

Home Truths



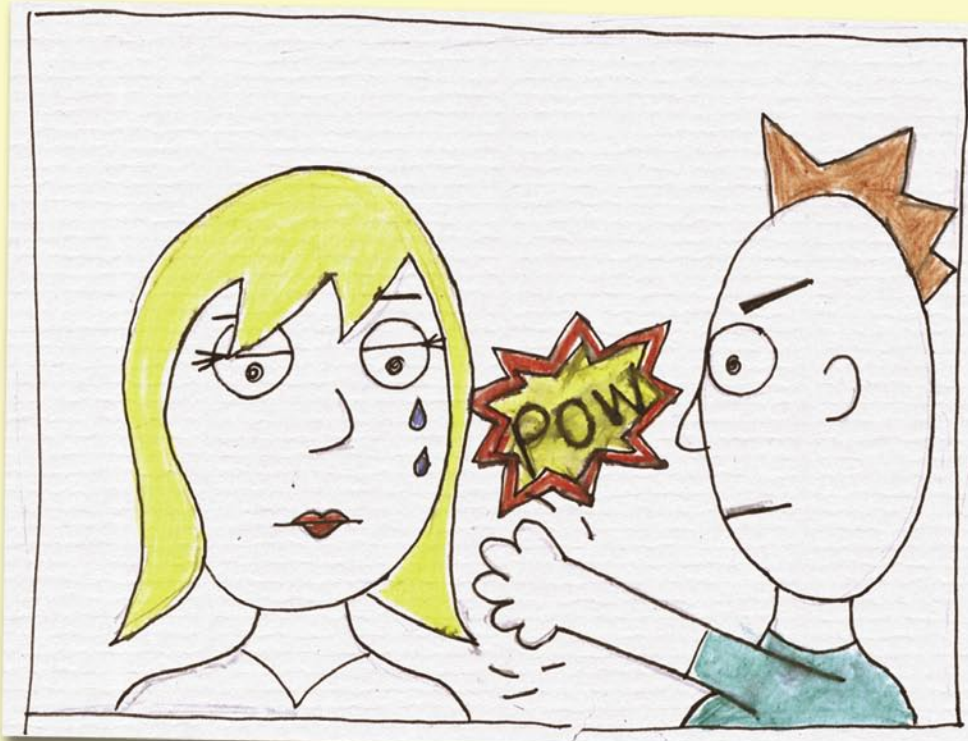
Contents

- 3 Introduction
- 7 Sam's Story
- 22 The Egg Story by David Robertson
- 26 Frannie's Story
- 36 Trife and Knibb
- 46 Homeless
- 49 Dedicated to the Peeps with no Bed by Marshy Myiagi
- 51 Christina's Story
- 56 The Ramblings of a Female Stoner by Hazel Martin
- 62 John's Story
- 70 Ken's Story by Kenneth Williams
- 76 One year passed so slowly
- 80 Cecil's Story
- 91 Stacie's Story
- 92 Support Organisations
- 94 Using the Book as a Teaching Resource
- 98 Credits

Home Truths

Illustrated Short Stories and Poems about being Homeless

Home Truths has been written, drawn and photographed by young people living at hostels throughout Norfolk. Some of their stories have inspired powerful contributions by students from Red Balloon in Norwich. The Red Balloon Learner Centres support the recovery of bullied young people.





Our contributors have some tough and uncompromising stories to tell. They have talked about broken homes, bereavement, drug addiction, physical abuse and mental health problems. All have been keen to tell their stories, so that others might better understand some of the problems they have faced and overcome.

Many of the stories have positive outcomes, and provide insights into the available support networks, and the help they can provide. There is also a signposts section, for any reader who might be facing similar problems, and is looking for help or guidance

The project has been youth led, from initial idea to printed book. Media professionals provided the creative skills needed along the way. The team learned drawing, photography and computer based illustration, alongside software based techniques for comic making and graphic design.

Some of the stories began as informal conversations. These were then written up with fictional details added, and names changed. Most stories were illustrated by their authors. We provided each participant with an art kit, comprising a portfolio and drawing tools.

Those who preferred to use photography learned digital skills using a Nikon DSLR. Other participants worked directly in Photoshop, combining layers of image and text to create the final page designs. All the work was exported to In Design for final print preparation. The computer generated images were captured using Second Life, the interactive virtual world.



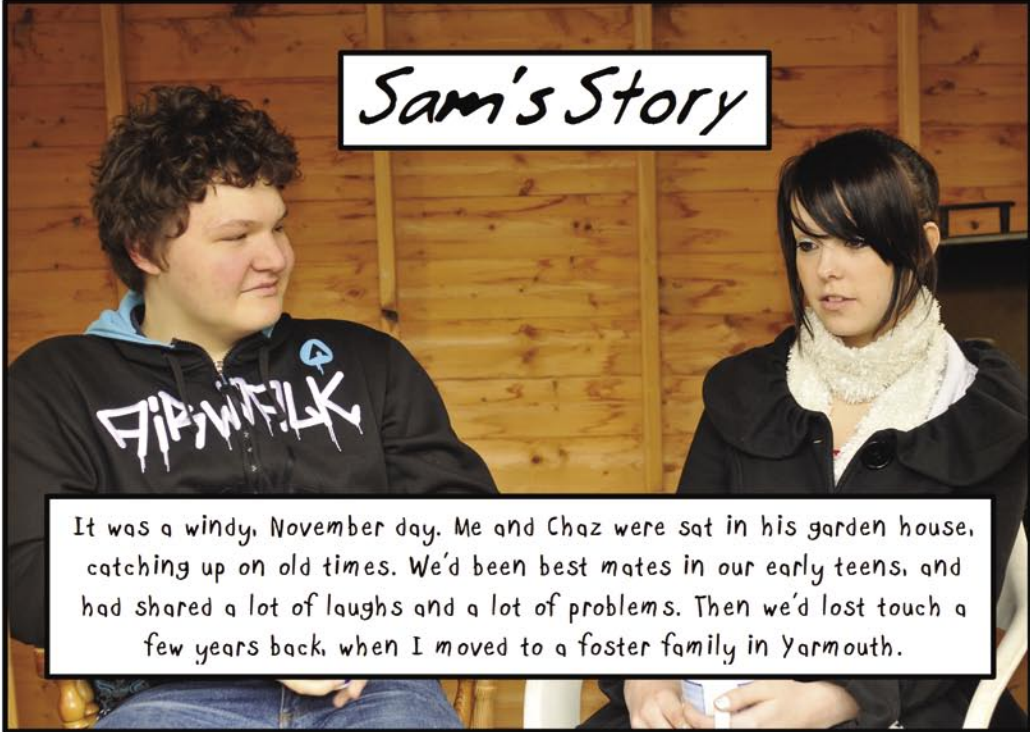
You will find a full list of contributors and supporting organisations at the end of the book. For reasons of confidentiality, the authors have chosen not be linked directly to their contributions, except where shown. Actors took the roles of the characters in the opening photo story.




We hope this book will prove a unique and valuable resource to help teachers deliver the Citizenship, English, Art and Drama curricula in secondary schools. We hope youth leaders will also find it useful in youth club settings. With both these audiences in mind, we have included suggestions on the types of creative activities the book might support.

There is mildly offensive language used in some of the stories, and references to difficult issues such as sexual assault and drug abuse. We decided not to edit for language in order to preserve the authenticity of the voices. For these reasons, teachers may feel that the resource is unsuitable for young people under the age of twelve.

Sam's Story

A photograph of two young people sitting in a wooden garden house. On the left is a young man with curly brown hair, wearing a black hoodie with 'HIP HOP' written on it. On the right is a young woman with dark hair, wearing a black coat and a white scarf. They are both looking towards the right.

It was a windy, November day. Me and Chaz were sat in his garden house, catching up on old times. We'd been best mates in our early teens, and had shared a lot of laughs and a lot of problems. Then we'd lost touch a few years back, when I moved to a foster family in Yarmouth.

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair and glasses, wearing a pink scarf, sitting at a kitchen table and talking to a young woman with dark hair. The young woman is wearing a white cardigan over a black top. They are in a kitchen with wooden cabinets and a tiled backsplash.

I'd come back to Lowestoft to see my Mum, but things weren't going well. The last thing I needed on a Monday morning was a bleedin' lecture on the importance of education. Jeeezuz!

So I'd run round to Chaz's place and surprised him.

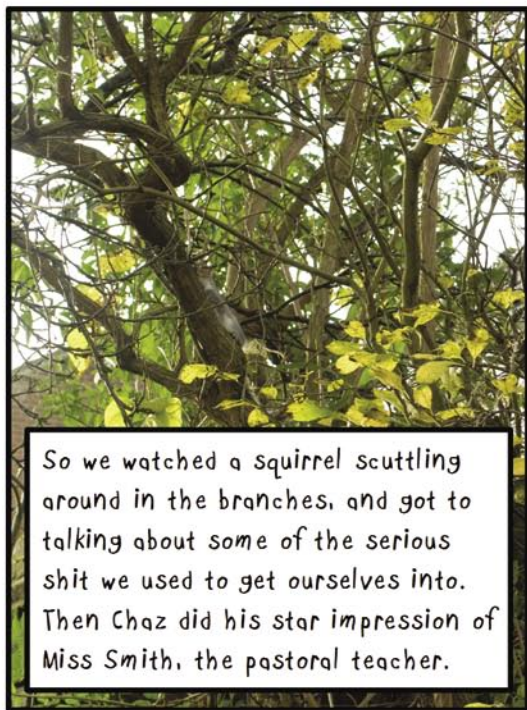


This calls for a celebration. Come on gal, Hows about a nice mug of tea?



We've got a lot of catching up to do, you and me. What have you been doing all these years?

You're not gonna believe me if i tell you!



So we watched a squirrel scuttling around in the branches, and got to talking about some of the serious shit we used to get ourselves into. Then Chaz did his star impression of Miss Smith, the pastoral teacher.




Sam, this is the third time this week you bunked off school. Do you want to talk to me about it?




I'm here to help you know. Standing there with that look on your face just isn't going to help, now, is it?'

After we'd had a good laugh about Mz Smith, we got to talking about how I ended up in the nick. It was Coral's birthday and she wanted me to come to her do that Saturday. Trouble was, me and Chaz had already decided to go to a rave in Thetford. So we'd made our excuses, then Coral had got really huffy.

A close-up photograph of a young woman with long, wavy brown hair. She has a grumpy or annoyed expression, with her mouth slightly downturned and her eyes looking off to the side. The background is blurred.

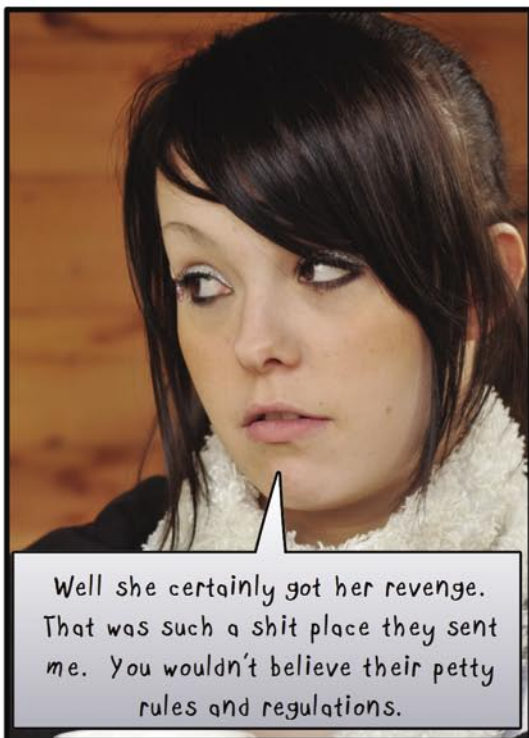
Rather spend time with your boyfriend than me, would ya? Yer turning into a right little slag, Sam

A photograph of two young people in a garden. On the left, a young woman with curly brown hair is wearing a white patterned hoodie and is looking down with her hands near her face. On the right, a young man with dark hair is wearing a grey and white striped hoodie and is pointing his right index finger towards the woman. In the background, there is a brick wall, some trees, and a blue bicycle leaning against a white table.

So I'd landed her one. All I'd meant to do was give her a bloody nose, but she was out for the count! Before I knew it I was done for ABH.



I reckon it was old Smithy made that call to the police. She always had it in for us, you know.



Well she certainly got her revenge. That was such a shit place they sent me. You wouldn't believe their petty rules and regulations.

One time I was caught having a fag in the loo. They put me on a lock down for a few days. They wanted me to stink like a prisoner of war, before they would let me have a bath and clean clothes.

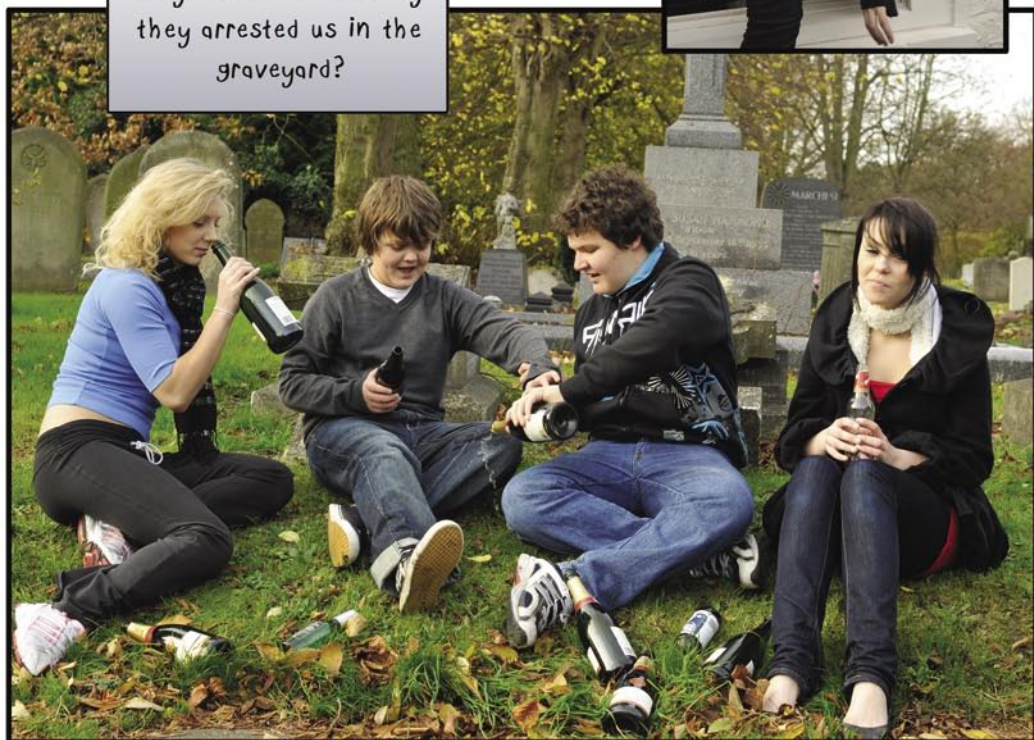
You never told me that story before, Sam, gal! No wonder you lost it! What happened when they let you out?



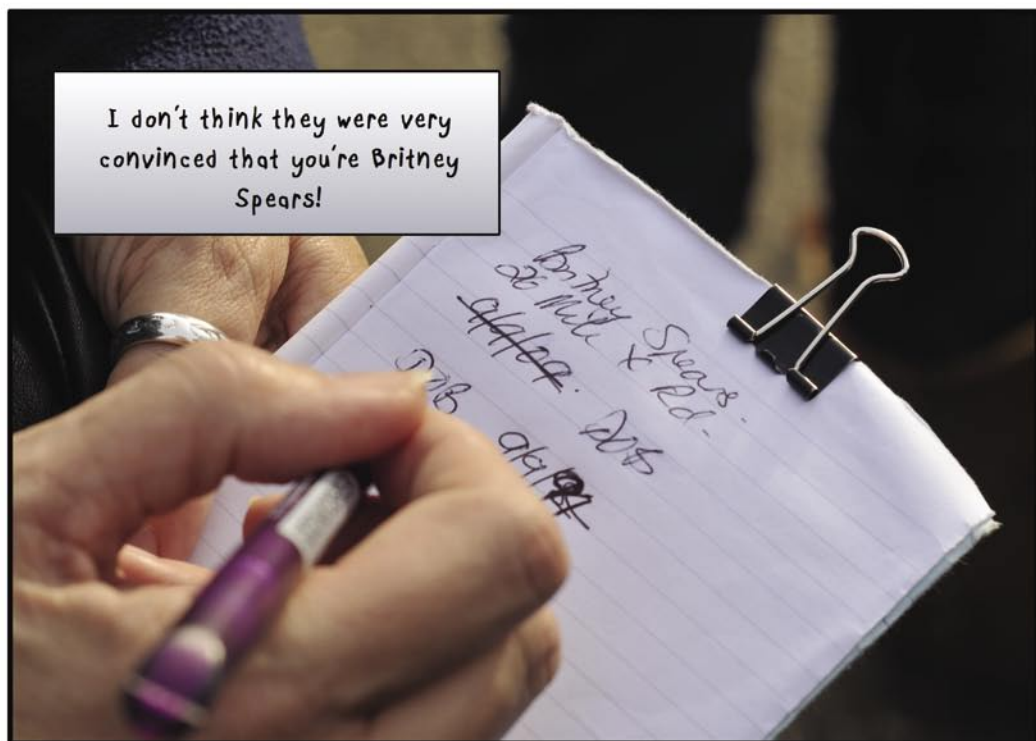
They put me on tag. They thought they could make me stay at home, instead of going out on binges. Well, it worked for a couple of weeks. But you try spending your life with big brother breathing down your neck day and night. It drove me totally nuts. Wasn't long before I cut the bloody thing off, and got the hell out of there.



Hey, remember the day they arrested us in the graveyard?

















I don't believe it!
Way to go, Gal!
What's her name?



Jessica!



Cool! And who's the
lucky Dad?



Steve. He's great. I'm
still seeing him. When
they let me.

Wooo..... Slow down. I
got some catching up to
do yet. Tell me about
Steve!

O.K. Where was I? Oh
yes....when I got out of the
nick, Mum decided she wasn't
gonna have me at home any
more.

But your Mum's a
sweetheart. I can't believe
she'd ever chuck you on
the street.

Yea, but you don't know how bad I'd got. I was
coming home after 3 every night. I was taking
any kind of pill I could get my hands on. Total
mess. Mum said I'd worn her down.




So where did you go?


And did she?

Remember Anne? She said she's have me for a bit. Just to give Mum a break. I always got on well with Anne. She knew how to calm me down and see sense.

Yea. But then the police busted me again. Whole bunch of burglaries I thought I'd got away with. But they had my number by then. Gave me a twelve month supervision order.



I had to go to this YOT centre four times a week. That's when the counselling started. I had to tell her everything about my life. They found me a B+B in Lowestoft. But I got kicked out of there cos I didn't take the forms to the council.



Jeesh, Sam. I had no idea. Why didn't you just come and find me. I could have helped ya!

Yea, I know. I'm sorry, Chris. I was in a weird head space then. I didn't think you needed me around, offloading all that shit on you!

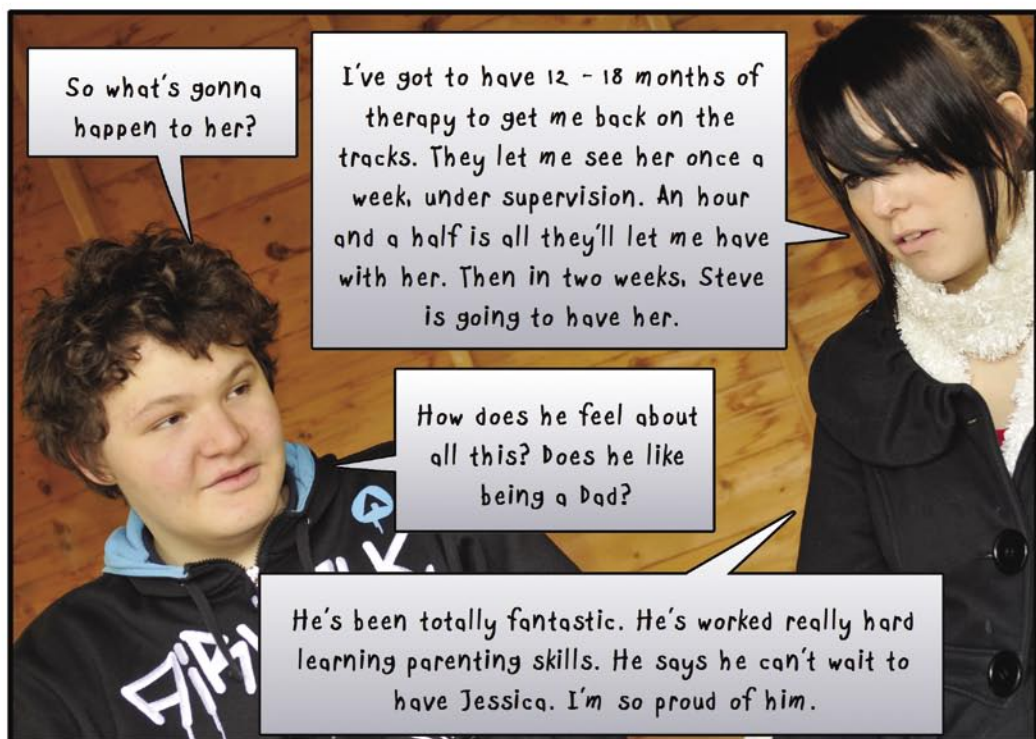
And what about Steve. Was he supporting you?

Yes, that's about the time I met him. At a tattoo parlour! It was love at first sight! I moved in with him the next week! That's when I got pregnant. I stayed with him 'til I was due. But then everything went wrong. The placenta wouldn't come out. They had to do an operation. I got very ill.

They rushed me for an assessment at a Mother and Baby Unit. They were judging everything I did. They never let me spend quality time alone with Jessica. After that I moved to the Benjamin Hostel in Yarmouth. That's where I've been ever since.

And Jessica, is she alright?

She's fine. She's the most beautiful baby you'll ever see! But they've put her in care. They said I'm just not stable enough to look after her.

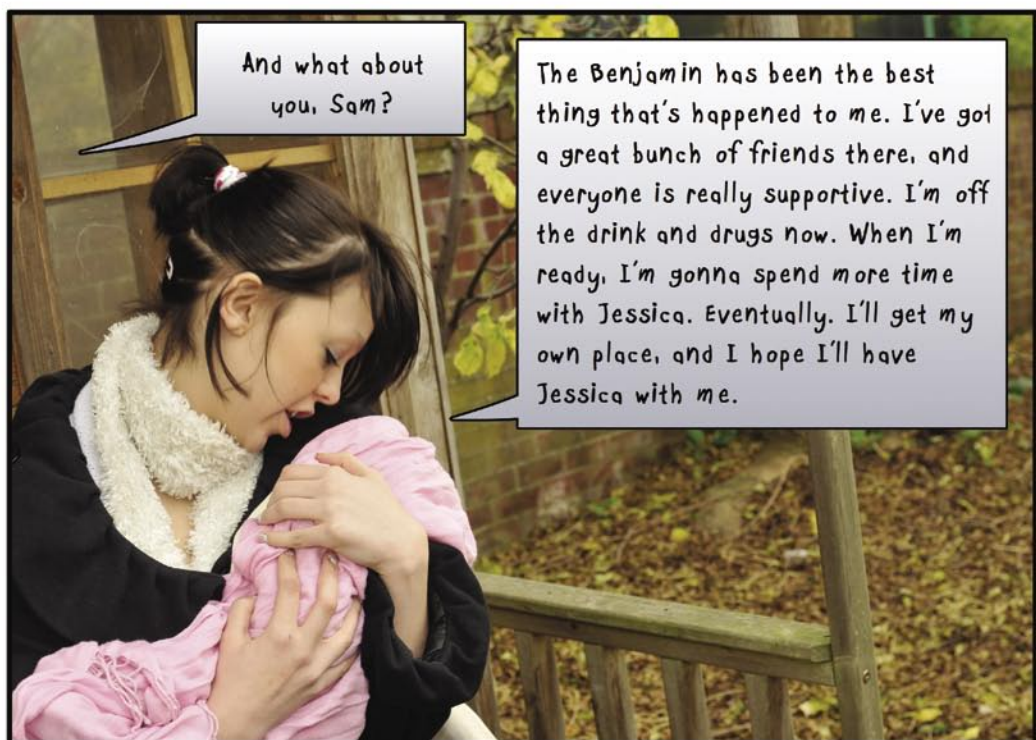


So what's gonna happen to her?

I've got to have 12 - 18 months of therapy to get me back on the tracks. They let me see her once a week, under supervision. An hour and a half is all they'll let me have with her. Then in two weeks, Steve is going to have her.

How does he feel about all this? Does he like being a Dad?

He's been totally fantastic. He's worked really hard learning parenting skills. He says he can't wait to have Jessica. I'm so proud of him.



And what about you, Sam?

The Benjamin has been the best thing that's happened to me. I've got a great bunch of friends there, and everyone is really supportive. I'm off the drink and drugs now. When I'm ready, I'm gonna spend more time with Jessica. Eventually, I'll get my own place, and I hope I'll have Jessica with me.



Give me a hug,
Sam.

Hey, I'm so glad I
came over today. I've
missed you Chris.



Don't be a stranger
any more, will you!
I can't wait to meet
little Jessica.