

# Changing Futures

Stoke-on-Trent

## Carl Case Study

### History

Carl grew up in the care system and was entitled to support from a local authority Personal Advisor (PA). He became involved with the Changing Futures Case Coordination team from late 2023 into early 2024.

Carl has a long history of substance use, particularly the novel psychoactive substance commonly known as “monkey dust,” which he first used at age 14. He also has a history of social anxiety disorder and offending behaviour linked to rough sleeping and substance use. Over time, Carl was excluded from multiple homelessness and community services due to behaviour associated with his substance use. He experienced evictions from two major housing providers in the city for similar reasons.

In 2024, Carl served a six-month custodial sentence for carrying a weapon, and he faced a further court appearance in 2025 for a similar offence. Many services were reluctant to engage with him due to perceived risk.

### Client Goals

Carl expressed a strong desire to become abstinent from substances and reconnect with his family. He wanted to gain qualifications and showed a particular interest in the catering industry. He also enjoyed animals and hoped to visit a community farm.

### Barriers

Carl faced significant stigma associated with his family name and was frequently the subject of negative commentary on social media and local community forums. This exacerbated his social anxiety, leading him to seek quiet, safe spaces—something made difficult by his exclusion from several services and community venues.

His local authority PA struggled to maintain contact due to Carl’s rough sleeping and lack of a mobile phone. Accommodation providers were hesitant to offer housing because of perceived high risk. Overall, Carl’s substance use and unstable living situation made engagement with services extremely challenging.

## Intervention

Carl was introduced to Lee Dale, Community Recovery Coordinator, through the Changing Futures Case Coordination team. Lee worked collaboratively with Carl's PA to build rapport and trust. Carl was encouraged to engage with drug and alcohol services and began attending a weekly group specifically for "monkey dust" use, though his attendance later declined.

Recognising the reluctance of services to work with Carl, Lee invited him to access the Expert Citizens community space on a no-obligation basis. This provided an opportunity to build a more balanced and positive picture of Carl to inform future risk assessments.

Carl gradually developed a positive relationship with Lee through café visits, cinema trips, Expert Citizens events, and weekly coffee mornings. He regularly accessed the Expert Citizens drop-in space, using the laptop for personal research and listening to music, which he reported helped regulate his emotions.

A referral was made to a mental health practitioner within the rough sleeper's team, who was able to meet Carl at the Expert Citizens space. This led to Carl receiving medication to support his mental health stabilisation. Meanwhile, the Changing Futures team continued to pursue accommodation options.

## Outcomes

Carl's consistent engagement with Expert Citizens and participation in wider community projects helped build a more positive and accurate understanding of his strengths. He was subsequently offered and accepted a place in a hostel.

Carl took part in the Rideout partnership project Punishment Acts, where he reflected on his criminal justice experiences and performed alongside professional actors. During this period, he re-established contact with his father and later his grandmother, who attended one of the performances. This reconnection motivated Carl to pursue residential rehabilitation.

A referral was made to a community-based rehab service in Loughborough. Carl demonstrated exceptional commitment by completing daily check-ins without fail and quickly built strong relationships with the team. He was offered a placement, and Expert Citizens staff supported his move.

During rehab, Carl progressed through the programme, gained a Level 2 Health and Hygiene certificate, and gained experience working on a mobile catering van. Despite a pending court case, Expert Citizens provided an up-to-date reference based on two years of engagement. The court opted for a community-based programme rather than a custodial sentence.

Carl has since graduated from rehab and moved into shared accommodation in Loughborough with fellow graduates. He has begun a Level 2 Health and Social Care qualification and is interested in becoming a support worker, hoping to use his lived experience to help others. He remains in contact with the Expert Citizens community, sharing updates and maintaining positive relationships.