

R's Life before Liaison and Diversion

R is a 28 year old female who was referred to us through custody with concerns about alcohol use and domestic abuse as a perpetrator. S has been separated from her partner N for 6 months and shares her home with her two daughters who are 6 years old and 2 years old.

R was brought into custody following a domestic incident. Where she was arrested under suspicion of accused of child abuse (throwing things at her children) and assault on her ex-partner. She was screened in custody.

R is originally from Rochdale, she has moved a number of times in her adult life at the request of N. She eventually moved to Halifax to live closer to her N's parents. R does not have many friends in Halifax, the ones that she does have she was not allowed to socialise with as N would make it too difficult for her or cause complications/arguments that left her feeling that she could not go out.

N has previously been in control of the finances in their home due to him working and her being a stay at home mum. That being said, all domestic bills and debts that they jointly accumulated are in R's name, R suggested that her debts were approximately £4,000 however R had stopped opening letters due to her anxiety around this issue. When we worked together to calculate the full amount it came to just over £10,000.

R often has low mood, she attributes this to her relationship with N. In addition, she shared that her father drank a lot of alcohol and died of alcohol related issues. She feels that she has not dealt with this bereavement.

How Liaison and Diversion Supported R

When I met with R in the community to complete an assessment it became apparent that her support needs were very different to those identified when screened in custody. We identified together that she would need support with the safety of her home, domestic abuse as a victim, debts and social isolation. The most important issue being her finances as she had stopped opening letters due to the anxiety of her mounting debts.

Together, R and I opened all her letters and organised them to allow us to fully understand the actual amount of debt that R had accrued. We completed a referral to a local money advice service. I accompanied her to the assessment appointment. Here they advised that a debt relief order (DRO) would be the best course of action as she had more money going out than coming in. The fee for a DRO is £90, however the service accessed some charitable funds for R so that she only had to pay £45. The DRO was completed meaning that R's debt was wiped. R was completely overwhelmed by this, as it also meant that the debts that were being deducted from her universal credits (UC) claim would not be taken anymore, meaning that R would have access to all her UC entitlement. R had also been paying less rent if she needed things such as new uniform or public transport passes. Access to her full UC would mean that R could manage other emergency situations. The impact of this on R mood was apparent immediately, she no longer had to worry if bailiffs were going to attend her property or if utilities would be switched off due to mounting debts. R also arranged for her rent to be paid directly to her landlord rather than entering her account meaning R was more able to manage her money.

A DASH was completed with R to help her realise the risk surrounding N's past behaviour and look at keeping her safe going forward. R was surprised to realise what a risk N posed and how highly she scored on the DASH assessment. This had a positive impact on R as she was clear about how N's behaviour has affected her emotional wellbeing and her safety. It helped R understand that she was a victim of domestic abuse (physical, emotional and financial). Following this discussion R agreed to a referral into the Freedom Programme at the Women Centre to further understand the abuse and to hopefully open up her social interactions as this is a 12 week programme working alongside other women. A sanctuary referral was completed to allow the local authority to assess the safety of her home and add safety devices to her windows and doors. This was completed leaving R feeling safer in her own home should N turn up unexpectedly acting aggressively.

A referral was made to a mental health support service to provide counselling to help R deal with her bereavement she is currently on the waiting list but is accessing GP support while she waits for this to commence.

What has changed?

R is in a completely different place day that we first met. She is now safe in her own home without the worry of mounting debts and isolation. I could see a physical difference in R, she smiled more and talked in a much more positive way.

When closing R commented as follows:

“You have helped me so much and I'm so thankful for your help and support”