



# CashBack VOW Project

A collaborative project across Edinburgh who use their lived experience of the criminal justice system, trauma, and adversity to make a real difference to the lives of young people.

David is 20 year old young man from Edinburgh, who was raised in an affluent area of the city, with a supportive family network around him. He was a promising young rugby player with a keen interest in aviation. During his teenage years David experimented with drugs and as time progressed this escalated significantly.

At the age of 18 years old, David became involved in minor offending and his drug use had become increasingly chaotic and problematic. This culminated in him eventually leaving the family home and following the breakdown of the familial relationships, he moved into temporary accommodation but this also broke down, with him being made homeless having to sleep in a work's van.

David came to the attention of the VOW Project having been arrested and held in police custody to appear at Edinburgh Sheriff Court.

He was very receptive to the approach made by the peer mentors and identified himself that he had concerns over his drug use and the potential impact it might have on his employment.

David was positive during that very first conversation which was encouraging and the team went on to provide him with contact details and information about the Project.

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**POLICE**  
**SCOTLAND**  
Keeping people safe  
**POILEAS ALBA**



A police officer and peer mentor from the VOW Project assisted David that same day in securing emergency accommodation and they went on to provide him with a food parcel and basic toiletries from their partners at Fare Share / Cyrenians.

David committed to the VOW Project and the team assisted him with obtaining appropriate identification to assist in housing application process with City of Edinburgh Council. Several days later David informed the team he had been removed from his accommodation due to infringement of rules around his consuming alcohol within the premises.

A VOW Project peer mentor helped with alternative emergency accommodation. Shortly afterwards, David lost his job due to traffic offences. This caused him anxiety in relation to finances and a peer mentor provided guidance and support and assisted him in applying for universal credit and other relevant benefits.

Despite many negative previous encounters with police officers and being arrested, David quickly established a good relationship the VOW Project and agreed to attend in person at the police station to meet the rest of the team.

David continued in a cycle of losing his accommodation due to breaking the rules, criminal offences, family fallouts and drug use. Despite these difficulties and at times frustrations, the VOW team never gave up on him.

Unfortunately a short time later David was arrested for being involved with a series of acquisitive crimes and the team made another approach to offer support. He disclosed that he had recently lost his job and had resorted to carrying a weapon for his own safety after accruing debts.

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At this stage a peer mentor had a very frank conversation with David, explained he needed to commit to the Project and ceases his offending, otherwise, the Project may no longer be suitable. These words resonated with David and he seemed concerned at the prospect of the team withdrawing support due to his escalating behaviours. A peer mentor was able to use his lived experience and provided an input on the dangers of carrying weapons and David seemed to respond to this.

David's decision making seemed to improve after a time and the team continues to persist with him and worked on issues he had around anger management, loss and how to handle his emotions without resort to alcohol or violence. David engaged well and understood the need for the building of relationships.

David did make contact with father and he was offered the opportunity of a place in rehab and also funding for a college course.

I am thankful to the VOW Project for their perseverance in my son and it gives me comfort that there is a glimmer of hope that he can turn a corner and hopefully return to the family in the months ahead.

- David's father

Fast forward to the present and David is employed at a bike repair shop and has begun working part time at a local church on a voluntary basis. His time at the church provided him with the opportunity of meeting someone who been in a similar position and this appears to have inspired David to make the most of himself.

David was offered a room in a flat by a friend he made through the church. David has since been making better life choices, has surrounding himself with positive influences and has even made some new circle of friends.

**With such positive outcomes and a renewed commitment to turning his life around, David has currently stopped his offending and is no longer using alcohol and drugs.**

**He has made new friends, gained employment, carried out some voluntary work and even regained a place in his rugby team.**

The most important development for him however was being invited for Christmas dinner at the family home. He spent the day with his father, his brothers and his aunt. The day was a great success and they are all now looking forward to further building those relationships.

