

**Name of project: STAR Partnership**

**Lead partner: Shelter**

**Delivery partner: Thames Reach**

I have had a few bouts of homelessness during my life. I wasn't someone that drank gallons of alcohol or had drug issues, but due to difficult social circumstances, I found myself homeless and rough sleeping on several occasions. I was constantly depressed and feeling like there was no way out. It has had a huge impact on my health. I was homeless again in 2019, and was admitted into hospital in May, when I was told that I had to have both of my legs amputated, due to health complications. This was difficult news, but I recovered from my operation really well and was ready for discharge after four weeks.

Unfortunately, the hospital could not discharge me, as I was homeless and had nowhere to go. Weeks passed and I was still stuck in hospital. I was said to be "bed-blocking". It was depressing. I began to leave the hospital during the day in my wheelchair and would return for meals and to sleep in the evening.

I was working with a support worker from Thames Reach at the time. He has been a great support from start to finish, and he tried very hard to help me apply as homeless to two different boroughs, whilst I was in hospital. Unfortunately, we made no headway with this. None of the councils wanted to accept responsibility for me and disagreed between themselves in terms of what borough I had a local connection with. Thames Reach referred my case to their partner's Shelter who took on my case and supported me in the progression of my homeless application to Barking and Dagenham. I was put in touch with a Shelter staff member, who advocated to Barking and Dagenham who really understood the difficulty that I was in, and immediately got in touch with the right people at the Council. She supported me in getting Barking & Dagenham to accept a duty towards me and to provide me with suitable accommodation. I began to feel that I was being taken seriously.

I am now residing in permanent accommodation and am loving my flat. I have enjoyed putting bits and pieces together and have also taken up cooking.

My life has changed dramatically in the past year. From being homeless, to having a life changing double-amputation, and now having somewhere where I can call home. I am really just trying to get on with life. I have the right benefits in place, and no longer have to worry about making ends meet. I can say that Shelter was absolutely brilliant, and Thames Reach has been a godsend.