



Client Feedback

Client V

V is a 31 year old single mum of 2 girls.

She was referred to Motherwell in Oct 2018. After many years of multi agency and social care involvement the situation at home reached crisis point and both of V's children were taken out of her care in January 2019. Her eldest daughter, who is diagnosed with social and emotional difficulties, has been placed into long term foster care and her younger daughter has been placed into the care of her paternal grandparents under a Special Guardianship Order.

From the onset V and the children's social worker had a very strained relationship and the final removal of her daughters only served to exacerbate this poor relationship even further. After many meetings and home visits V had reached the point where she was unable to control her emotions/temper towards the social worker and on one occasion had to be removed from the meeting place by security. From this point on V was not invited to any of the meetings about her children. She had to rely on a telephone update from the social worker on what had been discussed/decided on in the meeting. V felt she no longer had a say in her children's lives and that ultimately she no longer felt like a mother. V lived only for her fortnightly supervised contact sessions with her girls, and in between she slumped deeper into a dark place where she couldn't imagine her life ever getting any better.

From a young age V had difficulties in school, and she has said that her years at high school were horrendous, she hated every minute and rarely attended. V's mental health problems probably started here and she went on to seek help from her GP to manage them. However when V lost care of her girls, she felt her future looked very bleak and her anxiety and depression worsened. V also had outstanding debts and was struggling to live on a very low income. Her income was further affected when her daughters were removed from her care.

So how could Motherwell support V?

As part of the referral process V's mental health was assessed by the Motherwell Support Worker and it was found to be exceeding Motherwell's threshold for direct support and so a referral was made to Survive, a specialist counselling service supporting people who have suffered from abuse. The Motherwell Support Worker was able to help V with addressing some of her debt issues by helping her to join Chance, the social supermarket, where she could get a weeks worth of shopping for a minimal charge, therefore freeing up some of her income to spend on other basic needs The Support Worker also wrote a letter of support to the TV licence board about a non- payment fine and also accompanied V to her PIP assessment meeting, this was refused and V struggled to make ends meet on universal credit alone.

In addition to practical support the Motherwell Support Worker has been acting as an intermediary between V and the girls' social workers. This has led to V being much calmer to the point that she is now allowed to attend meetings with the Motherwell Support Worker as her advocate. V and the Support Worker meet before each meeting to clarify and write down her questions, thoughts etc. This is helping V feel more in control and less anxious. V says that historically throughout the process of losing her children to the care system she always felt unheard and unsupported and she felt alone and isolated in the meetings, leading to her acting inappropriately. V believes she was judged on a few crisis situations and that the bigger picture was never considered, but she had no control over this. From Social Care's point of view, they say that despite years of intense support from many agencies V was unable to make the necessary changes or was able to sustain a reasonable level of care for her daughters leading to their ultimate removal.

Going forward Social Care would like V to accept the decision of the court, draw a line in the sand and move on... something V was finding very hard to do before intervention and support from Motherwell.

As mentioned above her youngest daughter is living under a Special Guardianship Order with her paternal grandparents but Social Care still has a Supervision Order in place as they are concerned that the relationship between V and the grandparents has been volatile in the past and that the grandparents would struggle to manage contact going forward. So the Motherwell Support Worker invited all parties to meet on neutral ground to talk about why relationships were difficult. After an open discussion, several differences were ironed out and a more amicable relationship and more importantly a mutual respect has been established. Because of this, the concerns about future contact management are now looking less challenging.

This outcome has definitely given V something positive to focus on and her anxiety and depression seem to have lifted a little, to the point where she has started volunteering for Motherwell; she has participated in fundraising activities, she has talked about the support she has had from the charity with the project funders and the national press, she has made friends with other service users and is a source of support to them and she participates in peer support activities whenever they are arranged.

Aside from her involvement with Motherwell, V also started volunteering at Chance Social Supermarket 2 days a week and this led to her volunteering at their community meal on a Saturday evening, where she helped prepare and cook a 2 course meal for up to 50 homeless local people. The trustees of Chance spoke very highly of V's hard work ethic and reported that she did over 170 voluntary hours this year. They also trained V in Basic Safeguarding and Level 1 Food Preparation and Hygiene.

Following on from volunteering with Chance, V's self confidence has grown to a point where she has actively sought employment and now has a paid job for 20 hours a week.

She has completed a Budgeting Course with Christians Against Poverty and they have gone on to help her completely clear all her debts.

All these positive steps have been shared with Social Care. V still has a lot to prove to them that she is making great strides to improve and more importantly sustain this positive lifestyle. But with ongoing support from Motherwell it is lovely to see V's confidence and growing determination to show she can change and to show that she is becoming a stronger, resilient person, not just to be a better mum for her girls but just as importantly for herself as a woman.