



PRISONS WEEK 2008 STORIES

No. 4 - from the Open Gate Community Chaplaincy (NE)

I first met my mentor in prison about 6 weeks before I was released, she was really calm and friendly and it was nice to talk to someone who listened to me, about how I was feeling. I was worried as I didn't know where I would be living when I got out, I couldn't go home and my mum was barely speaking to me. I told her about my family and why I was inside. My mentor came to visit me 4 more times before I was released, on the last visit I was upset as I still didn't have anywhere to live and I was really stressed, I had to go to probation when I got out and I hated going alone. My mentor arranged to pick me up at the gate when I got out.

On the 6th March 2006 I got out, I was really scared of being out and I waited at the gate for my mentor. I know that if she hadn't been there it would have been much worse than it already was. I still had nowhere to live. My mentor drove me to Newcastle, we walked through the main shopping street, I was nervous and I felt as if everyone was looking at me and knew where I had been for the past six months.

My DIP worker, had been to see me a few times inside and she had been trying to find me somewhere to live, there was a space in a hostel, but it wasn't definite as I had to be interviewed. All we could do was to go away and wait for a phone call. We went to probation and to the housing advice place; we sat on the floor because it was so full. Then my mentor got the phone call and I was asked to go to the hostel for an interview. It was tea time by the time I knew I had somewhere to spend the night. I know if I had not been with my mentor I would have been back inside, she trailed around with me and stopped me from going to the pub, I had money in my pocket and faced with no where to live, all by myself I would not have been able to cope.

I have had my ups and downs since I came out, but my mentor has always been there for me, even at times when I didn't want to see her I knew she would always try to help me if I asked. My mentor got me through my probation appointments; she would come with me and would say you have got to go so you might as well get on with it, when I complained that I didn't want to go!

I am now living back with my Mum, and have got a job, and I hope to be able to train as an Open Gate mentor and help women just like me who are coming out of prison.

Prisons week 16th-22nd Nov 2008

www.prisonsw.org

Encouraging prayer for, and raising awareness of, the needs of prisoners and their families, victims of offenders, prisons staff and all those who care.