

CASE STUDY TWO- Bethany

Female

Age on admission: 15 years

Age on discharge: 16 years

Length of stay: 6 months at Companions, 3 months outreach support in the community

Reason for admission: Drug and alcohol misuse, Emotional Behavioural Disorder.

Background Information

Bethany started to experiment with drugs and alcohol at the age of nine years. These drugs included tobacco, cannabis and solvents. As the years progressed her mother found it difficult to manage her behaviour as there were very few boundaries in place. Tension within the home was a daily occurrence, which often led to violent outbursts; which both mother and step father found difficult to manage.

Bethany was accommodated under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989, following a breakdown in relationships within the family home. She had several placements ranging from foster placements to local authority children's homes. During this period her daily focus was obtaining drugs and alcohol for personal use. This included regular use of ecstasy, magic mushrooms, speed, crack, cocaine and heroin.

As a consequence of this hectic lifestyle Bethany's appearance and health deteriorated. There were also welfare concerns as she would go missing for long periods of time. Bethany was socialising with undesirable people who were much older than herself. At this point she was receiving support from the local community drug team and had a very good relationship with her worker.

It was during a session between Bethany and drug worker she recognised that her current behaviour was putting her life in danger. Following discussion she accepted that she needed help and agreed to access residential rehabilitation.

At Companions

Bethany quickly developed positive relationships with the staff team and other young people living in the home.

During the first two weeks she completed a two week education assessment, this highlighted her educational ability was that of a nine year old. A timetable was completed and focused on basic skills, following this Bethany started ASDAN COPE level 1 (equivalent to GCSE F/G grade) This program incorporated Sexual health, sports and leisure, independent living, drug awareness, cookery, reading, numeracy and literacy.

Within 6 months her basic skills had improved by 6 years and was very close to completing the ASDAN COPE level 1 award. Bethany also completed a 3 month work placement as a mechanics assistant, feedback from this placement was very positive. Her appearance significantly improved and she took great pride in herself. Bethany's diet and fitness improved as she regularly attended a local gym and ate a healthy nutritious balanced diet.

The program incorporated weekly sessions with a counselor which addressed emotional issues which she had previously found too distressing to discuss. During these sessions

foundations for building on relationships with family members were put in place. She began to accept her past and became very positive about the future.

Towards the end of the placement she contributed towards an independence program, which resulted in her receiving a weekly budget and responsibility for purchasing food and items to meet basic care needs, she also contributed towards the house hold chores in preparation for living independently.

Whilst at Companions there was no episodes of unauthorised absence and no concerns relating to her welfare (including misusing drugs or alcohol). This was significant improvement and perceived a happy, enthusiastic, confident young person.

Outcome

Bethany left Companions having developed a number of different skills to enable her to deal with various situations which she may come across. She also successfully passed an interview to attend training to become a mechanic.

Outreach support

As part of the exit plan it was agreed that she would continue to receive support from Companions, to enable a smooth transition into independent living.

During this time she did drink alcohol and smoke some cannabis, however she did recognize that this may become a problem and asked for support, which was given by Companions and the housing agency.

Contact with birth family was very positive and hopefully will continue to progress. Since the outreach work ceased, Bethany has maintained contact with the home via regular telephone calls and visits.

Names have been changed to protect identity.