

Brian's Story

Brian Somers (47) from Dublin tells how he got clean from drugs over 10 years ago and how Focus Ireland helped him to secure a home and to move on in life.

Brian now works as an Assertive In-reach Homeless Case Manager with Coolmine Rehab Centre and helps others on their path to recovery.

"I started off with solvent abuse when I was a kid. This gradually led to me using class A drugs, imprisonment and homelessness.

When my eldest daughter was a year old I tried to get clean for the first time. It didn't last and I was back to my old selfish self. It's not a nice feeling going in circles as your health and addiction gets worse. You give up on yourself and accept there's no way out.

Then 11 years ago a friend of mine went into treatment. He told me about 12 step meetings and I began a journey with Coolmine, where I attended the Drug-Free Day Programme. I immersed myself in my recovery with like-minded people and graduated from the programme after 1 year.

I was nine months clean and in emergency accommodation when I received the news that I was going to be housed. I had a

meeting with Focus Ireland and I knew I was going to be alright with their support. I was given a housing support worker who drew up a budget plan. She told me to keep receipts and always pay my rent and ESB first. This was great advice which I still do.

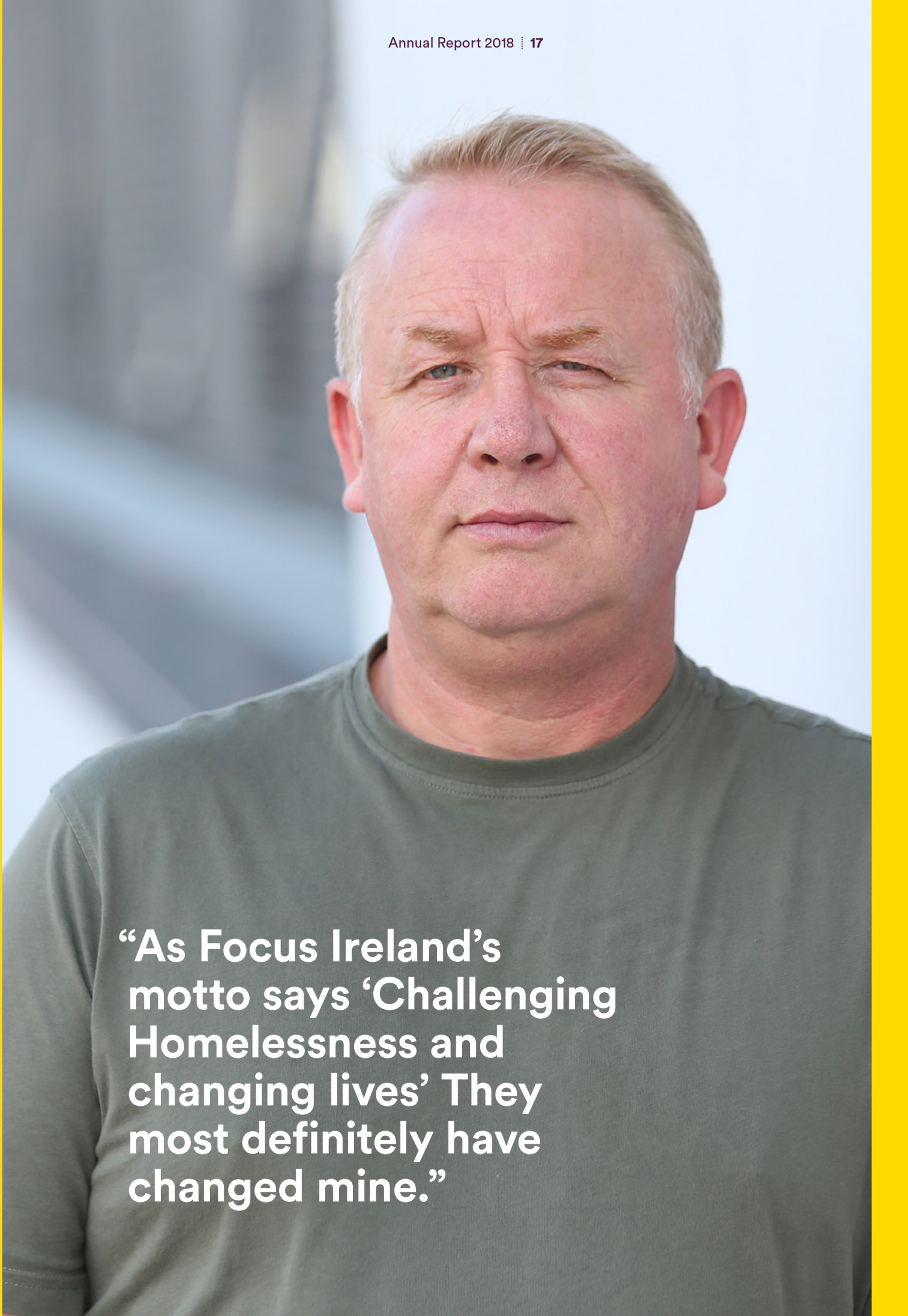
After I moved in I decided to educate myself which was tough as it was so long since school. The amount of support I received from Focus Ireland was brilliant. I soon became Caretaker in the property where I live and completed a degree and got accredited as an addiction counsellor. In between all that I became a father again. Sadly the relationship with the mother didn't last but I now have two beautiful girls.

Life on life's terms is never easy. Just because I turned my life around it doesn't mean I'm exempt from hardships. My brother Thomas (43) had a heart attack two years ago and died four days later. My youngest daughter was only 4 and was with him when he took sick. This was hard on her and all the family. I couldn't have received any better support from Focus Ireland.

Emilia my key worker helped get me through this. Two years on I am glad we all seem to be coping ok. Emilia still phones from time to time to ask how I am. Of course I always say "Yeah, I'm grand". She asks: "Are you sure?" "And then the real stuff comes out. Emilia and Focus Ireland have been a rock for me through the hard times.

More recently my eldest daughter's Mum and Grandmother both passed away nearly in the same week. Soon after this I got confirmation from Dublin City Council that I've been accepted to transfer to 2-bed accommodation. I nearly cried as I believed Shannon's mum was responsible for this and is up there looking after us. This means my two girls can share a room and the little one can have sleep overs with her pals.

In the near future I will be starting a new chapter. I don't know yet who will be in it but I would like to thank Focus Ireland and Emilia from the bottom of my heart."



"As Focus Ireland's motto says 'Challenging Homelessness and changing lives' They most definitely have changed mine."