

Access4all

Digital Inclusion through Framework



**DIGITAL
NOTTS**
Connecting Health & Care



**Integrated
Care System**
Nottingham & Nottinghamshire

The Framework Digital Inclusion Team have been successful in bidding for funds to work with Digital Notts to connect our service users to the information and services they need, when they need them.

We have launched the website www.access4all.uk for all things digital in Framework, run Digital Skills Days and Drop-Ins to improve digital skills and recycled laptops and phones from some of our corporate donors, and distributed free SIM cards from Vodafone. We focus on the everyday digital skills that our service users require to manage their life and hopefully thrive in today's society. The Digital Inclusion Team is formed of 2 full-time members of staff funded by the Access Foundation and a group of dedicated volunteer Digital Champions.

One specific case study is required for the first phase of the project and we have decided to focus on some of the hardest to reach clients, namely the rough sleepers. Access to health care is so important for this group, but something as simple as not having a phone can prevent people from starting their journey to recovery.

Richard Sparkes from the Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Team in Nottingham explains the impact of being able to provide a donated phone and SIM card to one of his service users.



Glen is a 48 year old man who has had a substance use issue for many years. Glen was able to access treatment in 2020 but the COVID pandemic meant that he dropped out of treatment soon after. At the time, Glen didn't have a phone. Our inability to contact Glen made treatment really difficult and with services working primarily remotely, Glen's ongoing treatment was sporadic at best. By the time RSDATT (Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Team) came across Glen again, it was 2023 and Glen's situation had worsened. He was living in a sub-let house which the council deemed unfit for human habitation. Glen had also been Cuckooed (had his house taken over) by drug dealers.

Glen's substance use had gotten completely out of control. We were able to provide Glen with a phone and a Vodafone SIM, donated to us through the Framework Digital Inclusion project. Glen was reachable again. We were able to get Glen into treatment and on to an opiate substitute therapy. Glen was forced to leave his house by the drug dealers after he was assaulted. Initially Glen was great at showing up for appointments, going to housing referrals and engaging with all the services he needed to. Suddenly, no one could get hold of him.

"I'd been out on the streets, keeping myself to myself, I got a tent and was staying out of everyone's way. One day some other homeless people moved in near me. I always try and help people out. I let someone use my phone and they nicked it. I didn't want to get into a fight with them, so I packed up and moved. It happens all the time, you think someone is a mate and lend them something then they screw you over."

Glen continued picking up his prescription, but we were not able to contact him and as he was laying low, trying again to stay out of people's way, he was impossible to find. Eventually, Glen's prescription ran out and he came back to the clinic. Again, we were able to provide him with a new phone. While Glen was out of contact, we had started the process of getting Glen to detox and rehab. Glen had an assessment with the rehab the day after he presented at the clinic. If Glen had missed this assessment – he would have had to wait months for another one.

Glen has kept hold of his phone ever since. He is due to go to rehab in January.

"Rich and the RSDATT tell me 2024 is going to be my year...if I want it to be. Having a phone means they can get hold of me when they need to. Just the other day, after months being on the street, Richard rang me to tell me I had an assessment for some temporary housing. We went together and it went well. Today, Richard rang me to tell me I move in next week!"

Phones for our clients mean the difference between staying in treatment and not. They mean getting the opportunity to go to rehab or staying out on the streets. They are a means to communicate with family or lose touch with everyone. Something we take for granted, a bit of tech in our pockets - when a client is in crisis or in danger, having a phone can literally be the difference between life and death. Please, if you have an old phone sat in a drawer gathering dust – donate it. It will make a difference!

13th November 2023