

ACCESS TO TRAVEL

How a Bus Pass Helped Awa* Manage His Mental Health Challenges

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BACKGROUND

Awa is a 23-year-old male from Somalia who arrived in the UK in 2022 after a perilous journey via a small boat. Upon arrival, he applied for asylum and was placed in temporary accommodations provided by the Home Office. Awa is naturally introverted and suffers from enochlophobia (fear of crowds), which makes it challenging for him to adjust to his new environment.

Living in Home Office accommodations, Awa often isolated himself in his room and avoided social interactions, which further deteriorated his mental health. He sought medical assistance from his GP and was prescribed medication. However, the side effects, particularly drowsiness, worsened his condition and added to his stress.

In 2024, Awa was relocated to Birmingham, where he connected with a local charity organisation. The charity encouraged him to engage with the community and facilitated his admission to a college. However, his lack of transportation remained a significant barrier to participation in these activities.

SOLUTION

A critical turning point in Awa's journey came when he received a free bus pass through a charity program. This small but impactful intervention enabled him to travel outside his accommodation, attend college regularly, and participate in various social activities.

The bus pass provided Awa with newfound mobility, allowing him to explore the city, attend classes, and engage in volunteer work with several charity organisations across Birmingham. Through volunteering, he built a support network and found a sense of purpose in helping others who were in similar situations. He began offering interpretation services for other asylum seekers and shared his experiences to help them cope with the stress of the asylum process.

IMPACT

The provision of a bus pass significantly improved Awa's mental health and overall well-being. His ability to travel and access community resources helped him navigate the appeals process more effectively, reducing stress and trauma.

AT A GLANCE

ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION can play a crucial role in improving mental health by reducing isolation and promoting social engagement.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT and participation in meaningful activities help manage the stress of the asylum process.

VOLUNTEERING provides a sense of purpose and enables individuals to rebuild their lives while positively impacting others.

SMALL INTERVENTIONS, such as providing a free bus pass, can have a profound and lasting impact on someone's life trajectory.

AUTHOR: ASMA MALIK

Outreach and Community Engagement
Coordinator

*For privacy and data protection purposes, the name "Awa" is a pseudonym used to protect the individual's identity. All personal details have been anonymized to ensure confidentiality.