

Respond to ambitions

Reporters

Adam Robinson, Josie Tate and Wayne Morris at [Cambian](#), 10 November 2014.

What did you do^{*}?

One resident struggled to find any positive motivation in life. We found out he used to care for birds of prey with his father. So, after discussing it with him, we worked together to build an aviary and purchase a Red Kite.

What was excellent about it?

The gentleman preferred to be isolated, and so he was tough to engage. Although we built a reasonable therapeutic relationship, this did not lead him to disclose his interests to us.

In the Care Programme Approach meeting, we asked his relatives what he enjoyed in the past and his mum told us about his previous interest in birds. This opened up a new topic of conversation and we found out that he was highly knowledgeable.

Staff then invested time in finding out about falconry and bought a bird that matched his preference. Whilst we wrote a risk assessment and care plan for this project, it was largely a matter of guesswork for the staff!

The positive role and responsibility to care for the bird gave him a purpose and significantly improved his motivation to get up in the morning and engage in activities through the day. It gave him a topic of conversation and he began to initiate contacts with staff. It also showcased his expertise and led to his wider involvement in the community, including with the local church. We made contact with a local member of the public who kept birds of prey and the two men built a relationship through caring for the Red Kite.

Even better next time?

We asked family members to help us understand the man's interests and areas of expertise, and believed what they told us. When the interest was identified, it was taken seriously and literally rather than dismissed or cut down to a lesser and safer expression of the interest - we actually bought a bird rather than a bird book.

There was no precedent or risk assessment, but we went ahead anyway and bought the bird of prey he wanted, rather than a safer alternative, such as a canary. The manager supported and funded the construction of the aviary and the regular purchase of food, and senior staff showed interest and support.

We gave this work consistent priority in staff duties so that the resident had daily opportunities to spend time on his interest. However, we kept in mind that this was the resident's activity and not a staff activity, and resisted occasional attempts to transfer responsibility from the resident to the staff, such as when he temporarily lost interest.

Even when the bird escaped and was eventually found dead, we took the view that this was a normal risk and the man had prior experience of dealing with these aspects of keeping a pet and we did not wish to be overprotective.

* [NDTi](#) was commissioned to deliver a staff development programme promoting a more personalised and inclusive approach for those living and working in locked rehabilitation services in the English East Midlands. While the current inspection routine has a focus on risk prevention, our job is to focus on sharing positive practice and innovation. Peter Bates led the programme and wrote up these stories.

The Excellence Programme is for independent and voluntary sector providers of locked residential rehabilitation services for people with mental health issues or learning disabilities living in the East Midlands. It has delivered:

- *A series of seminars for key staff and people using services to promote a more personalised and inclusive approach*
- *A shared sense of what excellent services look like, captured in an [Excellence Framework](#) document.*
- *Learning exchange visits between members which lead to individual action plans for each service*
- *These stories that capture and share ideas for service improvement.*

These case studies have arisen from members of the Excellence programme and NDTi has not independently verified what we have been told. Some are radical and ambitious approaches that transform the whole service, while others consist of small steps that may not seem especially exciting to other readers, but make a difference to one person. Some readers might even question whether progress is being made at all! The overall purpose is to stimulate reflection and celebration for every step forward, whether large or small.