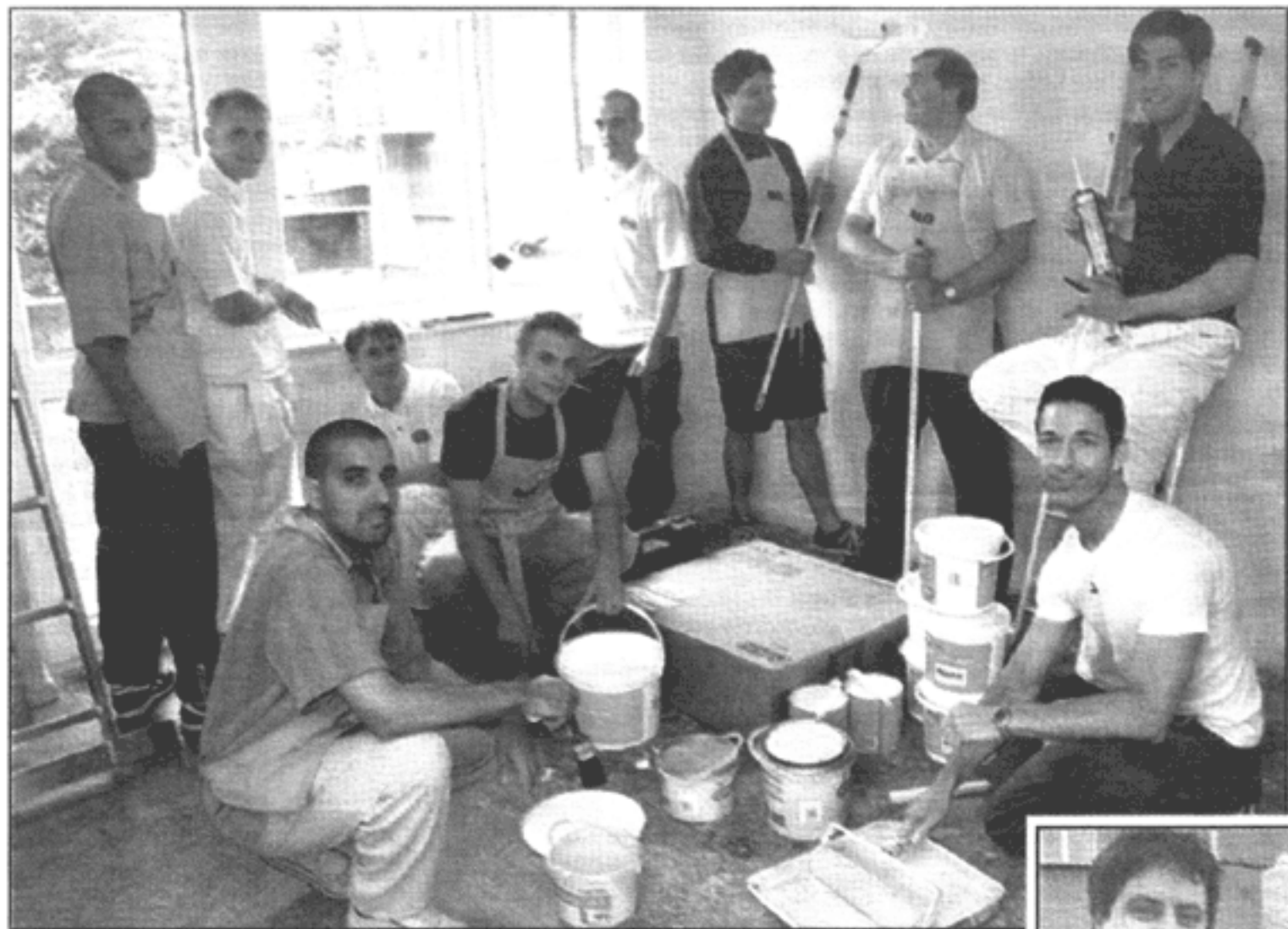


FLATS: First tenant moves in after 'decorators' slave all the weekend

Volunteers race to give Nick a new life



WELL DONE: Inset, David Jones and Nigel Delaney, of Impact, who are also pictured with other volunteers who rose to the challenge

by **SARAH WALSH**

Social Affairs Reporter

A teenager who has been sleeping on friends' floors for months was today beginning a new life in a newly-decorated flat – thanks to a local charity.

Nicholas Oliver, 18, is the first tenant to move into Bridgewater House, a new initiative from Impact Community Developments in Little Horton.

The charity – which works with needy young people – has already revamped one run-down council block, turning Hazelbury Apartments from a derelict shell to swish homes for youngsters who might otherwise have found themselves on the streets.

Now because of a growing waiting list for the flats, Impact has also taken over two neighbouring blocks, Shepton House and Bridgewater House.

And thanks to the local branch of the B&Q DIY store, the first of 11 apartments in Bridgewater House has been made habitable.

A delighted Nicholas said: "Impact has given me the chance to make a new start.

"Without its help and support I would be lost and would probably find myself in many difficulties. The members of staff have been welcoming, fun to be around and genuinely care. I didn't feel intimidated when I walked through the front door."

He helped the team of DIY workers from Impact and B&Q who slaved all weekend redecorating, carpeting and furnishing his new home.

Impact's professional maintenance workers and decorators usually take up to seven days to decorate, carpet and fully furnish each flat. Impact, together with a local B&Q store, decided to set up a Weekend Team Challenge to work together to transform Nicholas's flat so that he could move in.

Four young members of staff/volunteers from Impact, and four B&Q members of staff gave up their time at the weekend to complete the challenge successfully.

Steve Robinson, the local B&Q store manager, said: "It was fun, if not a little exhausting! The staff here at the store wanted to rise to the challenge because it was for such a good cause."

Impact was one of 20 projects across the country to scoop £5,000 worth of B&Q materials in the company's You Can Do It Awards.

Nigel Delaney, chief executive of Impact, said: "Without the support of companies like B&Q we couldn't continue the valuable work we do. The B&Q You Can Do It Scheme has been a real benefit to Impact and particularly for the young people within our accommodation."

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