



BARNABUS

Vanessa Thomson shares her thoughts as the Barnabus Champion in Chambers.

What made you want to be the Barnabus Champion?

“Working in the city centre of Manchester, it is impossible to ignore how many people are sleeping rough on the streets and in dire need of support. I have seen a significant increase over the past 5 years of rough sleepers and wondered what we as a Chambers could do to help those in need.

I started to research local homeless charities and came across Barnabus, who were located in the centre of the city. I discovered that Barnabus was not only a resource for those in immediate crisis, but it was a charity that offered long term support to those who accessed their services. Their aim was to discourage people from sleeping rough on the streets and to try and place people into permanent accommodation. Their commitment to a more permanent solution to their service users’ problems seemed like a great cause for us to support.

I was struck by the fact they referred to their service users as their ‘friends’ which demonstrated a sense of dignity and equality towards the people they helped.”



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Why do you think the work of Barnabus is so important?

"I went to meet the fundraising team at Barnabus to see what we could do to help and discovered a fantastic team of passionate people, whose aim was to improve the lives of those who were in desperate need.

I asked how they helped their friends in need and was told that it was their aim to get people off the street and into homes. I had not appreciated that part of the problem for those who find homes is maintaining that accommodation. Issues such as budgeting, home maintenance and loneliness can often mean that accommodation breaks down. Barnabus are there to equip their friends with the life skills that are needed to maintain a home. It seems that getting a roof over a person's head is only the first step of a homeless person's journey.

The emotional care and support offered by the support workers ensures that solutions found are likely to be permanent solutions. Barnabus are also a very prominent first port of call for those who are in immediate crisis."



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What can people do to help?

“Barnabus have regular campaigns throughout the year, whereby they make requests for certain items for the friends they support.

In the run-up to Christmas they are looking for warm outer clothing, jeans and shoes. They are also asking for donations of long life food and for Christmas ‘treats’ that can be shared amongst their friends. In particular, they would love to receive donations of Christmas cakes, mince pies and chocolates (which do not contain alcohol) before the middle of December.

Barnabus also offer volunteering sessions for those with ‘big hearts’, so that volunteers can witness for themselves the work that is done and offer a helping hand during the session.”

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