

## OAK GROVE FOODBANK EXPERIENCE



\*names changed

## Ellie and Toby's Experience

**Ellie and Toby\***, a **bright** and **determined** couple, met Bianca, Your Own Place Facilitator, at Oak Grove food bank in July 2024. They were reaching out for support after both experiencing redundancy and were concerned they would lose their home. They had struggled with their Universal Credit application and were finding it difficult to secure new employment. In their initial meeting they discussed their financial situation and **agreed on an action plan**. Bianca **referred them to Citizens Advice (CA)** for assistance with their Universal Credit claim and to **Seetec** and **Shawtrust for job-search support**. Bianca also supported them in looking up how to make a referral to **Change, Grow, Live** as they shared they felt the amount they were spending on substances was not sustainable nor the lifestyle they wanted anymore.

### August 2024

Ellie and Toby\* met Bianca for a follow-up 2-2-1 session to explore a budget sheet. This supported them both to identify **changes they could make to their finances, in the short term, while looking for work**. From that session they agreed to track their income and specific outgoings with the goal to write a more accurate budget plan. Finally they worked with Bianca to **identify their motivation for change** to help them stay focused. They said they would drop in at Oak Grove if they needed further support. A few weeks later they came to see Bianca at Oak Grove and shared that they **needed support to complete a self referral** to Change, Grow, Live. Bianca completed the form with them online.

### September 2024

Ellie and Toby\* came to see Bianca at Oak Grove (not for a food parcel but to access the support) to review their budgeting plan. They shared that the physical budget sheet wasn't work, so together they explored alternative methods and drafted up a budget spreadsheet they could trial instead. They also shared the progress they had made in reducing their spending on substances and Bianca was able to reflect back to them the progress they had made so far to recognise their achievements. Ellie shared how valuable this was as they **"don't hear it much as not many people really know about it."** This led to a discussion around motivations and how Ellie and Toby could write them down to help remind them of what they want to achieve.

### October 2024

**Ellie and Toby\*** came to see Bianca at Oak Grove (not to collect a food parcel, but for the support available) to show her the **in-depth budget spreadsheet they had created** and share the news that they had both gained full-time employment.

## OAK GROVE FOODBANK EXPERIENCE CONTINUED



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### Ellie and Toby's Experience

Their move into work meant they wanted to review their budget to reflect their new income and long-term plan. We used their budget spreadsheet to look at what would happen if they maintained their identified changes (cutting back on vaping and weekend spending) for the next six months. They also identified how much money they could save as they continue to lower their use of substances. They discussed how they would want to use that money on more activities together as a couple instead. They **reported feeling more hopeful** by the result. Ellie commented **"our mindset has finally started to change on the choices and what we really, really want to be doing"** and **"seeing it on the screen makes it feels really possible"**. Ellie shared they were now engaging fully with Change, Grow, Live and were making progress on their goals to reduce substance use.

### February 2025

Ellie and Toby\* came to see Bianca at Oak Grove to share their progress with her. They shared how they had significantly reduced their spending on substance and **are now spending less than half than when we first met**. They have been using the budget spreadsheet they created to stay focused and on track. They have also cut back on vaping (something they originally felt would not be manageable), and **their jobs are being sustained steadily**. Ellie even felt able to **share with her employer** that they are engaging with Change Grow Live. Her employer has now provided extra support for them both and **Ellie feels more secure within her role**. Additionally, Ellie and Toby been using the goals they discussed via Bianca's use of coaching and motivational interviewing techniques to keep themselves motivated.

During this visit the couple were collecting a food parcel due to Toby's employer not providing full pay. However, they are hopeful that this will be the last one, now that they have **a steady income and a clearer idea of what to expect going forward**. The smile on their faces as they recapped how far they've come was truly heartwarming. Each time Bianca sees them they have taken on further responsibility for their changes.

Ellie and Toby\* reported due to their meetings with Your Own Place they:



have increased confidence getting help



have increased knowledge of how to manage their bills



have increased knowledge of how to manage their money