

Email from Berlin received February 2009

[S was a volunteer with us for a number of years. His partner, Maria, is German and has also contributed to our work. She and S went to Hamburg in November where he met her family (he had never been abroad before) and on return they decided to relocate from West London to Berlin immediately Christmas (Maria's work utilises the internet and can travel with her).

S left school at sixteen and was hampered by dyslexia, depression and low self-esteem though intelligent and creative. Eventually he became homeless which is when he began to attend Turnaround. When ex-volunteers who had known him years before met him at our Christmas bash they found a vast improvement. He had returned to paid work and his outlook, his morale, his ease in company had grown by leaps and bounds. The trip to Hamburg provided a huge impetus too by showing him a world where 'they do things differently' and made for a complete break with the past. His email and the fact that he has enrolled in a class to learn German reflects the huge growth in his confidence and the project wishes him good fortune and every success.

Hello to Graham, Bob and all the volunteers past and present

For those who know me this letter will be a delight or comfort to some but I will come back to that a little later

As some of you may know I have moved to Berlin, Germany. The weather is a little steadier than in England with the snow storm and floods but I hope you are all fine and well. Things here are going well. Maria and I have settled in ok in our third floor flat looking out onto a garden – well, actually, it is an open space surrounded with plants, bikes and recycling bins but at least its better the hostel in Middle Street.

I am to start a language class. It's all signed up for and will start the beginning of March for one month. I have been getting out almost every day to do shopping which is a challenge at the moment due to me not speaking the native tongue. Although the food is a little different to that at home my body is becoming used to it by now.

For a lot of the time I spent in Turnaround it looked like I wasn't doing much with my life. even though I had projects on the go and things to do. But I did get a massive deal out of Turnaround and it has made me the person that I am now. For those who don't know me I once lived in a squat that was not fit for human life and Turnaround really did turn me around in the days it was called by a different name [Tower Hamlets and City Groundswell]. I have gained knowledge experience and most importantly friends. The best thing about Turnaround is its warmth and acceptance for those who need it and that there is help is at hand to make a troubled life move on to a better one.

If it wasn't for Turnaround I don't know were I would be right now so this letter is a big thank you to all the volunteers and trustees.

Once again a big thank you to you all.