



Working in Partnership: A Year with Sifa Fireside



February 2024 – November 2024

In late 2023, homeless charity **SIFA Fireside** approached Birmingham Mind to deliver a refreshed version of their existing Adult Support Hub service known as ASH.

Homelessness can trigger or worsen mental health problems. The experience of living without secure housing is traumatic. It can lead to acute anxiety, depression, substance misuse and feelings of isolation and hopelessness. The lack of safety, sleep, and stability creates chronic stress that directly impacts mental wellbeing with around 45% of people experiencing homelessness having a diagnosed mental health condition.

The Adult Support Hub (ASH) service aimed to place a stronger emphasis on health and wellbeing with support of Birmingham Mind, for individuals or childless couples living in insecure or temporary accommodation.

The Adult Support Hubs across the city, focus on preventative, community-based support, promoting access to health services, for those who may have been excluded from these services previously.



Birmingham Mind officially began delivering the service on 5th February 2024. Our team of seconded staff received between 40 and 60 new referrals each month.

We seconded 3 full time staff members to the service and our dedicated Birmingham Mind team worked from both existing SIFA Fireside community hubs and in newly sourced community locations.

Supporting individuals, aged 25 or over, the service was designed to support those with physical or mental health difficulties, but specifically those at risk of exclusion from mainstream services. The team were also able to support people being discharged from

“Thank you for getting me the help. I am not sure if I would have known where to start if I am being honest.”

To expand our reach, to those most in need, we successfully identified and established new drop-in locations across the city, in Small Heath, Kitts Green, Tyseley and at three central Birmingham locations.

“Thank you for the help with the guidance on my mental health.”

The needs of individuals varied and in some cases were moderately complex, our team provided a range of support from listening and emotional support to financial and budgeting advice. We we’re able to expertly provide support and guidance on a range of other topics, including:

- Housing and tenancy guidance
- Bereavement support
- Applying and accessing Food Bank vouchers
- Practical assistance in securing furniture and essential items
- Wellbeing advice
- Access to and referrals for specialist services
- In just over 10 months, we supported 315 adults at 8 community-based locations.

“I feel hopeful for the first time in a long time.”



Service User Support Journey



Claire* (*not her real name) is currently in a violent relationship with a partner and is unsure whether she would like to leave. Claire explained that she feels trapped, as she does not have a home of her own. She disclosed that she is pregnant and has decided to proceed with the pregnancy after taking some time to consider whether she wants to continue or terminate it. This pregnancy has been confirmed by a healthcare professional.

Claire would like to find her own accommodation but emphasised that she needs a place where she can bring her dog with her.

Our immediate priority was to ensure the safety of Claire and her unborn child. We signposted her to Birmingham Women’s Aid Drop-In and advised her to explore refuge options. We offered to help her look at available refuges if she would like, or she could attend Birmingham Women’s Aid Drop-In on her own.

We also explained to Claire that, given her pregnancy, she could be at increased risk in her domestic situation. When we asked if her partner was aware of the pregnancy, she confirmed that he was.

The main barrier to Claire’s decision-making is her indecisiveness about leaving the relationship. While she is aware of the risks, she may not be ready to take that step. From a professional standpoint, we assess her to be at risk, but we understand that readiness to leave an abusive relationship can be complex. Claire acknowledged the risks but mentioned that her partner is currently “behaving.”

We signposted Claire to appropriate services and referred her for long-term support to help her obtain her own property and to provide assistance with leaving the abusive relationship.

Claire is currently engaging with Birmingham Children’s Trust and is awaiting assignment to a midwife. She is actively working with a representative from the trust to ensure the safety of herself and her unborn child, and we are pleased to report that she is engaging well with their services.



The police were required to attend Claire’s property, and they completed a DASH (Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour-based Violence) checklist, which may have triggered a MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference), though Claire is unsure. She mentioned that the police will be in contact with her for further steps.

Reflecting on Claire’s case, we know that people may not always be ready to leave a volatile and abusive relationship, even when they acknowledge the risks involved. It is important to provide ongoing support, validation and information to those in Claire’s situation, while ensuring that safeguarding measures are in place to protect both the individual and their children.

Due to restricted funding, the contract came to its expected end in November 2024. This unique partnership has embedded a stronger integration of mental health support into SIFA Fireside’s housing-focused model.

Additionally, we received positive feedback from established community partners, especially Central Foodbank, where Birmingham Mind continue to sustain an excellent relationship as part of our Vulnerable Adults Service (VAS)’s.

Discussions are now underway for future collaborations with SIFA Fireside and we are excited and hopeful to grow our strong, ongoing partnership.