

MY EXPERIENCE OF 'MOVE ON'

This article grew out of a request for a quotation for the Annual Report at Westminster Mind, to promote successful "Move-on". Apologies to the housing manager at Westminster Mind, if instead of a sound bite, she got a whole article, as I felt my experience might be of interest to people considering their own "move-on".

In the article I would like to explore the concept of "move-on", then explore issues such as dependence and independence, continuity and change, and your role in connection with move-on, through the lens of my own personal move-on experience.

Like "recovery", I suspect "move-on" means different things to different people. It could be moving on socially, in work, or in self-development, or getting more involved in things you care about, for example. For me, move-on was some of these, but also to a larger flat where I had more space, with less support, and to a new area.

As a tenant of supported housing managed by Westminster Mind I have benefited enormously. I became less dependent and more able to take on tasks, encouraged by the housing support officer and the friendships made with the other tenants. My self-care

improved. At house meetings, and as the house representative on the housing review panel, my views and contributions regarding the running of the house were positively received and encouraged. As Westminster Mind provide integrated care and support services, so my stamina, social skills and self-confidence were further encouraged at the Birthday Bakers sheltered work project (sadly no longer running). Latterly I restored the communal garden at the house with the housing support officer.

At my regular care planning meetings with the housing support officer, and at Care programme approach (CPA) meetings, move-on came onto the agenda. The argument was too much support could be as undesirable as too little, given my growing independence.

The first step was to look at accommodation which would be suitable for myself. I did this through the choice-based letting system. This was easy as I owned a laptop and had access to emails. I was able to look at flats on the internet as well as bid for these flats.

The housing support officer explained the system. She stated that individuals are placed in a band according to their level of need, and then they can bid for

flats which they are interested in. The top 3 bidders for a property are invited to a viewing of the property. There was a form to fill, in order to start this process, and at all stages I was very reliant on the expertise of my housing support officer. During this time my housing support officer worked with me to further develop my independence in understanding how to pay my own utility bills, and expected me to keep the bills and my rent statements neatly filed in a folder.

Eventually I was offered a 1 bedroom flat in a new part of London which I accepted.

I had a lot of practical support around the move, but I was responsible for making some of the arrangements and for packing.

So, a snowy February day found me at a 1st floor 1 bed flat in a new part of London.

My address had changed and I had the spacious flat which I wanted. I was in a new area and finding my feet and the whereabouts of local amenities. But I have kept my voluntary job, which I enjoy, and I keep in touch with friends and maintain my usual interests. My housing



support officer continued to visit me for 6 months following the move. The move-on had gone well and things were falling in to place.

Along with more independence have come responsibilities, which I have enjoyed, like arranging my own repairs with the housing association, getting the correct housing benefit, and being resourceful in accessing services and pursuing interests. Moving-on to independence can be a good experience.

Gavin McCabe, 17.10.2010

Whats on at 526 Harrow Road

Monday

Outings Group

Weekly trips around London which are user only. Meeting at the 405 café across from 526 Harrow Road. New users need to meet with staff member before going on first trip. Cost ranges from free to a few pounds depending on the outing.

Tuesday

Creative Writing Group

1pm -2pm with Bunmi Session is open to anyone interested.