

## From Small Acorns: Mayday's Expansion and Diversification



In August 2007 Mayday Trust published an article about the charity's formation in the late 70's and early 80's. The second chapter in our history tells of our expansion and diversification across three counties:

Mayday Trust's inaugural Chief Executive, Brian Lomax was working for the Rugby Probation Service when he volunteered to join the committee of the Rugby Mayday Trust.

Brian Lomax had joined the Rugby Probation team in 1980, as an officer with ten years experience in Rochdale, Manchester Prison, and HMYOI Onley. In 1982 he volunteered to represent the Rugby Probation team on the committee of the Rugby Mayday Trust. Brian felt that, following his experience in Lancashire, where he supported the formation of a similar housing charity, he might have some contribution to make.

At that time there was a Government scheme called the Community Programme, designed to bring the long-term unemployed back into work. With the support of Chief Probation Officer, John Pendleton, the group created a development team and recruited six part-time workers. The development team included John Atkins, who is now the Trust's Warwickshire Regional Manager. Commenting on the Trust's early days John said: "It was a really exciting and challenging time for the whole team. I never dreamt that Mayday would grow into such an influential organisation within such a short space of time. It has been a real privilege to be involved in the transformation."



**1983: Meeting between Rugby Probation Service, Coventry Churches Housing Association and the Rugby Mayday Trust Development Team.**

In 1983, the Trust opened its first project, two group homes in Leamington, one of which was to provide move-on accommodation from the Leamington Probation hostel. In 1984 two Rugby projects, one at Rounds Gardens in partnership with the Borough Council, the other being the original hostel project, this time at Mayday House, Lower Hillmorton Road were opened.

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Word got around and spread beyond the confines of Warwickshire. By this time we had a dozen full-time permanent staff, and Mr Lomax was seconded from the Probation Service to manage and supervise the growing charity.

The Trust's major year of growth was 1986, with new projects opening in Northampton, Wellingborough, Bedford and Dunchurch. This increased the number of bedspaces from 40 to 120 over a period of just 6 months.

Following this expansion, the Management Team opted for a period of consolidation, before partnering with various Local Authorities and Housing Associations to expand into Leighton Buzzard, Daventry and Long Buckby, as well as increasing capacity at the existing schemes.

Over the years, the philosophy of Mayday Trust evolved and expanded. The charity, which was initially established to support homeless offenders began to realise that the needs of homeless non-offenders were very similar and that, through widening our client-group it could help ex-offenders to avoid the labelling process.

The charity also acknowledged that homelessness was not the same as "houselessness", and that clients needed help, support and training just as much as accommodation.

Commenting on his time at the helm, Brian concluded: "I look back with great pleasure and pride on my 19 years in charge of Mayday. Pride not in myself, but in the superb team of colleagues with whom I had the privilege to serve during that period; and in the people with whom we helped."