

# Personal stories

## of young people in Guildford



### KELLY

Kelly was referred to us after violently falling out with her step sister. She has quite extreme Asperger's syndrome. She is shy, and even when passing strangers in the corridor gives them a wide berth.

She is punctual and enjoys meeting her keyworker. But the only place to meet with residents for key working is in the public restaurant. To avoid the busiest times, availability there is limited.

Kelly finds it difficult to sit in a busy room like the restaurant. If she has to drop into the team office she will often wait until it is quiet.

*A quiet room conducive to private one-to-one conversation for Kelly and many like her is needed. The current Residential office is busy with residents seeking benefits advice, others needing to use a telephone, whilst staff may be typing up confidential key working notes or helping others to source jobs or training. Privacy is impossible.*

### KIERAN

Kieran is 16, and seriously vulnerable. He has anger issues having been rejected by his family. He is under the care and support of Social Services and Probation; he enjoys alcohol and cannabis. There have been child protection issues with police involvement. Kieran tried college but it didn't work out for him.

Meeting Kieran can be difficult, and often requires multi agency co-operation. Such support meetings take place in the restaurant which is not ideal. Kieran often needs to see his YMCA key worker and will drop into the Residential office almost daily.

*It would be great to offer some training online using a computer training suite where we can support a resident's progress in a better environment.*

### MANDY

A number of our residents are not working or at college, like Mandy. She is very extrovert and sociable. She feels she doesn't need key working. She has recently completed a Prince's Trust Team with Plantation and really enjoyed it.

Now the course has finished and she is quite bored and mischievous, often being noisy in Reception. She is 17 and easily turns to cannabis and alcohol. At present she has nowhere to 'be' at the Y apart from her room.

*Having a separate space with a pool table and mini coffee bar would enable young people to gather where staff are on hand to work informally with them. Such a place would be very productive.*

(Names have been changed)

# More stories...



## LIZ

Liz is 16 years old and has low self-esteem and confidence levels. She has been unable to gain any work experience since leaving school.

She was referred to the Aspire programme run by Guildford YMCA to help gain experience in working with others, and help develop more self-confidence. Working within a smaller group was much more manageable for Liz.

Liz has since been offered a conditional place at Guildford College, and is also planning to start volunteer work with Guildford YMCA's Plantation Trading gardening business.

*Having extra space to move around more freely with private interview rooms nearby, would provide valuable time to reflect and discuss any personal issues privately.*

## NORA

Nora is 21 and has been coming to Guildford YMCA's Plantation cafe since she was 13. She describes the staff as being her surrogate parents and they have had a huge impact on her life. They were always available for support and advice on her own terms.

Nora struggled with depression after her father died in tragic circumstances and she suffered an abusive relationship in her teens.

Nora has used self-harm and recreational drugs as a means to cope and escape from her emotional pain. The cafe has provided a safe place for her, to be herself and get non-judgemental support from the cafe workers. Recently Nora started 1:1 mentoring with a youth worker and this has led to her exploring counselling options and also taking part in Plantation's Romance Academy.

*More space will mean Guildford YMCA can help more young people, like Nora, overcome life limiting issues and develop into responsible adults.*

### **What young people are saying about Plantation, Guildford YMCA's current youth venue...**

"Plantation is a safe zone for me, it's helped me through so much and I have the best set of friends anyone could ask for from Plantation. I honestly don't know what I would have done if Plantation didn't exist when I had nowhere to turn to." (Ed)

"Plantation means an incredible amount to me and other young people who like to hang out there. We have formed our own family at Plantation - a place we know we will always be welcomed and smiled at by staff. So when times are hard at home we know where we can go. I don't know where I would be without my second home." (Florence)

"The cafe is awesome because I've met some of my closest friends there, it's safe and generally awesome!" (Pedro)

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