

GM Case Study

I first met GM in person on 14.06.2022, after having a telephone introduction with both he and his Offender Manager (OM). GM was 27 at the time, he is a White British male, and was living with his mother and brother in a small 2-bedroom flat. In his referral it was stated that he falls into the persistent offender cohort with complex needs. He also had an offending history with matters relating to, historic domestic abuse, lack of constructive use of time, pro-criminal attitudes, and alcohol abuse. To add to this, GM was stopped and searched or arrested on several occasions at protests, rallies and marches, linked with far-right movements. There were concerns of either racial views, grooming by these movements or both. GM was deemed a high risk of offender.

GM was referred to us with the aim of giving him a positive mentor to work and speak with to hopefully counter all of the negative people he has around him. Alongside that aim to engage him in physical activities to help improve his health, encourage him to see the benefit of receiving support from an alcohol worker, as well as work towards ETE (Education Training and Employment) and housing.

When GM and I first sat down to enrol him to our programme and set a plan of engagement, I noticed he was quite sharp and disinterested with his answers, he found himself on his phone a couple of times whilst we were speaking. I addressed it as it was rude and unproductive, he respected my request but found himself looking at his phone repeatedly. GM was very overweight in appearance, his clothes weren't well kept and he seemed quite sweaty and nervous in the conversation. This could have been because of the heat at that time of the year, his health, or just being nervous doing a form with someone new.

We went through his needs and goals he wants to work on which included:

- Support with his alcohol misuse – The action was to set about referring him to WDP.
- ETE – He originally said he didn't want to work. But after I reminded him that he just told me he may sometimes struggle with travel to get to sessions, he then listed a few working fields he has thought about. Railway, SIA, Stewarding, Coaching Badges, Youth Work. I felt that was an early sign of him potentially attempting to bend the truth to benefit him. But it ended up positive goal setting, which is good.
- Accommodation – He would like to work towards attaining his own tenancy away from his mother's.

We originally set a plan to meet twice a week, one being for a table tennis session as that is a big passion of his, and the other being a 1-1 football session, as he feels that would be a good way of helping him lose weight. After making some progress on his health and wellbeing we will start working towards ETE, ID and Bank account applications etc. Simultaneously we will work on housing also.

After having to reschedule a couple of appointments, he finally made it to our first table tennis session. We had a slow start getting into the sports hall due to some booking issues. GM got visibly flustered and impatient whilst we were resolving the issue and threatened to leave because of his impatience. I managed to calm him down and get him to wait. He was quite loud and cheekily confident, and told me that he used to compete when younger, prior to getting in trouble and before putting on a lot of weight. He was very good as expected and the game was competitive and great for the physical and mental wellbeing improvement that it was intended for. During and after the session

I noticed a rude tone that he spoke with, saying things like “GET THAT BALL” with no please or thanks. At the end we sat down and had a chat about what is going on with him. GM said, “I won, GET me a Lucozade Sport from the vending machine now!” again with no please. I said firstly, we made no such arrangement for that. Secondly, I will never accept you speaking to anyone like that, let alone myself. I would happily buy you a drink as I usually bring spare water with me to sessions, but we are not going to continue a trend of you speaking to me in that manner. He began to smile and apologised saying he was playing.

To the session, I brought 4 table tennis balls with me, 3 orange 1 was white (all the same quality). Whiles playing I noticed an odd comment. He had a fixation on wanting to serve with the white ball at every opportunity. I asked him why that was so, and he replied “I prefer the white one, white ones first”. As there was nothing that followed, I made nothing of it and we continued. But this was the first concern I had about his racial views. We spoke a lot about football which really helped us build a strong rapport, catching up on the results every week. This helped us break barriers over time, and hopefully build his trust with someone from an African background. It would additionally open the door to us having a lot more uncomfortable conversations around his presentation, hair, beard, the condition of his clothes and his body odour. This happened over a long period of time and not straight away.

A few sessions down the line we had another concern about GM’s racial views. It was little while after the Euros where some of the black British, English players missed penalties in the finals of the competition. GM, myself and my colleague were having friendly football talk about how well England did in the competition. GM said “you see how they say white men can’t jump, because of the movie, well black men cannot take penalties!” referring to the Euro finals. My colleague and I said it was inappropriate and inaccurate, and explained why. This alongside the fact that he was still being spotted by the police at protests / rallies was concerning.

I challenged him on his comments in the next session and asked if he has any issues with ethnic groups. He said no he doesn’t, but said there is an issue with people coming from different countries illegally and taking a lot of the jobs in the UK, claiming benefits etc. He went on to say he has family from Caribbean backgrounds. I reminded him that the UK is heavily multicultural and there are many ethnic groups that have contributed to its growth. Yes, there are ethnic groups that have been disruptive to the UK, but asked him to look at himself and a lot of people that look like him and ask if you have contributed or been disruptive to the communities in the country, before judging others. He kind of took a step back and thought deeply about it as we got deeper into the conversation. GM messaged me later that day to apologise for his comments and said sometimes he says things without thinking and gets carried away and he didn’t mean any offence.

GM in conversation comes across quite youthful and immature, merging multiple talking points into one, struggling with listening and talking at the same time. He also makes these controversial statements, not really having much reasoning behind what he is saying, as if it weren’t really coming from him. This led me to believe that he could be being groomed by some racist groups where they may be taking advantage of his youthful thinking and planting racial beliefs in his mind.

Nonetheless, we continued working with GM and more often than not his engagement and communication was exceptional, He started noticing he was getting healthier as he could last longer playing table tennis. With this progress we (myself and his OM) Thought it best to start working on some of the goals that he set in our engagement plan. So, we referred him to WDP for support with his alcohol. He did not have any form of ID, a bank account or a national insurance card / number at the time. But with the partnership support of Shaw Trust, we were able to fund his Citizenship card

for ID, apply for a NI replacement, which then meant he could now apply for a bank account. We had also started the process of referring him to Brents AFEO Housing Team. He received the Citizenship card and it felt like really big moments of success for him. Prior to this GM had never had a real job, so this was all very new territory for him, doing all of it by himself would have been overwhelming for him.

Although he was appreciative of the support and was moving in the right direction, there were still many bumps in the road. GM would now and then get careless with his alcohol consumption at a bar and get into a fight with security, staff at a fast-food restaurant, or just someone at a bar, adding to the pile up of court cases and charges he already had against him. He would also often lie to services and give us different accounts of what took place to blame other people for his mistakes. For example, he would say that one service is not helping him with his ID, when in actual fact he had lost the ID after an incident and just needs to apply for another. This proved to be very disruptive of his progress. The IOM police team raised concerns and were monitoring him a lot more closely, services also began to lose faith in his motivation for self-betterment. At this point it was very important that partnership working and communicating was at its best as we were able to put together all of the stories he brought forward, so that he couldn't tell us differing stories without being challenged.

As time passed, I would challenge his statements and stories a lot more making him aware that all of the supporting partners are in communication. As a result, he was slowly understanding that if he really wanted to keep moving forward, he would need to be honest and actually work hard otherwise he could end up with negative reports from all services and end up back in prison with all of these court cases coming up. Despite how uncomfortable he was about it, I would have many serious conversations with him, motivating him to prove everyone wrong, and to prove to himself that he could better himself. After one of our table tennis sessions, we had an emotional conversation about his childhood and how his parents never had any money growing up. His dad never used to work, he stayed at home smoking cannabis drinking and sending GM's mum to go and get more for him to smoke. His dad was also very abusive to him and his sister and says that he was sexually inappropriate with his sister. As a result of this GM was stealing from very young age to have clothes and food. He would also link in with really negative peer groups and individuals that would influence him heavily. So, a lot of these positive changes he has made and still has to make, he has never been taught any of it. This day was a significant turning point for him, to really open up and look deeper in himself being the potential problem.

As we were in a good place with our rapport and trust, I was able to have a chat with him about the potential of seeing a counsellor. He was open to it and we very quickly re-registered him with his GP and requested a referral for it. From this point there was a change in GM's commitment, he was becoming a lot more open about everything. He would contact the IOM police to update them on progress, contact myself, probation, WDP (Drug & Alcohol Service), Shaw Trust (ETE Service) to let us all know of his next court dates and appointments, so that nothing clashes. He would be open about removing himself from certain negative groups of people he was spending time with, he also admitted that those people used him and didn't have his best interest at heart.

At this point things really started clicking he was still engaging with AIR via our usual table tennis sessions, but one day he turned around and said he is ready to have his first session in the gym as he really wanted to lose weight. We had a mini celebration then went straight to it; this was a huge outcome (FIRST EVER GYM SESSION!!!!). Not only did he attend sessions once / twice a week, but he was committing to eating better, and he had stopped drinking for over two months. GM would sit with me to chase up his housing referral after every session which finally lead to some progress. In October he had two viewings for studios in shared accommodations, despite them being

unsuccessful there was still positive movement, which helped motivation, he was beginning to see things were possible.

- After some encouragement we had him firmly linked in with WDP doing workshops and 1-1 working.
- We actioned both railway and forklift licence course referrals, through Shaw Trust.
- His NI came in the post, alongside his replacement citizenship card.
- In December he shared excitement about eating and spending quality time with the family for Christmas. This was new for him.
- After months of efforts on the 06.12.2022, GM finally had a successful viewing for a studio, not too far from his mother's place. This was a huge pillar that propelled his progress. This was the first time he had ever moved somewhere by himself.
- We supported him in doing his housing benefit claim and applying for funding for household goods such as cutlery, pots, pans, toaster, kettle etc.
- On the 22.02.2023, GM completed a forklift licence course and was ready to start looking for work. Which is exactly what he did.
- GM created a brand-new CV with the support of Shaw Trust.
- GM started taking pride in his appearance, shaving and showering more often. Taking care of his clothes and his hygiene.
- GM decided to open up a new bank account and a savings account, because he has ID to do so now.
- He is speaking a lot more respectfully to myself and everyone he speaks with

I can confidently say that GM has made complete 180 degree turn on his life and says he is happier for it. He is still currently open to us and we are still working on finding him employment. As the work is still in progress, I think it is important to recognise the transformation that he has made on his life.