

Kevin*

Kevin had heard about the Choices Project in Leeds through a friend. He was keen to turn over a new leaf and find a job after being released from his latest sentence in a young offender institution. However, his criminal convictions were holding him back as he had faced multiple rejections from employers and never been invited for an interview. When he came into contact with Choices, his self-esteem and confidence levels were very low and we had concerns over the risk of him re-offending unless we acted fast.

Our caseworker Gillian met with Kevin to discuss his situation and longer term ambitions. He was eager to find work but felt he would never get a job with a criminal record. Gillian helped him develop a CV and gain some interview skills – things he had never received help with before. Despite this, his lack of confidence was still holding him back.

An opportunity arose for Kevin to participate in a sailing challenge off the south coast with a group of young people in similar situations to his. Kevin seized this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and attended all the required training beforehand. This included conflict resolution, team building, health eating/ food hygiene and first aid. Kevin's confidence grew as a result of the training and he started to come out of his shell.

Once on board, he was an exceptional crew member. This was a tough challenge where the young team were expected to learn how to sail and navigate the vessel, cook for each other and learn and practice first aid. Kevin volunteered to take on additional duties after some of his crew mates suffered sea sickness.

The experience spurred him on and Kevin threw himself into looking for work after the challenge. Within three weeks he had secured a job in a warehouse and, ten months down the line, he was given extra responsibilities and a salary increase. It is the longest time Kevin has been out of prison and he is described as 'an exemplary employee' by his new employer.

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