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Europaia and collaborations between organisations during COVID-19

Supporting vulnerable EU nationals by working in partnership

Covid-19 has complicated everything since the UK first went into lockdown on 23 March 2020. The work systems we used to have in place, and procedures that used to be simple, now need more time and effort. Furthermore, building a relationship with clients is harder when we cannot meet face-to-face. **Rome was not built in just one day**, and neither is confidence.

Manchester City Council referred a young man to us who had lost his job and his house during the pandemic. At that moment, **he was sleeping with his girlfriend in a park**. Europaia worked hand-in-hand with Shelter, a charity which helps millions of people every year struggling with homelessness and The Booth Centre, a community centre run with and for people affected by homelessness, and together we were able to arrange a hostel for the couple within two days. Unfortunately, it was just the beginning of the journey.

The young man's problems began when he failed to prove his right to reside in the UK as part of the EU Settlement Scheme. Then, he could not prove he had five years of employment, because his previous employers paid him in hand, without payslips or any hard copy.

As a result, he lost access to his Universal Credit account. In addition, he broke up with his girlfriend and was moved to a hostel with lower standards.

The client spoke enough English and worked legally since 2013, but **the pandemic had hit** him differently. Normally clients like him require just guidance and advice, and they are capable of doing the rest by themselves.

With help from Citizen Advice Bury and Bolton, Job Centre, and a local MP, Europaia was able to reactivate his Universal Credit account. Using Booth Centre space, we could physically meet and upload the evidence he needed for **applying again for Universal Credit**.

Since the first lockdown one year ago, Europaia's office has been closed, and we have been unable to see our clients in person. Therefore, our supporting resources are limited, and we often need to use other organisations' help. Aside from all disruptions, the pandemic's bright side is that we have **strengthened relations with other organisations**.

Eventually, this client had better accommodation, received food regularly and some money from our Europaia Emergency Fund. All this was possible thanks to the collaboration of **seven** local institutions.

For information about free services and support for EU nationals in Greater Manchester, visit www.europia.org.uk | <https://www.facebook.com/EuropaiaMcr> | <https://twitter.com/EuropaiaMcr>

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