DIGITAL INCLUSION AT Framework

Digital Inclusion case study

Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Team donated phones case study - Richard Sparkes

MF has had a problem with substance misuse for 25 years. M arrived in Nottingham in March 2022 from Barnsley having been living on the streets there for two years.

MF was picked up by our team at RSDATT (Rough Sleepers Drug and Alcohol Treatment Team) the morning after he arrived in Nottingham.

Here at RSDATT we do drug and alcohol treatment differently. We are afforded the luxury of being able to take treatment to the streets. Our main aim is to remove barriers to treatment. All our clients experience server multiple disadvantages. The majority of our caseload are rough sleeping, have limited access to basic necessities and all have severe addiction to wide range of substances.

I met MF that morning while out in town looking for another client. MF had been in drug and alcohol services on and off in his hometown. When I explained to him that he could come with me there and then, be seen by a doctor and get on a methadone prescription, he was shocked.

MF engaged with services immediately. One of MF's biggest worries was being able to contact his children back home. MF like many of our service users had sold his phone to buy drugs. Having no address and limited funds, a phone contract was out of the question. With no means of contact, it also would have made my job particularly difficult.

The Vodafone SIM cards we received made MF's treatment easier, his isolation less and his confidence greater. We were able to provide MF with a cheap phone – enough for him to send texts and make calls home – and the SIM card offered him the comfort of knowing he was able to communicate without the worries of having to find money to pay for it.

"Having a phone that I didn't have to keep topping up meant I could call my kids and let them know I was alive without worrying. That was huge. My relationship with them was breaking down, the odd call here and there let them know I was thinking of them and working on making myself better. It also meant Richard

could get hold of me when he needed me and I could call him whenever I needed to."

After about 6 months of treatment in the community, MF had engaged so well that he was offered the opportunity to go to rehab. He jumped at the chance and complete his programme in February. He is now 9 months free from Drugs and Alcohol, studying to become a counsellor and living life to the fullest. Oh – and he still has the same number we gave him on that morning way back in March!