



Louise's Story

How 'Louise' came to Housing First

As a young child Louise was regularly moved between her mother and father and lived between Liverpool and Blackpool.

"It was like being kidnapped by my mother and I missed a lot of school. I had to learn to cook at a young age or I just wouldn't have eaten."

Louise's father had a long term mental health issue and her mother was a long term heroin user who died when Louise was 13. To cope with the death of her mother Louise started using heroin herself at the age of 14. She began offending to fund her addiction and became the victim of domestic violence in abusive relationships where she was nearly killed on a number of occasions.

She has three children who are all in care and Louise has spent the last 11 years in prison. When she came to Housing First she was in a cycle of sofa surfing and rough sleeping, offending so she would have somewhere to spend the night.

"I didn't want to sleep rough so I was doing things that made me feel uncomfortable so I wouldn't have to stay on the streets. I was using both prescribed and non-prescribed substances on the black market and didn't have a good experience with support services as I couldn't engage with them while under the influence of drugs."

At the age of 42, Louise had never worked or claimed benefits and was suffering ill health with unstable personality disorder, anxiety, psychosis, COPD and arthritis.

What Housing First offered 'Louise'

Housing First helped Louise choose a home of her own and she picked where she wanted to live. "I didn't think I deserved a place of my own, let alone decorate it how I wanted."

Louise's support worker gave her daily responsive support such as staying with her all day to access medical services and carried out daily welfare checks.

"These checks saved my life as at the time I was regularly overdosing and they were able to find me and call the emergency services."

Housing First challenged her lifestyle without judgement and supported Louise to want to change. Her support worker helped her manage her own safety by putting her in touch with substance misuse services to control addiction and went with her to the appointments so she wasn't alone.

The Housing First team take a persistent approach, continuing to offer appointments even when Louise didn't show up rather than taking her off the scheme. Her support worker helped her access

benefits as a source of income and encouraged her to see her own strengths of being kind and having a brilliant sense of humour.

“My support worker helped me get used to the area, finding out where things were and it helped me feel more at home in the community. I started to move away from negative relationships.”

How things have changed for ‘Louise’ so far.

Nine months on, Louise is now maintaining her own tenancy in the area of her choice. She has chosen to address her substance misuse issues and is on a methadone script for the first time. She has fewer hospital stays as she has stopped overdosing and is starting to make her own decisions about her life.

Louise is engaging with Housing First and is attending appointments with her support worker and other organisations. She is now in receipt of benefits and is budgeting her money, stopping shoplifting to get money to live on.

“I’d like to help mentor others in the same way that has been done for me. I do have strengths and things I can do well, I can be capable and I deserve a chance to try and do the best I can with my life.”