

A day in the life of Gravesend Daytime Hub

“Vicki, I need you!”. Looking up from my desk, I see one of our regular users, completely inebriated, shouting, and swaying from side to side. As I walk over to her, she says, “I don’t feel well”, before collapsing on the ground and having a seizure. I shout to my colleague Kerrie to ring an ambulance and then shout for someone to pass me the Naloxone. (This is a drug used to reverse the effects of an overdose that almost all my volunteers are trained to use). As Kerrie gets through to the ambulance and Abbi (an outreach worker from Serveco) and I get ready to inject the Naloxone, the service user suddenly sits up and says, “Don’t you dare inject me with that.” I respond with, “OK, now you are responsive, so you don’t need this,” at which point she collapses into another seizure.

While this is going on another service user steps forward and says, “She is faking it, Vicki. She does it all the time.” Again her seizures suddenly stop as she sits up and shouts at him for being nasty to her, before lying back down and having a third seizure. At this point we all realise it is an act and wait patiently for the drama to stop. When she realises the act is not fooling anyone, she then takes nine Valium pills out of her pocket and shoves them all in her mouth. She does not swallow them but refuses to spit them out saying she wants to die.

Meanwhile her friend who is also very drunk decides he is in fact her cousin and wants to fight with the world for making her upset. As I tell him to calm down and step away, Abbi stands in front of him and tells him to look at her and calm down. After a few raised

voices the drama ended. Less than an hour later, both the girl and her “cousin” arrive at my office door with a beautiful card containing a written apology for their poor behaviour.

In the middle of the chaos a quieter guest is asking for help to fill in a form to get his citizen card and two others are requesting new clothing. We have another twelve guests sitting quietly eating their full English breakfast in the other room and three waiting on hot showers and for their clean laundry to be returned.

Serveco, CGL (a drug and alcohol charity), Gravesend Borough Council Housing Needs Team and Counselling Services are all available and work from the hub to help provide a holistic service to our guests. Our guests can speak with any agency attending the Hub and are able to get answers and help quickly. When situations arise like the one described above, it is helpful to have a multi-agency approach to diffuse and resolve difficult situations. Only by knowing each of the guests well are we able to gain their trust; knowing each guest’s personality is important when deciding the best way to deal with their outbursts and emotions.

No two days are the same. Every day brings a new problem or situation that needs to be dealt with quickly. There is always a mixture of laughter and tears as we help those that are struggling. We can be the voice of reason, a mother or father figure, or a friend. The volunteers at the hub are all trained to be the support our guests need at a time of chaos in their lives. This is the work God gives us at the Gravesend Centre Hub.

Vicki Clarke,
Gravesend Hub Centre Manager

Vicki Clarke, Gravesend Centre Manager at the Royal Garden Party, May 2022

In recognition of her excellent work at the Hub of Gravesend Methodist Church Centre, Vicki Clarke was invited to attend the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Vicki had lunch at Westminster with Adam Holloway MP, who has been a huge support to the daytime hub over the years and she was introduced to Sir Lindsay Hoyle. The magical day then finished with tea at Buckingham Palace with members of the royal family. Congratulations, Vicki!

