> <li>• What do you think have been the key challenges whilst working at Harvey?</li> <li>• Do you have any stories you want to share?</li> </ul>
Development and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has working at Harvey contributed to your personal development?</li> <li>• What skills have you gained while working at Harvey? What training have you undertaken?</li> <li>• What have you learned whilst working at Harvey?</li> <li>• Given what you have learned whilst working at Harvey, how has your practice improved?</li> <li>• Given what you have learned whilst working at Harvey, how do you think the service could be improved for clients and staff members?</li> </ul>
Impact of the Harvey Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you think are the key strengths of the project?</li> <li>• How has it made a difference to clients?</li> <li>• How has it made a difference to staff and volunteers (including yourself?)</li> <li>• How has it made a difference to the community?</li> </ul>

## Overall Experience

In terms of the uniqueness of Harvey and how it compared with other supported housing projects, staff highlighted the following points

- Harvey Project is a harm reduction setting (i.e. clients do not have to be abstinent from drugs or alcohol use)
- Diversity of clients and issues supported; males, females, couples and pets are accommodated
- Supportive and caring relationships among staff members and clients
- Holistic approach with 24/7 support

When asked what they enjoyed most about working at Harvey, staff members revisited some of the themes above, but also mentioned their satisfaction when clients they have supported make positive changes. Staff members least enjoyed the shift patterns, lone working, and barriers encountered referring clients for specialised help. Although supporting people with chaotic lifestyles to make changes, was mentioned as one of the most satisfying aspects of the work, it was also flagged as a key challenge, as was the need at times to defuse difficult situations. Below is one of the stories that a staff member chose to share:

‘I worked with a client who had a difficult past, with violence, alcohol, drugs ,who came to the Harvey worked hard and is now living independently in his own flat and working with people who have the same type problem that he overcame.’



## Development and Learning

Staff members indicated that working in Harvey has improved their understanding of multiple complex needs, and made them more confident and assertive in making decisions, assessing risks and managing difficult situations. Some staff members indicated that they have learned to treat everyone as individuals, and be flexible in their approach to supporting people. One staff member said that through working at Harvey they had learned that:

*‘Every individual matters, and everyone deserves the chance to make positive changes in their lives with support.’*

In addition to undertaking mandatory training on a range of topics including First Aid, Challenging Behaviour, Handling Needles, Dealing with Drug overdoses, some staff members have successfully completed NVQs in social health care.

## Impact of the Harvey Project

For Clients	For staff/volunteers	For community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Housing for people who are homeless</li><li>• Somewhere safe to live with the possibility to access support</li><li>• Enables residents to make positive changes to improve their lives</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased confidence and knowledge</li><li>• Sense of belonging to a team</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce homelessness</li><li>• Reduction in crime, and anti-social behaviour</li><li>• Volunteering opportunities</li></ul>

Staff indicated that the benefits of Harvey Project were as follows:

Staff suggested that the service could have been improved by:

- Increasing the number of beds – as the demand for the service is high
- Ensuring that at least 2 staff members on duty at all times
- Improving communication amongst staff and with clients
- Increasing the time allotting for shift handovers
- Increasing client involvement in in-house social activities and groups



**The  
BigLife  
group**