

Charity opens homeless helpdesk

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A former homeless man who was forced to sleep on park benches after a serious accident left him jobless has thanked an Ipswich charity for helping him turn his life around.

Father-of-two Gareth Green, 32, is backing the Ipswich Housing Action Group (IHAG) as it launches a helpdesk for the homeless at Sailmakers Shopping Centre.

The charity, which runs hostel houses and walk-in centres for the homeless, celebrates its 40th anniversary on Thursday.

Gareth, who grew up in children's homes in Ipswich until he moved to Kent aged 17, suffered serious head injuries in a horrific accident just days before his 31st birthday when the front wheel of his cycle spun off on a busy road in Folkestone.

The accident put him in hospital and forced him to take seven months off work as a self-employed painter and decorator, in which time his relationship also broke down.

"My life fell apart and it all happened at once," he said. "I would sleep on park benches or boats down at the harbour, wherever I could get my head down.

"I would do odd maintenance jobs for people and they would feed me in return."



■ IHAG tenant Gareth Green, left, with IHAG housing services manager Giles Cresswell and Hayley Kendall, IHAG money advice service manager.

Jobless and homeless, Gareth decided to return to Ipswich.

He approached volunteers at IHAG's Chapman Centre in Black Horse Lane and was given the support he needed and has lived in

shared accommodation run by the charity for the last 11 months.

"My life had started to pick up again. I have a bank account and an ID card, and I've been able to get back on track.

The charity's new helpdesk for the homeless will be a regular visitor to Ipswich Building Society's Sailmakers branch, which has now adopted IHAG as its designated charity.

Picture: CONTRIBUTED

Improvement call for buses to hospital

Kesgrave Town Council is investigating whether improvements can be made to the 66 bus route through the town, after complaints that people with mobility issues have struggled to reach the hospital.

The route 66 bus runs between Ipswich Rail Station and the Tesco store in Martlesham Heath.

But the town council has reported that comments have been made that the closest stop to the hospital – next to the A1214 shops at the Heath Road roundabout – is causing some people difficulty.

A statement from the town council's public transport liaison officer, Sue Hall, said: "Whilst the hospital is right on our doorstep, a lot of people tell me they can't get there by bus. The ideal solution would be for some of our local buses to stop in the hospital grounds."

A spokesman from First Eastern Counties, which runs the 66 bus, said it had not been made aware of any issues, and added: "Route 66 has been established for many years. We have no immediate plans to change the present route. If people wish to travel into the hospital they can use service 75."

Anyone who has experienced this problem should write to the town council offices in Ferguson Way, Kesgrave, IP5 2FZ.

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