

Laying the Right Foundations using a Trauma Skilled Approach



Michael was 24 when he came from a secure hospital environment, to be supported by TRFS. He had been in an 'out of area placement' in England for over a year because it had been difficult to find him a home. Finally in October 2020 he returned to the area of Scotland he had grown up in near vital family connections that were so important to help Michael establish nurturing relationships.

Michael had spent most of his teenage years in secure foster care. Diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), a moderate Learning Disability and then Oppositional Defiance Disorder Michael was struggling to get the support he needed and to be understood. By the time he was being assessed for a longer-term placement in 2019 he was regularly displaying a range of physically aggressive behaviours including hitting, kicking and spitting at other people and property damage on a regular basis, often 3-4 times a week.

When the transition to TRFS began, he was being physically restrained by 2-3 staff 3 or 4 times every single week and was often given 'as required' psychotropic medication alongside this described by the hospital as a treatment to try and help Michael feel calm.

It was clear from our first meeting with Michael that he was struggling to maintain any control and choice in his life. His anxieties around relationships and trust in people was (and still is) extremely difficult for him to develop.

A Functional Assessment using the Brief Behavioural Assessment Tool: BBAT (Smith & Nethell, 2004) alongside a series of informant-based questionnaires and direct observation methods, was carried out by our Behaviour Support Advisor and helped us to see a different way for Michael, a need for us to be Trauma Skilled and understand the life experience of Michael and the need to move at a pace that was right for him. Our core focus for support centred around building rapport, establishing trust and being patient to help Michael gain confidence in making decisions and taking back control in his life. Staff had a real core belief that life could be better for Michael and their own role to support him in increasing his quality of life.

Central to this was a focus on ensuring Michael had regular quality time each week with his Senior Support Worker, time spent getting to know him well and to begin building a trusting relationship. We understood that Michael needed to be given as much choice and control as he could within the boundaries laid down by his Welfare Guardian. This included:

- Having a consistent approach across all staff that we would never mislead, be vague or avoid being open and honest with Michael was key. This was led by our Senior Support Worker to reduce the power imbalance between Michael and the staff as much as possible.
- Michael's Senior Support Worker made it a priority to have set meetings twice a week, an opportunity for them both to sit down and talk through any issues and address these as they happened.
- They would meet after any incident to help Michael feel supported and talk through what happened and plan a way forward together.

The Behaviour Support Advisor helped the team to see the importance of developing new skills for Michael to help him build his confidence and reach his potential. This included delivering a Professional Development Award in the Management of PBS which taught the staff how to help Michael with coping skills around talking about difficult feelings. The team also spent time planning community activities together and having a real focus on celebrations such as birthday and Halloween parties to build rapport and help Michael have fun.

Lots has changed for Michael since his move into his own home.

His anxieties still affect his relationships with everyone around him however staff are consistent and maintain a long-term focus on relationship-based support knowing this will take time. Michael is becoming more confident in himself and realising what he can achieve.

- Michael has had a 95% increase in his time spent being part of his community and engaging in community activities since moving to his own home, measured using the Guernsey Community and Participation Leisure Assessment (Baker, Taylor-Roberts, Jones, 2020)
- Michael has status and value in his local community, enjoying taking on responsibility in a volunteer job
- Michael takes pride in being responsible for looking after his own pet

Over the last year, Michael is beginning to trust in a brighter future and is no longer having daily behaviours of concern to express how he is feeling and as a way of being heard. There has been a:

- 74% reduction in the frequency of all of Michael's behaviour of concern measured using behavioural recording charts
- 87% reduction in the use of 'As required' medication
- 83% reduction in physical interventions
- Michael has an MDT team who puts value on meeting regularly, offering support and working together to achieve common goals.

