



Case Study: Independent Living

Concrete's Changing Futures Case Co-ordinator Charlotte has supported Phil* since October 2022. Phil is a 46-year-old man from Stoke-on-Trent who has been in and out of various accommodation across the city.

He's been known to take monkey dust and believes he has parasites under his skin, which means he often picks at his legs, resulting in scarring and infection. Charlotte explained that many people believe this is due to drug use, but Charlotte said she's never seen him under the influence so doesn't think that this is the case.

When Charlotte met Phil, she knew that she had to gain his trust and build up a relationship with him. They started to meet for coffee and she worked hard to find out more about him as a person. She made sure he had things in place, such as PIP and Universal Credit, and started to establish his needs. Phil also receives support from a Concrete Service Coordinator.

Phil had a bike which he relied on to get around – this included picking up prescriptions and travelling to appointments. Due to his skin picking, his legs were often swollen and sore so he struggled to walk, but he was able to peddle.

Sadly his bike was damaged, but Charlotte was able to buy him another using his Changing Futures personal budget. Charlotte said this was a really important purchase for Phil because it allowed him to maintain his independence. She said he was 'over the moon' when he received the bike. Charlotte also used the budget to purchase Phil a mobile phone. He's kept this safe and uses it regularly to engage with Charlotte and other services.

Housing is the biggest priority for Charlotte in her work with Phil. Phil was living with a local housing provider until he was served a 28 day notice last month. The provider said that this was due to his skin picking upsetting other residents and his belongings being found across communal shared spaces within the accommodation.

A few days before his eviction date, Phil's legs were so bad that he agreed to go to A&E. This was a huge step for Phil as he'd previously refused to seek medical attention. Before going to hospital, Charlotte had spoken to mental health professionals who said that if Phil went to A&E, they'd admit him and complete a mental health assessment. However when Charlotte took Phil to A&E, he was simply



given antibiotics and sent home. This was frustrating for Charlotte, who was hopeful that the mental health assessment would have been a step forward for Phil around his parasite delusions.

Following his eviction, Charlotte booked Phil a stay at The George Hotel to make sure he was off the streets and had somewhere safe to stay. He's been there ever since and hasn't had any issues. He's engaging well and is polite to staff and other residents.

Now Charlotte's priority is to find a longer-term accommodation that works for Phil. He's previously stayed in hostels and shared accommodation but they don't work for him. It's not appropriate for Phil to be around high-risk individuals or drugs such as monkey dust.

Charlotte believes that the best option would be supported independent living where he can have his own space. Phil's delusions around parasites under his skin often increase when he's anxious and Charlotte hopes that improving his living situation would alleviate those concerns.

To secure supported independent living, Phil needs a social worker and a Social Care Act Assessment, which he hasn't had, so this is Charlotte's next step. She has put in a request to complete this which will hopefully take place in the New Year. Once Phil has been assessed and assigned a social worker, Charlotte can start to look for accommodation that would be suitable for him.

Phil's goal is to secure a self-contained flat where he can have privacy, maintain his dignity and reduce his anxieties. Charlotte believes this would help alleviate his worries and reduce his concerns of having parasites under his skin. Once he's settled, Charlotte can look into mental health support to tackle the delusions directly.

In other areas of his life, Phil is doing well. He's engaging with local services, keeping in touch with Charlotte regularly and planning to attend some Expert Citizens coffee mornings. This will help him build relationships and experience some peer support.

Phil is also a 'brilliant' artist, according to Charlotte, so she'd love to support him to take some creative courses to build on his skills and increase his confidence.

*name changed