



Michael Case Study – 05.09.2022

“Ask for help and tell people what you are struggling with. Trust to process. The help is there for you to receive it.”

Michael spent most of his young adult life surrounded by drugs and alcohol. In and out of prison, Michael struggled to trust people and engage with substance misuse services. Michael had little knowledge of safe injecting so would share needles with fellow inmates. As a result, Michael contracted Hepatitis C but could not get the medical care he needed due to a lack of understanding, stigma, and a limited amount of information on blood-borne viruses. Throughout his young adult life, Michael found himself isolated from society, with no fixed residence, and no financial status.

Deb first met Michael begging on the streets of Birmingham. Deb is a Recovery Coordinator with our Homeless and Rough Sleeper team. It took a while for Michael to trust Deb, but her continuous visits several times a week to his tent reassured him that she was there to help. Deb would walk across the city to find Michael to make sure he was safe and taking his medication for his substance misuse, she would remember Michael's birthday which meant a great deal. Michael remembers having new and interesting conversations that did not revolve around drugs: **“I never understood why people had conversations about anything else apart from drugs”**.

Talking to Michael about Deb he said there was *“No point running away from Deb, she'll catch me”*. Deb managed to build a relationship built on trust convincing Michael to get housing support from Shelter and Housing First. Change Grow Live worked closely with these housing providers to get Michael seen by a doctor, collect regular medication, and eventually get a place in rehab. Michael was able to complete a 3-4 detox and then 3 months in rehab. At first, Michael *“thought life was going to be the same, but [the staff] encouraged you to find fellowships to expand social circle and support.”* Deb checked on Michael throughout his time in rehab and offered a variety of follow-on support. Michael also received medication for his Hepatitis C and is now living free from blood-borne disease.

“I felt like I was valued by the services and that I was important”

All of Michael's hard work paid off and he is now over 11 months sober, engaged to married, and looking for full-time work. Michael underwent open heart surgery earlier this year, but somehow still found the time to volunteer to raise awareness of Hepatitis C. Michael now feels more connected to his family and enjoys taking his sisters for a carvery! Small things like opening a bank account, getting a passport, and answering the telephone for appointments have made all the difference to Michael. Just *“having the ability to sit with a pizza and watch Netflix and catch up on Games on Thrones”* and relax in his place means Michael can live a life with less worry.

We wish Michael all the best with his journey and hope that his story encourages others to seek support.