

# **Mel Jones**

## **Moving On**

### **Hints, tips and strategies**



# **Moving on from secure accommodation is a big deal for all young people**

No matter how hard young people have worked to address their high risk behaviours it is a big step to go back into the community full time.

With this in mind we have put together some thoughts, hints, strategies and tips based on our experience of working with Mel. We hope that this will help all professionals to make Mel's first few weeks especially and subsequent placement at Brownley Lodge as successful as possible.

# Hints, tips and strategies.....

## Mel's short, medium and long term goals

### Short term:

- Take ADHD meds daily without fail.
- Behave well enough to be able to stay on his motor mechanics course at college i.e. not get into petty arguing with the instructors and other students.
- Attend college every day required – at the moment - Thursdays at Fridays so Mel can do well on his course and get his bursary.
- Keep up with college work every day.
- Take care of personal possessions especially lap top.
- Attend guitar lessons.
- Communicate feelings and frustrations to staff without the discussion getting into threats or aggressive behaviour.
- Continue to manage money well.
- Shop well and eat well.
- Look after personal hygiene and do laundry, keep flat tidy and clean.
- No involvement with substance misuse including alcohol and cannabis.
- Go to all ISS appointments on time.
- Be home on time for curfew.

### Medium term:

- Grow a new set of mates at college or in the community who are not into substance misuse and/or crime.
- Develop his conversational skills beyond talking about himself i.e. take an interest in other people's lives.
- Develop a non-reliant relationship with Dad.
- Develop leisure interests that are healthy eg. free running, guitar and do them often.
- Complete ISS.
- Pass college assessments on mechanics course.
- Utilise EHC Plan and Dyslexia Assessment to get examination special arrangements.
- Get a part time job in mechanics on the weekend or early evening.

## **Long term:**

- Complete and pass college course in mechanics June 2017 and get an apprenticeship in mechanics to start July 2017.

Support Mel with these goals, celebrate when they are achieved - this all helps to keep positive energy going on. If things go off track remind him what he is trying to achieve and work out how to get back on track. Keep it positive and motivational.

There will be lots of things to argue about anyway! Having goals gives a focus for direction and a reason for structures and boundaries – and of course a good excuse for a celebration and a “well done.”

## **Structure and boundaries**

Secure accommodation is chock a block full of structures and boundaries so it is important to release them gradually in the community otherwise freedoms can be overwhelming. Therefore make his daily structures, expectations and boundaries clear and stick to them – make sure everyone is consistent in the staff group. Write these down, give them to him - Mel prefers this, he will tell you if you are not being consistent – be prepared to apologise!

## **Family**

Dave - Dad, Dave's partner and his half-brother Tom (1 year old), paternal grandma Betty are Mel's only family. Mum has had no contact with Mel since he was 12 years old, he doesn't know where she is living.

Dave and gran Betty are sometimes unable to do what they say they are going to do for and with Mel – this has a huge impact on him. He wants more from their relationship than they can currently give him - even though they really do care for him his expectations can be unrealistic – he sets himself up for a fall. When he is let down Mel can get disillusioned, argumentative and impossible to please because he is hurt. If this happens then try to support Dave and Betty to not let Mel down, to apologise and to keep up regular contact. Positive peer support and staff time to empathise all helps. Ultimately, Mel needs to develop the resilience and understanding to cope with the realities of his family situation – this is not easy at all. Keep positive with Mel, see beyond his presenting behaviour when he is upset and talk up the positive.

## Interactions with staff and peers – Behaviour - Top Tips

- If staff have said they will do something then Mel expects you will do it.
- Treat Mel in a mature manner.
- Give Mel time to think when you need to tell him something and come back later to discuss – let it sink in.
- Take people away that Mel might be angry with and give him a fresh person to speak to who is neutral.
- Support black staff when they are the ones who challenge Mel directly as he can be racially abusive when angry. Mel will feel bad afterwards and will want to apologise.
- Mel wants to feel empathy in different situations with staff, peers and his family. The problem is he knows practically what to do but he doesn't "feel it" inside.
- Mel gets wound up if peers are treated differently or more favourably – he has a strong sense of fairness.
- Peers who are immature and with over-bearing behaviour will annoy Mel, he needs to be able to move away.
- Mel has leadership skills, use these skills to coach other peers particularly in physical activities and with verbal coaching – this is really good for his self-esteem.
- Mel struggles to accept advice from adults – Mel knows best! This is improving but discussion is the best way through this – it can take a while.....be patient - Mel generally only accepts advice if he thinks it is to his benefit.
- Other young people and staff can get fed up with Mel when he is in a moaning, going on and on and negative mood, give them a break and move people around. If not, then this can lead to Mel feeling rejected if people tell him they are fed-up with him and have had enough. Mel needs time to off-load but this may need a tag team approach in order to keep everyone positive and maintain good relationships.
- Mel can be stubborn! Do not get into long arguments – say what needs to be said and move on to something else if possible. Try and end every point on a positive.

## **Self-harm**

Mel is more likely to self-harm when:

- No or few family visits happen
- Family has let him down
- Family row
- He feels “there is just no point” – despondent
- A mate lets him down
- He gets involved with a girl who lets him down
- He likes girl who doesn't like him back
- If he thinks he has blown something important and let himself down – no way back

Mel prefers to self-harm by cutting arms and by making so called “home-made tattoos” or “scarification.” Staff need to keep an eye out for this and watch out for him picking at scabs that could then become infected. If Mel is self-harming just talk to him, keep him positive and give him lots of 1:1 time – this is attention needing behaviour, if he is getting enough of the right support and attention he will not be self-harming.

## **Use of leisure time**

Mel likes physical activities which are non-competitive: – free running, trampolining, skater activities, bmx-ing, outdoor pursuits, canoeing, walking. He is not interested in team games and football. Mel is a good chess player and guitarist/singer. He enjoys drama – improvising in particular and is very good at this. He likes gaming and all manner of geeky things. He is an intelligent guy who loves factual TV programmes about even the most obscure and complex of things happening in the world – he likes to talk about this stuff too.

Mel needs to keep busy and although he says he wants to be on his own mostly he does not – he wants supportive adult company to take part in the activities above.

## **Special needs and emotional difficulties – understanding Mel**

Mel experiences complex, severe and long term special educational needs. These must be seen in the context of his very traumatic and abusive care history. Early records within social care indicate that the first referral relating to his family was when Mel was just 2 months old relating to neglect and

physical abuse within his family, both parents being drug users. It is estimated that Mel moved house over 16 times, experienced consistent poor care and neglect and had very little if any stability during his early childhood and adolescent years.

### **Mel's special educational needs are best described as follows:**

Mel is now assessed as having **dyslexia and dyspraxia**.

#### **Dyspraxia and Dyslexia Issues:**

- × Self-care such as shaving
  - × Eating with a knife and fork/spoon
  - × Having hobbies that require coordination
  - × Writing neatly when there is a need to write fast
  - × Sometimes reading his own writing
  - × Copying information accurately
  - × His organisational skills are poor in terms of finding things and tidying
  - × He has problems finding his way around new buildings and places
  - × Others have called him disorganised
  - × He struggles to sit still
  - × He is clumsy and drops things
  - × He is slow in the morning
  - × Other people find his writing difficult to read
  - × When he chooses a sport it is more likely to be on his own: e.g. the gym
  - × Sometimes Mel has problems preparing a meal from scratch
  - × He struggles to fold clothes
  - × He has difficulty managing money sometimes
  - × He has problems multi-tasking
  - × Mel can experience difficulties estimating distances.
  - × He has problems planning ahead
  - × In certain situations he loses concentration
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- His fine motor control skills are weak and his writing is difficult to read, with at least 33% of his words being illegible in the free writing piece. This may also be due to dyspraxia but the fact that the tendons in his wrist were cut about four years ago may have contributed to his difficulty. He will benefit from using a word processor.
  - Mel's expressive language skills are weak and this will adversely affect his ability to express his thoughts in words, which will be a source of frustration for him.
  - His slow speed of recall of information from his long-term memory indicates that it will take him longer than his peers to complete some tasks.
  - Mel's pace of visual information processing is well below average. This will adversely affect his ability to read written information at speed. The results provide evidence for the need for extra time in examinations.

- Visual stress needing to use a blue screen to read black text on white paper or have his work printed on light blue paper.
- Attainments significantly below his chronological age and below his level of ability.

### **Emotional Issues:**

- Attachment difficulties, low mood and anxiety resulting from consistently poor care which have led to high risk, sometimes violent behaviours and a reduced ability to understand and acknowledge the needs and wishes of others.
- Underdeveloped emotional responses as a result of his attachment difficulties resulting from poor care, which mean that he struggles to process his feelings in a way commensurate with his chronological age.
- Very low level empathic responses where Mel struggles to acknowledge or care about in any meaningful way the impact of his behaviour on others.
- Angry, sometimes unpredictable and sometimes violent responses when he has reached his personal limit in terms of tolerating what he perceives to be irritating behaviours from other young people
- Attainments significantly below his chronological age and below his level of ability as illustrated below:

### **Mel has many, many strengths**

- His underlying ability is within the range normally expected for his age even though he has missed loads of school– he is a clever guy!
- His receptive (listening) language skills are commensurate with his age.
- His phonological awareness skills (reading) are high average.
- Mel's reading of single words and spelling is mid average
- His ability to comprehend sentences and what he is told is also in the mid average range.
- Mel enjoys writing poetry and working with words and has excellent creative writing skills.
- Mel can successfully use memory strategies to strengthen his short-term phonological and working memory skills
- Mel writes at a speed of 25wpm, which is commensurate with his age but his handwriting is hard to read due to dyspraxia so he should use his lap top where possible.
- Mel enjoys many non-competitive sports especially trampolining where he is good enough to coach others.
- Mel enjoys learning to play the guitar, he is good now and enjoys singing too.
- Mel is great at drama especially improvisation.
- Mel is a hard worker who wants to do well.
- Mel is loyal and fun to be with.

**Never be afraid to ring up for a chat to talk things through. We will not have all the answers but we will do our best to help in any way possible. Clayfields House 0115-917-0010**