

A day in the life of a WYCCP link worker...

A typical day at WYCCP would be near impossible to put into words, as no two days are ever the same. My experiences of being a link worker have been extremely varied over the 18 months I've had the pleasure of being involved with the WYCCP team. However, if I were to try and put down on paper what an example of a link worker day may look like, here goes...

Arriving at the office at 9am, I would be booked in through legal visits to see two new referrals. I would complete the initial screenings and the first spider assessments with each of these men, and carry out the necessary follow up work back at the office. I would input all of the information onto the database and create a paper file for our new service users.

My afternoon would consist of meeting with one of my service users in the community. Having already arranged a meeting with him the week before, I would call him on the morning of our meeting to check that he was still able to attend. The meeting would generally take place either at the WYCCP office or in a public place which was convenient and easy for the service user to get to, usually his home town. The initial stages of the encounter would include an update on how the service user had been, and what progress he had made since our last meeting. We would also cover any areas in which he was concerned and would address if there was anything that he would appreciate help with that we were not already doing to support him. One issue that may arise is that the service user is finding it difficult to manage his money since his release, and finding that he is unable to make his JSA stretch for the two weeks before his next payment. In this case, we would devise a budget plan together, whereby we would look at what income and what outgoings he had each week and try to make it balance. Debts, including rent arrears, often play a large role in our service users finding it difficult to budget, and therefore it may be possible to reduce their weekly outgoings by negotiating a reduction in the repayment rates with the necessary organisations. After the meeting, follow up work would take place back at the office. All of the case notes from the meeting would be written up onto the database and the necessary phone calls would be made to try and negotiate the repayments of any debts. Every task that is completed, and any time spent working on behalf of the service users, would be documented on the database so that a record can be kept of the time spent on each individual.

During my time as a WYCCP link worker I have met some truly inspiring service users. These are men who have remained positive and motivated, in spite of what turmoil they may have previously experienced, and despite what life may continue to throw at them. Working to support our service users can provide a real sense of achievement, knowing that you are helping to make a real difference in another's life. If I had to give one piece of advice to future link workers it would be that it is important not to take things personally. Some of our service users lead extremely hectic lifestyles, which can sometimes lead to them missing pre-arranged meetings, for example. Although this can often be considered a set-back, it is crucial to remember that we are there for the benefit of the service user and must do what we can to rearrange meetings and continue to engage with the service user for as long as they value our support.

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