



**YMCA  
NORFOLK**

# Going the extra mile

By Frances Hollingdale

Edited by Keith Morris

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Some of the names in this book have been changed to protect privacy.

# Introduction

**Y**MCA Norfolk is part of a world-wide movement active in over 122 countries. The YMCA in Norfolk, England, was established in 1856 just twelve years after the founding association in London.

Each YMCA in England is an autonomous association, an independent charity and often a registered Social Landlord.

YMCA Norfolk employs people from all faiths and none who are sympathetic to the association's Christian mission: to develop all people to their full potential, but particularly vulnerable young people at risk.

This book contains a glimpse of the extraordinary work being undertaken on a daily basis by dedicated staff who give sacrificial service often at risk and without recognition, going the extra mile.

I commend them to you.

**John Drake**  
**Chief Executive Officer**  
**YMCA Norfolk**

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This is a collection of true short stories about real people whose lives have been touched by an encounter with YMCA Norfolk.

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**Written by Frances Hollingdale**

Edited by Keith Morris



January 2008

## SUPPORTED HOUSING

# The day John's life was turned around

**J**ohn, a 33-year-old man with an eight-year addiction to heroin, is on a different kind of high today; a high that stems from new roots of stability in his life. The stability of his accommodation at the YMCA, and the support from YMCA staff and family, has contributed to a completely new sense of hope for the future.

A recent meeting with the Archbishop of York to put the case for young people who have fallen into homelessness and crime has given him a sense of his own power of articulation and a thirst for changing society's perceptions of people like him. But his journey is far from over.

John was born in Norwich. His was a close family: mum and dad, two older brothers and a sister. "I was really close to my older brother. We lived together for a number of years. We got on brilliantly, even after I left his place and moved in with my girlfriend," he said.

It was shortly after this that John's life turned upside down, when his brother died in a tragic accident. "I blamed myself for what happened," says John. "If only I hadn't moved out. I realise now that it wasn't my fault, but at the time I just couldn't cope with it."

At 25 years old, filled with grief, pain and remorse, John was extremely vulnerable. He drank to blot it all out, and started taking heroin, though for a while he managed to keep up his job as a tree surgeon. Wasn't that a little dangerous? "You may laugh, but that's cos people think addicts are out of it all the time. Most of the time, you're using simply to stay well, to stay straight, and yes, to be OK up a tree with a chain-saw."

After a number of years of addiction, his family life had deteriorated to the point that his girlfriend had no choice but to kick him out. Homeless and rootless, John stayed round at friends' in a fog of booze and heroin, but something prompted him to try and get sorted, and his family were ready to help in any way they could.

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"The YMCA has been fantastic to me. If you want to make a go of it, they'll back you 100%."

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"I tried a couple of treatments but they just didn't work for me. My other brother was brilliant. He even took me through cold turkey. He locked me in his flat for weeks, and finally I was clean for the first time in years. But when I got out, I went straight back on the heroin. My mum took it the worst. She let me home, but I lied to her all the time, told her I was clean when I wasn't. She kept finding needles and paraphernalia in my room," said John, shaking his head in disbelief at himself. "No mum should have to go through that."

The family got wise to him, and John found himself on the streets again. Sleeping rough for three months in cars and at mates', he felt himself to be truly at rock bottom. Then a mate who was living at the YMCA suggested he try and get a room there. They had a place for him within a week. Despite the state of his mind at that time, John recalls the date perfectly; "It was 26/6/06," he says, with some emotion. "The day my life turned around."

The week he arrived, a support worker at the YMCA suggested he get help from The Matthew Project, a drug and alcohol counselling service in Norwich, and got him an appointment that afternoon.

"You have to show up ill. They monitor your habit for three days," said John. "I needed 90ml of methadone to maintain. Today, a year later, that's down to 50ml." Now his addiction is stabilised and he is looking forward to moving on to his own place in a couple of months.

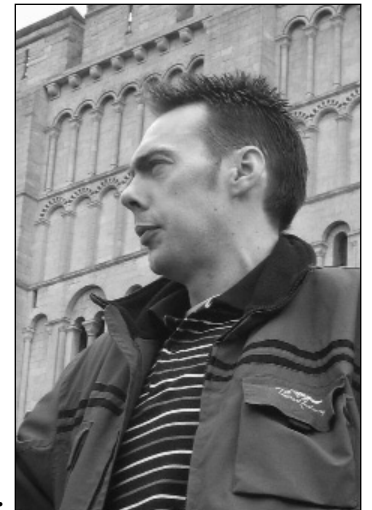
He's been doing a few college courses and has been on day trips, and learned to express his views. "There are endless opportunities here," he says. He enjoyed meeting the Archbishop of York. "It was great to be able to explain to someone in a position of influence why some young people end up doing what we do."

"I couldn't have got through this ordeal without the full support of the YMCA. I have always been listened to by YMCA support staff and fully supported in all my plans to return to independent living. My family has also stood by me. Not all young people get this and I feel very fortunate to have their help as well as from the YMCA."

"The YMCA has been fantastic to me. If you want to make a go of it, they'll back you 100%."

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John.



# A chance to change

**H**ostel operations manager Julie Oakes has worked in the Norwich YMCA hostel for almost 30 years and has been involved with some of society's most challenging and troubled young people.

She is firm but warm, and quick to recognise when someone can use a second chance. Richard has recently moved out of the YMCA into his own accommodation. It's a great victory for Julie and the hostel team, who have supported him through many ups and downs since he arrived 18 months before.

Since falling out with his family he had been sofa surfing and at interview he admitted that he was struggling to cope with a dependency on alcohol and various drugs. He was generally sober but every two weeks he would spend his giro in a single afternoon binge drinking. This was often accompanied by drug taking. He'd return to the YMCA drunk, loud, aggressive and difficult to manage.

"We could only try and get him to go to his room and sleep it off," said Julie. "The next day he'd be filled with remorse, promising never to do it again, but every two weeks it was the same. He was given another chance time and time again, as we knew he had a desperate desire to change. Appointments were made for him to seek further help but he never attended.

"So the pattern continued and eventually he fell so behind with his rent we had no choice but to give him notice to leave. I really hate to do that, admit that we can't help," said Julie.

Richard was devastated, begging Julie not to throw him out, asking for one more chance. Somehow Julie knew that this time he was serious and with the help of his support worker, Richard began the serious work of recovering from his problems. Counselling was arranged to help him overcome his drug and alcohol problems and he has since been reconciled with his family.

He still pops in to the YMCA to let them know how he's doing. "You wouldn't believe the change in him," says Julie, with maternal pride. "I love it when they make it."

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**"Richard was devastated, begging Julie not to throw him out."**

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# A mother's love

**G**ary was full of beans the day he dropped by to visit his former mentor, YMCA's hostel operations manager Julie Oakes, despite the fact that he was due in court the following week and likely to be sent to prison.

His girlfriend Michelle had given birth to a boy and they had brought the two-week-old baby in to meet Julie.

While Gary was off chatting with old mates from the hostel, Michelle asked Julie for a quiet word. Something was troubling her.

Knowing that Gary wasn't likely to be around much for his son, and unsure of her own ability to bring him up, she wasn't convinced she could hold on to her baby for much longer. The prospect of local authority care for him was quite real; it was all she and Gary had known, after all.

"Can I put his name down for a room when he's 16?" she asked.

Julie was saddened by the fact that Michelle was serious.

"Michelle thought she had so little to offer her son, and assumed he'd end up homeless. It was the YMCA she looked to for security for him.

"Whatever happened to them, she could tell her little boy that he'd always have a home here."



**Julie  
Oakes.**

**YMCA  
NORFOLK**

## SUPPORTED HOUSING

# Simon's long and winding road

**S**imon is a 35-year-old Norwich-born man living at YMCA's Norwich hostel for homeless young men. When he arrived, 14 months ago, he was, in his own words, "a raving smack head."

Previously, he had been with his girlfriend and mother of his two children for ten years. He had a steady job, working as a pipe layer on the railways. A regular family man.

But Simon's increasing addiction to heroin was causing major problems at home. "The arguments, the more I was out of it, it was scaring the kids. I had to go, I realize that."

After a few weeks sleeping on first his mum's, then his sister's sofas, he soon had to leave them too. The heroin drove him apart from everything that had mattered to him and away from any means of support. He went downhill fast, the addiction exerting an ever harder grip on him.

Eventually he lost his job and contact with his children. He spent five months living on the streets of Norwich, getting by on shoplifting and selling heroin. Inevitably he was arrested and spent two weeks in prison on remand, receiving a two-and-a-half-year suspended sentence.

The key to starting to solve his problems was finding somewhere to live. "I tried various hostels but it was hard," he said. "Then I came to the YMCA one Friday, had an interview on the Monday and moved in a week later."

Simon didn't tell YMCA support workers about his habit. He didn't want to jeopardize his chance of a bed to sleep in and a roof over his head. But he knew they weren't stupid. "They'd soon worked it out. I was sleeping till 2pm, mugged out of my head half the day." And of course they were well aware of Simon's criminal conviction.

After a while, Simon felt able to confide in his YMCA support worker about his

addiction and begin the long journey to recovery. "He's just a brilliant geezer," says Simon. "He didn't push me; just let me come out with my story when I was ready. That way I felt I could trust him. He's helped me sort my rent and housing benefit arrears."

Simon's YMCA support worker put him in touch with drug support agencies, the first time he'd received any help for his addiction. He is now stable on methadone, but has never lost the desire for heroin. It will be a long time until he feels himself able to establish anything like normal life again, even though one dirty test will put him straight back into prison.

"Methadone is even harder to come off than heroin. It'll take two or three years for me to get clean. One day at a time. In the meantime I'm just waiting on the courts to decide if I can see my kids. I miss them; it's what I've done to them that kills me."

"The good thing with the YMCA is there is always someone to talk to, 24 hours a day."

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"The good thing with the YMCA is there is always someone to talk to, 24 hours a day."

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# Eddie was all at sea

**L**ike the residents he cares for at the YMCA Hostel in Norwich, Sunderland-born Eddie Pleban knows something about living an itinerate life. He spent his 16th birthday aboard a ship to New York, his first sail in a career in the Merchant Navy that was to last 17 years.

"I got engaged to my wife Jean three weeks after we met, and went straight off to sea for nine months. When I got back we hardly recognised each other!"

Eddie enjoyed life in the Navy, and put up strong resistance when Jean gave her life to Jesus after an operation. "I said, 'You won't get me in a church!' I liked the Navy life too much."

But he was persuaded to go along and hear preacher and evangelist Eric Delve at Down to Earth in Norwich in the 1980s, an event which changed his life forever.

"He described the full horror of the crucifixion, no holds barred. For a tough serviceman like me, it really hit home what Jesus had done for me," said Eddie

Then 32, Eddie found himself on his knees at the front of the stage giving his life to Jesus, along with a bunch of teenagers. And Eddie has spent the past 25 years still getting down alongside young people at the YMCA.

On leaving the Navy some years later, Eddie opened a Christian restaurant in Great Yarmouth, an enterprise which was to go bankrupt just six months later.

"We lost everything, our house, the lot," said Eddie. Together with Jean and their four children, Eddie was forced to spend four months sleeping on friends' floors until he got a job on the rigs. "I was away for another year, but it helped get us back on our feet. That was a terrible time though."

It was when a relative came to Eddie for some help with an addiction problem that he first came into contact with the YMCA in Norwich. "I rang them for some advice and spoke to the pastor; he invited me to visit. As soon as I walked through the door I could sense that good work was being done there."

Eddie started working in the YMCA's kitchen three weeks later and was catering manager for five years, before becoming a security night man, a job that isn't without problems.

"I can look after myself, life at sea teaches you that much. There were some hairy moments. One big guy, a non-resident, got into the hostel one night. We had to wear ties in those days, and he just picked me up by it, almost strangled me. All I could do was pray ... and he leapt off me like he'd had an electric shock. God certainly saved me that day. And now we don't have to wear ties so that's a bonus!"

Now, as Head of Housing Services, he is also responsible for developing new projects outside the hostel: Night Stop, Y-Life and the Furniture Recycling project have all benefited from Eddie's guidance.

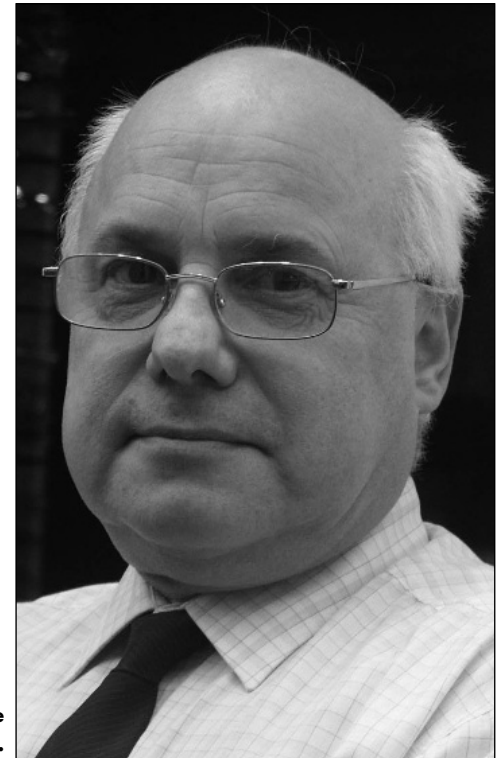
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"He just picked me up by the tie, almost strangled me. All I could do was pray ... and he leapt off me like he'd had an electric shock. God certainly saved me that day."

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**Eddie  
Pleban.**



## Best day of Sam's life

I can't thank these guys enough for giving me a second chance, says 28-year-old Sam. "I have to learn the hard way."

Sam has finally moved into his own flat after two years at the YMCA. "I'm a better person for my experiences, but I've put my family through some terrible times."

Sam's dad left when he was 11, and, as the eldest of four, he took on a lot of responsibility for the family, going to work at 14 for a local butcher. Mum took out some of her depression and anger on him too. "It was hard to get on."

Sam left home himself at 16, and developed a lucrative sideline as a drug dealer, selling mostly cannabis, ecstasy and speed. He thought he was clever, but the police were on to him, raiding his 18th birthday party and arresting him. "It was a real shock; I needed that. I needed to grow up," he said. Sam felt he was fortunate to get away with a fine, and resolved to change.

He got a job in a factory and met his wife, Tanya. "We married in Kenya. Her parents paid for it all. It was a brilliant experience, topped by the birth of our son nine months later!"

But married life was tough for the young couple in their small flat, and the increasing rows left Sam depressed and frustrated. "It was like an emotional cancer. I would go out and get wrecked, just to get away from it all."

He was prescribed Prozac by his doctor but Sam was used to levels of self-medication. His drinking and use of cannabis increased, and eventually Tanya's family stepped in to protect their daughter and grandson. Sam was back at his mum's, unable to see his family, feeling as if he'd failed everything.

"I can't do in-between," Sam admits. "I can't chill and unwind with a beer. It's all or nothing with me. So I turned to what I always did: drink, drugs ... and then a friend introduced me to cocaine. Coke overtook me; all I could see was the next line."

Sam was soon spending £250 a day on drugs, funded initially by credit cards. His moods became violent but his addiction drove him on. He turned once

more to dealing, this time in cocaine and with a serious habit himself. "That always leads to worse trouble," says Sam. "Of course, I used most of what I was supposed to sell, so I ended up owing money to some really dangerous people."

Sam was forced to flee his home town and ended up sleeping rough. He even hitched to Holland where he spent time with a 'gentleman of the road,' an older man who taught him how to survive out of a bag. Strangely enough, it was this quest for survival on the streets that forced him to kick his drug habit. "I was completely focussed on getting by; no space in my head for anything else."

Eventually, Sam arrived at the doors of the YMCA in Norwich and signed up for a room. Like many other residents, he remembers the date well. "It was the best day of my life. I had nothing, nothing at all. They gave me toiletries, got me a doctor, helped me fill in forms; I started to get normal life back."

But with the new stability of a roof over his head, the old demons returned, and Sam started to drink heavily again and use drugs. His YMCA support worker was quick to challenge his behaviour and he stopped for a while, but he kept slipping back. "They really tried to help, and kept supporting me. Eventually I had to admit that I needed proper help."

YMCA got Sam the counselling he needed to deal with his psychological and physical addictions to drugs and alcohol, and after two years away, he is now rebuilding his relationship with his wife and family. Recently, he moved into his own flat, and they are taking things slowly. He doesn't touch drugs, and can manage to go out and have a couple of pints. The huge grin on Sam's face never fades as he describes what he owes the YMCA.

"There's no way I'm going to throw all this away. The counselling has really helped; I'm not nearly so vulnerable. I know what I want out of life, thanks to the YMCA. They have been my rock."

I don't have words to express what they've done for me.

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## As shrewd as snakes

**Y**MCA's Steve Ginn is notorious for going the extra mile. After many years working at the YMCA in Norwich for the Prince's Trust, and then developing YMCA Norfolk's Y-Life scheme, he is now running Night Stop, a system of volunteer householders offering emergency accommodation to 16-24 year olds who find themselves suddenly homeless.

He deals with many referrals from the local authority, including Carrie, a 16-year-old girl under the legal guardianship of her older sister. The two had rowed and Carrie had been turfed out. She ended up spending a few nights in the home of Maureen V, a former YMCA resident herself. The volunteers come from all walks of life, retired couples, anyone with some time and a spare bedroom in their home. But it takes a lot of courage to open your home to a stranger, particularly a stranger who may be harbouring huge problems.

Steve takes a call from the local authority wanting an emergency home for Pat, a young lad whose mother has kicked him out for 'breaking a window.' It seems a bit extreme; something doesn't quite add up. After several hours' research and interviewing, the truth emerges. Pat is due in court on Monday charged with a series of violent offences. There is no way Steve can allow him into anybody's home in the scheme.

There are currently around 15 volunteer hosts prepared to offer one or two nights' accommodation, a listening ear and a hot meal to a young person in distress. Most attend local churches, as it happens, although that's not one of the criteria. To be 'shrewd as snakes, innocent as doves' certainly is, though. (Matt 16:10)



## Waking up to life

**D**avid, 25, is a former resident of the YMCA in Norwich. He arrived 18 months ago, homeless and in debt, a heavy cannabis smoker turned dealer.

"I was wrecked every day. I had no friends, just associates. I didn't trust anyone and nobody trusted me," he said.

David took part in the Y-Life course, a 12-week programme designed to develop self-esteem and confidence in some of Norwich's most damaged young people.

"Some of these young men have such chaotic lives that even the prospect of getting a job is a distant hope," says YMCA's Steve Ginn. "We take them to the Lake District for a week of team-building and sports activities, which is always an amazing experience. Some of them just can't cope with being away from their home territory; it's a real culture shock. But for those who get into it, it's something they never forget, and they come back to Norwich with a new outlook."

"It was a fantastic experience. I felt awake for the first time in years," says David.

His cannabis use dropped as he developed the desire to get up in the mornings and get going. His fellow students soon became his close friends, the first people he'd known for years whom he could actually call mates. "I'm still in touch with most of them ... great guys; we went through a lot together," he says.

Today, David is a bright-eyed young man who smiles widely as he talks about his profile of achievement, his health and safety award and a huge folder of work some 140 pages thick. And the presentation evening where they performed sketches and karaoke was magical. "My mum, my nan and my wife were all there. It was the first thing I'd done to make them proud in years."

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**"It was a fantastic experience. I felt awake for the first time in years"**

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## SUPPORTED HOUSING

# Living in the real world

**F**ifteen years ago, Gus Hawes was a trained preacher, before his financial situation forced him to take stock and rethink what God was calling him to. YMCA Norfolk's Chief Executive John Drake was, he says, 'an answer to prayer,' offering him a job as night security at their Norwich hostel, and even paying his first wages early to help get him back on his feet.

Now he has discovered a new ministry as a support worker to homeless young men in Norwich, in need of much time, care and support to assist them on their journeys to independent living.

"I don't exactly come over as Mother Teresa," says Gus, "and it's a different world here. A real world, for certain." Rather than being up at the front, Gus's day now consists of being alongside young people who have nothing left, nowhere to go.

Gus will interview applicants, most of whom are sleeping rough, for rooms. His philosophy is to be as honest and direct as possible, especially about what the YMCA can or can't do.

"Young people need a 'yes' or a 'no', plus a reason. The relief you see in them when they arrive; living at the YMCA isn't the best, but it's a roof over their heads.

"They need a little time to settle down and feel their feet. The great thing we have to offer them here is to be part of the YMCA community, but for some that is very threatening to start with. They just aren't used to it."

With the immediate problem of homelessness temporarily solved, it's often not long before other issues emerge. Drug and alcohol abuse have often contributed, but it's the break-up of relationships that is one of the biggest causes of homelessness amongst men. Once he's lost his wife or girlfriend, and with her, his home, things fall apart very quickly. Gus does not try to tackle the problems though, waiting for his charges to come to him for help and support as they see the need.

"Some you can catch and save, some you can't. We're not going to sort them out.

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"He said he would kill himself if he didn't get something sorted. I believed him; he really was a man without hope."

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Each individual has to find their own way through. It's an enormous test of faith, requiring the patience of a saint.

"I wouldn't be here without the love of Jesus," he affirms. "I can't see any other way of dealing with it, not as a prop, but seeing the value of Jesus working in these young people's lives. Jesus knows what these guys are going through, he's been through it all himself. He's closer to them than a brother.

"But God also allows the bigger picture in. As Christians we can get a greater handle on failure. The worst thing is when you have to say "no" to a guy who's got nothing."

Gus gives a chilling example of the kind of edge-of-kingdom decisions that sometimes have to be made.

"I interviewed a man for a place in the hostel. His life story was tragic, truly. He said he would kill himself if he didn't get something sorted. I believed him; he really was a man without hope. I had to do a risk assessment. Could we safeguard him and other residents, all themselves vulnerable young men? I had to decide not, and he did in fact commit suicide the next day." Gus reflects on what might have happened if he had admitted him.

'On one level, it was a good call. I had to protect the other lads here and he was very likely to have killed himself here if I'd taken him in. On the other hand..."

Gus can do nothing but commend yet another broken life to God.

**YMCA**  
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**Gus  
Hawes.**



# Building sandcastles in the TV lounge

**G**us Hawes' previous occupation as a preacher gives him invaluable insight into offering spiritual direction to troubled young people, even those with the barest education and, on the surface, the least insight into the problems that have brought them to the YMCA.

He tells of how he spent Christmas Day with a group of young men, building sandcastles in the TV lounge, the entire floor covered with sand.

"Christmas Day is a hugely significant time for our young men," Gus says. "We have to be constantly on our toes for them. They are missing their families, their kids. Many become extremely morose, sitting alone in their rooms, so we try to provide activities to stretch them, make them think about something else, something not Christmas."

"When they walk through the sand and leave footprints, it's a symbol of the marks that we leave as we walk through life. One of the residents read aloud the 'Footprints' story of Jesus and the sets of prints in the sand. 'Some of them began to question why we were doing all this, and put together their own answers.'"

"We had a 35-year-old man with significant mental health problems, on huge amounts of prescription drugs. He had a great time building sandcastles at Christmas; it was the first time he'd ever made one."

Gus is keen to demonstrate the truths behind the Bible in ways that impact visually and physically on these young men. Putting moats in the castles was important, watching the water: "It's important to see something flow," says Gus.

"Another young man began to cry. His parents had both died that year, and he was reminded of family holidays at Felixstowe. His family was part of his life

that he'd tried not to think about; the tears were liberating, a part of healing.'

Millennium eve, 31st December 1999, was memorable for Gus, as another evening when states of depression among YMCA residents would be running especially high. These young men are not part of any celebration.

"We got a load of helium balloons for the Millennium," he explains, "and released them at midnight. Attached to each balloon were the names of three people important to a YMCA resident: the person they liked the most, a person they were responsible for and a person they hate.

"Releasing those people, those feelings, that night, was important. They needed to let it go."

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"When they walk through the sand and leave footprints, it's a symbol of the marks that we leave as we walk through life."

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**YMCA**  
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## SUPPORTED HOUSING

# Lewis is waiting for the gas man

**L**ewis, 35, has made an incredible journey, from growing up on one of the most troubled estates of north London and a life of crime and drugs to, within two years, complete rehabilitation and a new career as a drugs counsellor.

One of the most significant changes in Lewis has been his ability to open up about himself. "As a kid, we didn't talk at home, not at all. We didn't talk, we didn't give. It was just take, take. It seemed the only way to survive.

"My life in London was chaotic, all over the place. I was in and out of prison many times, but that was nothing more than a break from life on the streets. In prison I got a bed, free meals, and the drugs I wanted. There was no incentive to change. I'd just go back and do it all again."

Three years ago, Lewis was sentenced once again, but this time something was different: "The prison drugs worker really stuck to me. She just kept coming back, not giving up on me. She suggested I leave London and arranged for me to go into rehab when I got out. She wrote a really powerful letter in support of me; I guess that triggered something in me to really get help."

Instead of returning to his usual routine, Lewis found himself in a Norfolk treatment centre on a six-month programme to deal with his drug and alcohol addictions: "I was broken - mentally, emotionally and spiritually, and they helped to rebuild me," he said.

Leaving treatment, he decided against returning to London, and was able to get accommodation at the YMCA hostel in Norwich. He was clean, but still vulnerable. "It was quite hard to start with. I was afraid I'd drift back. But I got

through it. Meeting other addicts in recovery helped in the end. I found I could talk to them; I knew what they were going through. And I thought, 'I'm never going back to that.'" Lewis has been completely free of drugs for two years.

Lewis' new-found desire to help others is something he names as part of his spiritual recovery from the past. He now works as a volunteer at the treatment centre where he himself was treated, and has completed an introductory course in counselling at the University of East Anglia. "Until three years ago I had never ever sat down and talked about anything. Now I'm training and working as a listener. It's a total turnaround."

Lewis recently moved out of the YMCA into his new flat and has much to do. He's a man in a hurry, driven nowadays not to score drugs or escape his enemies, but just to get back in time for the gas man.

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"Until three years ago I had never ever sat down and talked about anything. Now I'm training and working as a listener. It's a total turnaround."

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**YMCA**  
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# From day release to true release

**P**ete carries many of the marks of a difficult life. Tall and well tattooed, he has spent most of his 37 years in and out of institutions - from children's homes and foster care from the age of five, to prison. "Over 17 years I never spent more than 12 straight months outside before re-offending and being sent back," he says.

Yet Pete exudes a gentleness and positive optimism that belies first appearances. He puts this down to a series of strange coincidences that have brought him to a new life.

"My life began two years ago," he says, "the day I first came to the YMCA on prison day release. I'll never forget that day; the day I started living. Now I'm like a different person."

"I had a bad start," Pete admits. "Prison was an extension of all I'd ever known. I never had proper friends. There was no support available, just me, looking out for me. I was only a little boy when my life went wrong, and I didn't understand. I always felt I'd been dealt a bad hand, that the rubbish in my life wasn't my fault. But I did some bad things, really bad things, and that made everything worse."

"It was a shame though," he says with some understatement. "I'm not that bad a person, deep down I always had something to give, but I'm only just finding that out now."

During his last sentence, over two years ago, Pete connected with the prison rehabilitation services for the first time and felt he had an opportunity to turn his life around. From open prison for non-violent offenders he was able to take up voluntary work at YMCA's Norwich hostel while on day release.

"I only went as an excuse to get time out of prison if I'm honest. I didn't go wanting to help, or to change anything. But spending time at the YMCA, talking to people who listened was something I hadn't had before. They would

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"The day I first came to the YMCA on prison day release. I'll never forget that day; it was the day I started living."

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do anything they could to help. They helped me get a flat on my release, and now they've taken me on full time in the kitchens - a proper job!

"The people I met at the YMCA were the first people in my life I was ever able to trust, and I mean that. They had no agenda; there was nothing in it for them. They were just decent human beings who wanted to help; I'd never met authority figures like that. Every one of them went the extra mile for me, not for any credit or recognition themselves, but out of the goodness of their hearts."

"I realise now that people like them exist in the world, but, honestly, at that time I'd never met anyone like them before. I'd be in prison now if it weren't for them."

But Pete's story doesn't finish there. "That day, when I first came to the YMCA, I was walking through the market on my way from prison and stopped off at a stall to buy a lighter. I started chatting to the girl on the stall. It was a bit nerve-wracking as I hadn't so much as spoken to a woman in almost four years."

Pete got the girl's number and called her. "To cut a long story short, we're still together, getting married next summer. It's like a series of dominoes just fell into place that day."

Life is now steady and on track. "It might not look much to some. I go to work, come home of an evening. But that's a bright future to me."

As Pete reflects on the changes that have occurred, he speaks of his life being touched.

"I'm not much of a church-goer, but I have started wondering. There have been too many coincidences, so many positive things happening at once. Someone upstairs has been looking after me. I reckon God sees everything and sees my change of heart. But I recognise that just as the bad I did in the past was up to me, the decision is on my shoulders as to what I do now."

"I have learned to be patient, just to wait and everything will fall into place. I do believe that."

**YMCA**  
**NORFOLK**



# When they get out they stay out

**W**hen Roger 'Jingles' Goodall dropped into the YMCA in Norwich for a coffee one morning, he little thought that he'd end the day as a night security man, nor that he'd still be there 15 years later, leading the work of YMCA's young offenders' resettlement project.

Jingles is a biker who clearly loves nothing more than a good stretch on an open road. Yet his days are spent inside a Norwich prison for 180 male offenders under 21, working with them to organise their lives outside and give them the best possible chance of never returning. The YMCA has a good relationship with the prison authorities, and Jingles can call on people as he needs to.

"Even after only a few months in prison, a lot can change on the outside and it can be hard to adjust," he explains. "The first few hours after release are some of the most crucial in resettling and preventing re-offending."

Having got to know most of the 180 inmates, when the morning of release day comes, many are relieved to see Jingles waiting for them outside the gate. "It's a long walk down a wide empty street towards the city, and at the end you hit the ring road, the first sight and sound of traffic they've heard for many weeks or months. Then there are the people rushing about to get to work. Somebody straight out of prison can get a bit paranoid, the sense that everyone is looking at them. They are no longer issued an HMP plastic bag for their stuff, but even so, the standard prison-issue duffle bag seems like a dead giveaway."

Norwich takes offenders from all over East Anglia, and some of the young men released on to the street have never been as far as Norwich before. Jingles will take those from Suffolk to the station to get the train to Ipswich, where they are met by a YMCA Ipswich support worker.

For the Norwich lads, the first place they need to report to is the probation office in town. The first place they want to stop off however is any one of the five pubs along the route. Jingles' job is to calm the kind of high energy behaviour that will lead to trouble.

For many of these young men, their lives have fallen apart while they've been away. There may be housing issues, family or relationships that have disappeared. Their stories have begun to unfold in Jingles' office in the prison, often with great emotion.

"They have to be so hard in prison, living two to a cell there's no privacy or rest from it," he says. "Some are career criminals, no doubt about it, waiting to graduate to the men's prison next door on their 21st birthday. But for others, my office is the only safe place they have. Once behind that closed door, I've seen many a hard case cry his eyes out because he hasn't had a phone call from his mum."

But Jingles offers more than simply a shoulder to cry on. "I have only 45 minutes per prisoner to interview them and set up a support plan; that's all the time they are permitted out of the cells. We can sometimes find accommodation when necessary at the YMCA and a place on the Y-Life course; it really helps that we have these integrated services.

Sometimes it's the simplest thing, like phoning a parent and asking them to make a couple of calls, which Jingles can do. "Prison is a world apart, where time operates on a different scale. It is very, very slow.

"Imagine having no contact with the outside world, no mobile, and access to a phone just once a day in the evening, if you're lucky. Then try and ring your landlord, or the benefit office. They've all gone home by that time. And if these young offenders can't get a few basic issues sorted out, the chances of making a good start to life outside are very slim."

Frustrating though it can be, Jingles finds his job immensely rewarding.

"The best bit? When they get out, and stay out!"



**YMCA**  
**NORFOLK**

**Roger  
'Jingles'  
Goodall.**

## SUPPORTED LODGINGS

# The rest of my life was a blank page

**S**arah had lived in South Africa and Holland, before arriving in Norfolk with her mum, dad, and older brother and sister. Her parents were British-born, but this was her first experience of the UK, and it wasn't a good one.

"My dad's job fell through about two weeks before we arrived. We were never very well off; hence Dad travelled so much for work. We had no money and nowhere to live."

Sarah and her family were placed in two rooms in a B&B on the Norfolk coast. She was 11 years old at the time. "It was not a holiday home, absolutely not," says Sarah. "Our neighbours were ... well, let's just say there were a lot of police raids, ambulances, windows breaking ...."

Eventually they moved to a two-bedroom council house. "A great relief," says Sarah. But the strain of coping with the B&B had left her parents, particularly her mum, under a great deal of emotional stress. "A few months after we moved, my mum started to have affairs which lead to my dad leaving us, going back to South Africa."

Sarah describes the hardest decision she ever had to make: deciding which of her parents to live with. "I was 13, just starting high school. Mum was really volatile, not in a good place at all. But she was my mum and I needed her. Letting my dad go was awful, though."

Mum wasn't on her own for long, however, and her new boyfriend made it clear he didn't appreciate her kids being around. Sarah found herself on the plane to South Africa to join her dad. "While I was away there were a number of incidents between my brother and mum's boyfriend. By the time I came over for the Christmas holidays a year later, the boyfriend was gone."

Sarah decided to stay on with her mum, but things were clearly not good. Her sister had been forced to move out; the two just couldn't get on. But Sarah decided to get her head down and commit herself to year 9 studies with her old friends.

Sarah's mum found a new partner, they married, but her moods didn't improve and she was always fighting with someone, often Sarah.

Sarah received a lot of support at school from the learning mentor. "I could go any time; quite often over the years I just broke down in her office. I couldn't cope with it all. I didn't want to abandon my mum, but things got so bad that I couldn't see any other way. I would have to do what my sister had done, and leave." Sarah was just 16, and desperate. Where could she go?

YMCA Norfolk's supported lodgings was contacted and Sarah met with Pam at YMCA's Great Yarmouth centre and was offered a room in the home of an elderly lady, one of their established hosts, by 4pm that day.

"It was a bit sudden, but I couldn't bear it any longer. Mum was upset, of course. This was her second daughter to run out on her, but I just couldn't support her emotionally any more."

Sarah describes the first night she spent at Irene's. "There wasn't much room, but it was quiet and I had my own space. I just remember being left in this room to unpack, totally daunted. I didn't even know where to start. It was like facing a blank page that was the rest of my life."

Sarah would still visit her mum, and with support from school and Pam at the YMCA, found that having the space apart helped to heal their relationship. They are now close again: "It's the best feeling in the world when she comes to me and I can help," says Pam. "And she helps me too, of course!"

Despite all this turbulence and upheaval in her young life, Sarah has emerged from school with a good crop of GCSEs, all at A\* to C grades. "Yes, I did well there," she says with well-deserved pleasure in her achievements.

And the future? "Just after I turned 17, Pam rang with the offer of a bed-sit. So I've just moved into my own place! It's better than I hoped, just perfect. I was feeling a little back to that daunted feeling I had when I first got to Irene's but after a week or so it really feels like mine."

"Getting into YMCA supported lodgings really put me on my feet and Pam's been great with all kinds of advice and support as I've needed it. I've just completed a performing arts course. That's where my heart is; singing, dancing, acting. I feel really positive, like I can go anywhere, do anything. So watch out world, here I come!"

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## It's time to decide

**T**he YMCA funds a number of learning mentor and personal advisor posts in Norfolk high schools. Gary Pillar has worked in a 900-pupil high school for the past five years where he supports students from a wide variety of backgrounds, from the relatively well-off to some of the most deprived areas, where low income jobs and high unemployment are usual, often to the second or third generation.

"The majority of the children I see have pretty low aspirations," he says. "There's a distinct sub-culture of not doing well at school; there are many very disenchanted young men and women out there. Some of our 14-year-olds are out drinking all through the week – or so they'd have us believe! Some certainly hit it hard at weekends; on a Monday morning we are often dealing with the after-effects of all-night parties, alcohol and drugs. They don't think about the future; maybe what kind of job they'll get, if any, when they leave school."

For students in their final year of high school, with a history of low educational attainment and often a history of exclusion, the future is sometimes not very bright. They often end up without a job or being in any form of ongoing education or training. The YMCA works in partnership with Norfolk County Council and Connexions to deliver Time 2 Decide, a programme that aims to give them a better start to life beyond school.

"We support young people in making positive choices," said Gary. "Part of this involves taking them on a residential event for team-building and outward bound activities. One-to-one conversations and listening to them is very important too."



Gary Pillar.

## The academy of life

**G**ary Pillar's life prior to working for the YMCA was very different indeed. "I spent 18 years in the banking sector, providing customer service, mortgage and other financial advice. But over the years banking has changed. It's less about what the customer wants, and more about what we can sell them."

Uneasy with the increasing change of emphasis from service to sales, Gary felt that God was calling him to serve elsewhere, but transferring his skills in financial services seemed a difficult task. Then he saw an advertisement for the YMCA, applied for the job, and hasn't looked back.

"There are some similarities, believe it or not!," says Gary. "Many of the issues affecting teenagers today have the kind of impact that job-loss or moving house, or planning a pension can have on working adults. Young people need time to think, talk things through, and make decisions about their own responsibilities. It's not rocket science, but it does take time and patience, and understanding."

James was coming to the end of year 9 and had been nothing but trouble since the day he started school. A big lad by 14, his aggression, especially towards female teachers, was becoming all too threatening. "James had a difficult relationship with his mum," explains Gary. "He'd developed a pattern of behaviour towards women in authority where he expressed all his anger."

Gary was asked to see what he could do to manage James' violent outbursts. "It's a process with young people like James," he says. "But as we talked about his anger, his mum and where it was all going wrong for him, he managed to see that the focus of control lay with him."

"Young people who say, 'It's not my fault' sometimes have a point. But in the end they are responsible for what they do about it, and it's my job to help them to see that if the results of the choices they make are rows, fights and exclusions from school, how is that helping their situation? The turning point comes when they can say, 'this behaviour is not working for me, so what could I do differently?'"

James eventually learned to treat his mum with trust and respect, and is now a role model to other students in Gary's 'lessons for life' academy.

**YMCA**  
**NORFOLK**

# Rainbows in the classroom

**J**o Thomas, 27, came to work for the YMCA as a pastoral care worker in a Norfolk primary schools five years ago.

"As a volunteer youth worker, the job really appealed to me. The main frustration is just not having enough time with all the children who need support," she says.

Jo is based at a primary school in one of the most deprived areas in the UK. As pastoral care worker, she has her own private room where she plays and talks with young children who are referred to her care by teachers, social services, or self-referral. Any troubled child in the school can come and see Jo.

Jo's first year with the YMCA was a baptism of fire, when an eight-year-old school boy went missing from the streets near his home. To this day his disappearance remains a mystery and he has never been found.

"The different stories flying around were getting increasingly horrifying. Many of his classmates were upset and terrified by what had happened. We spent a lot of time talking it over with the children, learning to discern rumour from fact. Two years later some of them were still dreaming about him."

Later that same year, another child was hit and killed in a road accident. "It was a terrible time; children in the youngster's class were very upset. But in some ways it was easier to help them in this instance; as we knew the facts about what had happened."

Rainbows is a loss and bereavement group that Jo runs at the school. Children come for a variety of reasons. "We've had a number of children affected by the death of a parent in the last few years, and others who have lost grandparents; some are coping with being transferred between foster homes, family break down or a parent goes to prison.

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**"It was a baptism of fire, when an eight-year-old school boy just went missing."**

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There are many ways that children experience grief and loss. One child came when she discovered that the person she thought was her dad turned out not to be."

Rainbows is a 12-week programme in which children keep a diary of their feelings, and learn to process the guilt which often accompanies bereavement. 'If only I ...'

Through one-to-one counselling and supporting one another, children can learn gradually to come to terms with events beyond their control that have knocked them sideways.

Harry's mum had died of leukaemia and he'd been fostered locally when his dad had been sent to prison. He found it hard to make friends, and some other children teased him about his family.

"Sometimes it was nothing more malicious than children's insensitivity, but he couldn't always see it that way. Other kids did get a bit nasty, often because they were missing a parent as well, only his situation seemed so much worse. It made him more vulnerable."

Harry started to lash out at other children. After spending time at Rainbows, Harry was able to open up to Jo and even, quietly, to chat to other in the group. "The Rainbows group helps form a real bond between those children," smiles Jo.

The following year, Harry was nominated for a Norfolk children's award as Most Enthusiastic Person, and he won! Rumour has it that he's still wearing that medal to this day.

**Jo Thomas.**



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## I can't do anything

**A**t almost eight years old, Rory couldn't write, read or even draw. Any work his teachers tried to give him, even simple worksheets, reduced him to tears. It got so he wouldn't even pick up a pencil, or look at a piece of paper.

"I'm rubbish. I can't do anything!," he would say.

Rory had recently moved in with his grandparents after a history of abuse at home. YMCA pastoral care worker, Jo, met with him over the course of two years, just to chat, relax, and even to play a couple of games. It was hard work; Rory found it very difficult to speak. Jo brought in the support of outside agencies able to work with Rory as he tried to resolve some of his past, and gradual changes began to emerge.

One day, Rory picked up a picture of a church outline, and copied it. It looked like the original drawing! From then on, Rory began a series of church outlines, getting better each time.

He started to make friends, and last year Rory was chosen out of the whole school as the Head Teacher's Pupil of the Year.

## Counting down the meals

**T**aking pupils on residential outdoor activity holidays is part and parcel of school life. Every summer sees coach-loads of children off to enjoy a week of independence away from home. It can be a challenging time for many of them, negotiating friendships, tackling rock climbing and abseiling, finding their own clothes ... but YMCA pastoral care workers working in some of the UK's most deprived areas also see another side.

Jo from YMCA Norfolk says: "Some of our children have never been away from home, or away from the few streets around where they live, or seen the sea. But then there are the kids who count the cooked meals on a plate that they've eaten while they've been away. It's quite heartbreaking, especially to hear them count down to coming home: two more dinners, two more breakfasts, one more dinner, one more breakfast ... Some of them don't ever get meals like that."

## Great expectations

**I**t is not only children from impoverished backgrounds that YMCA's Gary Pillar is mentoring in the Norfolk high school where he works.

William was the younger of two boys from a well-off home. Both parents were in good jobs; they had holidays, a nice house, enough money for new clothes and the latest games. William's older brother had done exceptionally well at school and was off to university, expected to get a first, no problem.

Living up to the expectations of his parents put William, 15, under a lot of pressure, and he didn't cope well. The family doctor had diagnosed depression and prescribed medication. In the crucial run up to his GCSEs, William was using cannabis on a regular basis and started to miss deadlines; within a few weeks he was truanting and his exam work was falling far behind. His teachers were worried and referred him to learning mentor support with Gary Pillar.

William's mother was very distressed; she couldn't cope with his behaviour and drug-taking, but in one-to-one sessions with Gary, William gradually started to open up and confide his fear of failure and the pressure he felt.

Gary referred William to an outside agency to help him address his use of cannabis and mediated between William and his parents as he tried to explain his feelings to them.

"I don't think I could say it was resolved between them at that stage," Gary admits. "But there was an understanding between William and his parents that hadn't been there before."



**YMCA**  
**NORFOLK**

## Caring for the confused

**K**evin retired to his holiday home in Great Yarmouth after a career in the bar and club industry, and has been a supported lodgings provider for the YMCA for five years.

"I suppose offering supported lodgings is just another form of hospitality," he muses. "It's another way of looking after people."

Kevin was inspired to assist young homeless people by his encounter with Abigail, who came to work for him at Sea World on work experience when she was 15. She was a good worker, clean, smart, intelligent, and turned up on time. Three years later, he spotted her in a café in the town, thin and grey-looking.

"What's up?" he asked her. She explained how her stepfather had thrown her and her sister out of their home, and they were currently sleeping under the pier.

Kevin couldn't just leave the situation and set about finding out how to help Abigail and her sister; a search that brought him into contact with the YMCA.

Kevin will regularly have up to four young people aged between 16 and 18 years living with him.

"It's a struggle for them, as well as me!" he says. "I'm up dealing with things from 7am through to 11.30pm. You have to be dedicated, but it's very rewarding. Yes, I've had problems with breakages and other damage, but everyone who comes into my home is told that here is somewhere you are wanted, and will be listened to; somebody cares about what happens to you. Many are confused, life has gone wrong at home – abuse, drugs, step-parents. Some of these young people are literally fighting for their lives."

In five years, Kevin has supported 20 young people in total, and only three of those have left never to return. "They like to come back, see how I am, and meet the current residents to give them the benefit of their wisdom. Like which window at the back is good for breaking out of!"

## Kevin, he's your man

**J**erry was a homeless 17-year-old from Liverpool who was referred by the YMCA to Kevin's place. His mum was too ill for him to live with her any more, but Jerry's problems went deeper than that.

"His memory was shot to pieces by pills, cannabis, whatever he took. He was completely withdrawn, could hardly utter a word," said Kevin.

Kevin had to monitor Jerry's whereabouts at every moment. "He was dangerous, not violent, but if he was cooking the simplest thing we'd be in danger of the house going up," said Kevin.

Jerry left Kevin's and ended up dossing. He'd pay him a visit every now and again but seemed as far from getting his act together as ever.

Recently he turned up unannounced, articulate, smartly-dressed and articulate. He was off the drugs, living with his mum again and looking after her now she was ill.

Kevin overheard Jerry explaining the old how-to-escape-through-the-window trick to one of the new boys ... and then, to his astonishment, a list of all that Kevin had done for him. It hadn't gone unnoticed after all.

"You need anything, then Kevin, he's your man."

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"His memory was shot to pieces by pills, cannabis, whatever he took."

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# A life-changing moment

**G**ary Moore must be one of the most colourful characters ever to have entered the YMCA in Norwich.

When he walked through the doors he came with a background which included children's homes, prison, the Royal Military Police and the French Foreign Legion.

Shortly after becoming a resident, Gary had a life-changing experience and became a Christian.

"The change in my life was both immediate and, in some ways, dramatic," he said. "I stopped drinking almost straight away for one thing.

"As the first few days after my conversion to Jesus Christ moved along, I saw for myself first-hand evidence of my new life, of the fact that I had been born again of the spirit of God and was in fact, what the Bible called a new creation.

"One day I had my usual walk and was passing through the crowded market place in Norwich when a man barged into me, nearly knocking me over. Just a few short days before I would've attacked him; instead, today, I asked him if he was all right! He was the most surprised man in Norwich that day, the more so when I began to talk to him about my Jesus. He was amazed, shaking his head as he left me. A small crowd had gathered and I told them as well about my Jesus!

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Shortly after becoming a YMCA resident, Gary had a life-changing experience.

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"I began to smile at everybody I met; the joy of knowing Jesus loved me just overflowing from deep inside of me, from heart to face muscles. 23 years later I'm still smiling.

"One afternoon soon after, there was an argument between two residents. One of the staff members, a lovely guy called Ron Day tried to calm down the incident as it was right on the point of turning nasty," said Gary.

"I was in the snooker area when it started and so I went over to back Ron up in case he needed any help. He was a Christian brother and that was good enough for me.

"Ron was in-between the two guys and I could see one of them was about to have a go so I pulled Ron aside and stepped in the middle – just as one of the guys threw a punch at the other. Fortunately it hit me instead of Ron and there followed a stunned silence as the gathered crowd waited to see what happened next. I still had a reputation as a nasty piece of work and had only the week before thrown someone down the stairs for getting in my way.

"I had been a Christian for four days now but I had read in the Bible only that morning about turning the other cheek when violence was offered to you.

"So I did; and then invited both the guys for a coffee in the canteen and told them all about my Jesus. Within a week both of them had also received Jesus as Lord!"

Gary's life in the last 23 years has been no less remarkable. Married for all that time to Tracey, he has two children and two grandchildren. He has worked with American evangelist Billy Graham, preached the Christian gospel in Siberia, Africa and Argentina, smuggled Bibles into Communist countries and has been commissioned to write a book about his experiences.

Today he is supervisor at YMCA Norfolk's furniture project helping countless needy families across Norfolk and dreaming up his next great adventure.

**Gary Moore.**



**YMCA  
NORFOLK**

# Body, mind and spirit

**T**he YMCA is not just about finding homeless people somewhere to live. Caring for every aspect of those it comes into contact with is what the YMCA is all about.

It is summed up in the famous YMCA red triangle sign, which represents the body, mind and spirit of those it offers its many services to.

YMCA Norfolk has its own faith development officer or chaplain, Alexis Lloyd, whose role is specifically to look after the spiritual side of its work.

"My main job is to look after the spiritual well-being and pastoral needs of the residents at our hostel in Norwich," says Alexis. "That means anyone with any sort of faith or no faith, Christian, Muslim or whatever. The YMCA is keen to develop the spiritual well being of young people because that is part of our ethos.

"I am there to give day-to-day advice, helping residents on a more personal level, with family issues, or issues of faith or no faith. It really is a big mix. If they would benefit from counselling, I can point them in the right direction, outside of the YMCA," says Alexis.

"We also run specifically Christian programmes for residents. We do Bible studies, visit local churches and run a shorter version of the Alpha-type course, to give the young men the opportunity to find out what the Christian faith is all about. It is always pressure-free and with element of no compulsion," adds Alexis.

One resident who has benefited from the holistic approach that YMCA Norfolk offers is Mark.

Mark left school at the age of 16 and joined the Army. He signed up for the Royal Artillery Regiment where he spent four and a half years posted in Germany and Northern Ireland.

"Following that I had about two jobs every year for the last 12 years," he says. "I could never stick at anything for long though."

Mark first came into contact with YMCA Norfolk through its Norwich hostel. After becoming homeless he found a room at the city centre hostel. But this was only the start.

As well as offering him somewhere to live, the YMCA found him a job with its Furniture Project.

"I told one of the YMCA managers that I needed something to do," says Mark. "He saw my experience in warehousing and driving and things like that and recognised an opportunity to use my skills in the recently launched furniture project."

"We take old but good quality furniture from places like the Center Parcs holiday villages and give it to the needy. Anything from beds and tables, very basic things like that. And it is totally free for the recipients as long as they meet certain criteria.

"Most people are absolutely over the moon with the stuff, especially the quality of it. When they see what they are getting they are really chuffed," says Mark.

"One young lady we gave furniture to was living in an empty shell of a flat. She was pregnant and due in six weeks, so she was absolutely over the moon and we were really glad to have been able to help. That kind of thing really makes it worthwhile.

"The YMCA helped me find somewhere to live and also to move on from there. I definitely get a lot of fulfilment from doing the furniture work," says Mark.

Alexis Lloyd.



**YMCA**  
**NORFOLK**

# What does YMCA Norfolk do?

## **Supported Housing**

The current YMCA hostel in Norwich provides accommodation for 90 people in single study bedrooms and 63,000 meals a year for residents, members and guests. Two new centres are under construction. One will provide 34 en-suite accommodation units for both men and women, opening in December 2009, the second, 40 self-contained accommodation units for young people at risk.

## **Y-Life**

A highly commended independent living programme offered to all residents.

## **Faith Development**

YMCA Norfolk has its own faith development officer who supports people of all faiths and none.

## **Nightstop**

Provides emergency short-term accommodation to help youngsters from the age of 16 upwards who find themselves stranded.

## **Resettlement**

Currently delivers advice, training and support to local landlords/landladies and direct support to 150 lodgers, in a positive caring domestic environment.

## **Prison Work**

A YMCA facility inside Norwich Young Offenders Institute provides intensive contacts with over 1,000 young offenders offering pastoral care, guidance and resettlement advice.

## **Furniture Warehouse**

A furniture warehouse in Norwich offers free quality equipment to vulnerable groups across Norfolk.

## **Asylum Seekers**

An Asylum Seekers Advice Worker provides support, advice, guidance and protection to asylum seekers under the age of 18.

## **Schools Work**

The YMCA Schools Department delivers pastoral care in 34 Norfolk Schools impacting over 12,000 young people. It tackles issues such as: bullying, self-harm, truancy and anti-social behaviour.

**Trowse YMCA, The Street, Trowse, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 8SP  
Telephone: 01603 630049. Registered charity 801606**

**If you want to support our work or find out more, contact Susie Knights on 07967 741103 or [susieknights@ymca-norfolk.org.uk](mailto:susieknights@ymca-norfolk.org.uk)**

**or visit: [www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk](http://www.ymca-norfolk.org.uk)**