

A year of being a link worker by Jeni Timmis

Wow!! Has it really been a year already? What a fantastic year it has been, I would like to use this opportunity to thank all at WYCCP for allowing me the opportunity to be a link worker and to thank Eddie for allowing me to be his link worker it has been an honour working alongside you all this past year.

For those reading this who do not know me I originally came to WYCCP as a university student on placement 18 months ago, however, I fell in love with both the WYCCP organisation and the aims of the project. I really believe that once a person reaches their turning point then with support their goals can be achieved. I wanted to part of this therefore I returned to the project to train as a volunteer in October 2013.

I remember as if it was yesterday how my journey as Eddie's link worker began. It was a cold and frosty December morning in 2013 and I had arrived at WYCCP thinking I was giving Oliver and a service user a lift to a hostel. However, the agenda was changed at the last minute as Eddie's family met him at the gate on his release. Throughout my time at WYCCP I have learnt that working with ex-offenders is not a straightforward process, people are complicated and interactions can be complex and often subject to last minute changes. This requires link workers to be able to adapt and think on their feet, initially I admit I found this to be very challenging. However, the support from the WYCCP team is fantastic which has allowed me to develop and grow both my professional skills and interpersonal skills.

My initial few meetings with Eddie in the community were full on and very challenging, he required a lot of initial support. Through these initial meetings I quickly became aware of the barriers that ex-offenders face in the community and how vital the link worker role is in supporting service users in their resettlement. For example, through previous bad experiences Eddie had lost confidence in his communication skills and required assistance from WYCCP with tasks that most people take for granted such as opening a bank account and telephoning the water board.

To build up his confidence and to enhance his skills we worked closely together to complete an action plan of what he would like to achieve. This was a fantastic tool to use as it allowed Eddie to set his own goals. Throughout the last year he has successfully managed to achieve 60% of these goals with most of the remaining 40% well on the way to being met within the next few months. It is however important to add that these goals could not have been achieved without Eddie's continued engagement with the project, which I would like to commend him for. I recognise that it has been a rollercoaster year for him and at times it has been very challenging. However, he has endeavoured to attend his weekly meetings and has been open and honest with me and WYCCP throughout and this has allowed us to fully support him.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as a volunteer link worker here at WYCCP. The experience has allowed me to develop and enhance already established skills and to develop new ones. Due to the WYCCP team (including other volunteers) being welcoming, and friendly this has meant I have always had a warm reception and support throughout the time spent in my role. Unfortunately, due to other commitments I will be leaving WYCCP this month and do so with a heavy heart. I will miss the team very much but leave with enhanced skills and knowledge, which I am very grateful for. I wish all the best to Eddie on his continued journey; you have done so well and I look forward to receiving updates of your continued progression.

Best wishes and good luck to all,
Jeni Timmis