

Case Study 5



family care associates

Jeremy arrived at the home in February 2004 having lived in a respite home for a number of years due to difficulties in identifying a suitable long-term placement. Possibly due to the inevitable lack of stability that this type of resource offers, Jeremy who is described as having Downs Syndrome and associated learning difficulties had become difficult to manage and at times become challenging both to the staff team and to other young people resident in the home.

On his arrival at Links Avenue, Jeremy appeared eager to please and tried to befriend every member of the staff team. However it became apparent within a short period of time that Jeremy liked to control everyone around him and that he was used to being the centre of attention and getting his own way. Jeremy seemed to quickly identify members of the staff team that he felt he could intimidate and he would endeavour to manipulate those on shift so that he was more likely to get what he wanted. Contact with family appeared to be modelled around Jeremy's need for control and it was this aspect of Jeremy's behaviour that caused most concern.

During the first eighteen months of Jeremy's placement at the home his attempts at control would often end in Jeremy becoming enraged and resulting in physical intervention by staff members to ensure his safety and the well being of those around him. The staff team found that he would target those that he perceived were weaker or those that would present him with the biggest battle, Jeremy was not finding the move into adolescence easy. The staff team worked together to provide consistency and structure that would provide the boundaries that Jeremy seemed to need and slowly this approach appeared to have the desired effect in that Jeremy became more able to live in a home that did not give in to his every demand. Positive reinforcement was used at every opportunity to encourage Jeremy to use his personality in a constructive way and triggers for aggression, for example watching television programs such as East Enders, were replaced with activities away from the home.

Slowly but surely Jeremy found that negotiation and cooperation were more effective ways of living with other people and reports from family contact began to echo similar behaviour. Jeremy was encouraged at every opportunity to develop the necessary skills for independence and his self-esteem began to grow as he discovered that by earning respect he was able to lead a more enjoyable life. His key worker introduced him to the game of pool and he not only acquired the skill to play the game but also to take part in the etiquette of the pool table and how to lose a game gracefully, something that had been difficult for Jeremy in the past. A program was developed for Jeremy to travel by train independently and to go to the local shop on his own to spend his pocket money. Jeremy joined the Everton football scheme for people with a disability and enjoyed training at the Netherton ground on a Monday night as well as attending other clubs during the week.

During this last year at Links Avenue Jeremy has matured into a personable young man with wit and charm and if he is unable to get his own way for any reason he might mutter and grumble as any seventeen year old would but for most of the time he is too busy to let minor challenges get in his way. Overnight family contact is now frequent and enjoyable for all concerned and he regularly attends family functions as well as relishing his role as an uncle.

As his eighteenth birthday approaches Jeremy has been introduced to a family that can provide him with a placement as an adult and the initial meetings and visits have been very positive. Over that last four years we have been able to help Jeremy develop into a personable young man who is capable of empathy and understanding. This should stand Jeremy in good stead as an adult and once he moves on from school to college he now has the skills to form friendships and positive relationships that will ensure that there will always be some one to play a game of pool with or watch a football match on a Saturday afternoon.