



# **Me and My Learning**

## ***A Significant Cultural Change***



### Dale's story:

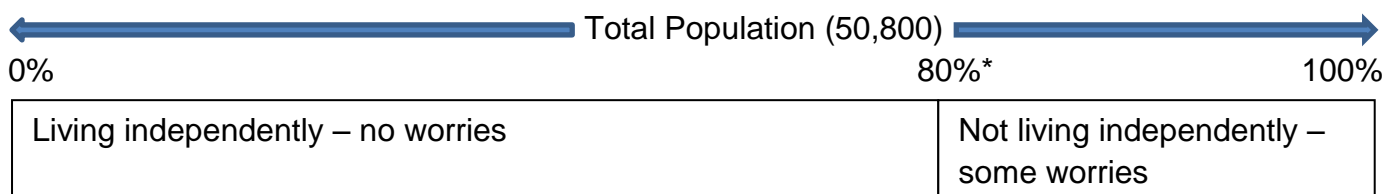
Dale is 47 years old. He lives alone and has not worked for 22 years. After losing his job he began drinking heavily and his health suffered. Over the years he attended several government work initiatives but none were successful. Following a move from JSA to ESA he was referred to Working Links by Jobcentre Plus. Working Links, a partner in Me and My Learning referred Dale into the M&ML programme. They worked with a drug and alcohol service, a volunteering service and a mental health service. Working together these providers have now moved Dale to a position where he is significantly happier, healthier, sober, volunteering and actively seeking employment.

See supporting documents for Dale's full story.

## Context

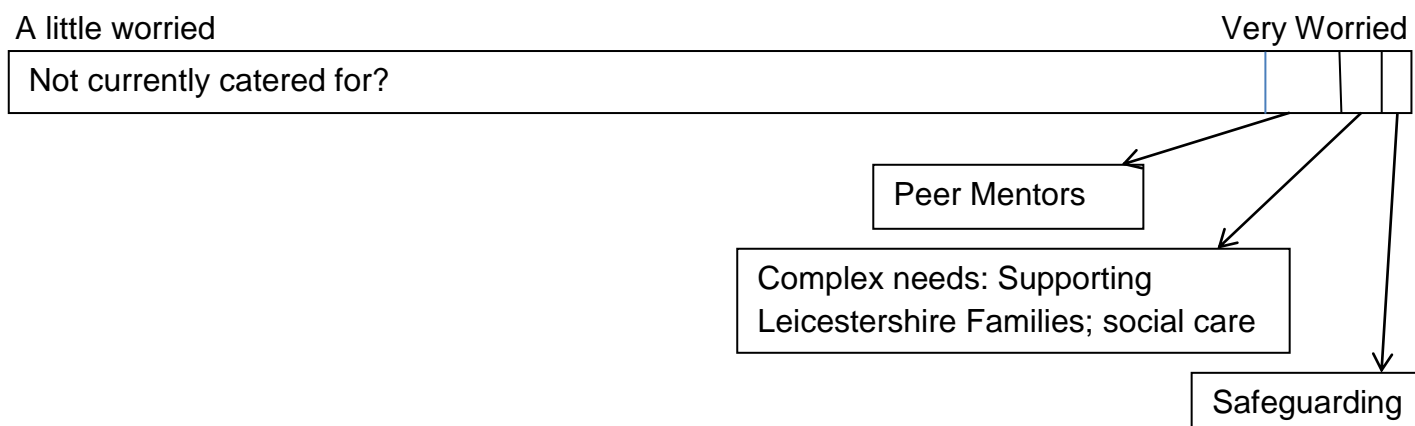
Melton is one of the smallest Borough Councils in the country with a population of 50,800. It is a predominantly rural area based around the market town of Melton Mowbray. Although Melton has low levels of unemployment at 1.0%<sup>1</sup> of the working age population and lower than the national average numbers of Employment and Support Allowance recipients<sup>2</sup> there are pockets of significant deprivation.

Whilst the majority of Melton's population manage their lives well, with little call on public services, there is a proportion that, to varying levels, are unable to do this – the people we worry about



(\*assumption based on local knowledge)

The people we worry about cover a broad spectrum from those we are a bit worried about to those that we are seriously worried about. Those with the most severe issues are generally catered for by the statutory services (safeguarding, social care etc). However, this leaves a large number of people (around 9,700 in Melton) who have issues that would benefit from some support. Me and My Learning provides this support which prevents people slipping to the right in the diagram below and increasingly moves people into the living independently group above.



<sup>1</sup> ONS Claimant count November 2014

<sup>2</sup> Melton 3.2% of population aged 16-64, Great Britain 6.2% - DWP May 2014

## **Background**

Melton is transforming the way it delivers its services. Me and My Learning represents the latest, significant, step on a journey that began a number of years ago with a move away from silo discipline based services to a people focused approach. These changes have been underpinned by increasing the number of co-located services within the main council offices. These now include (amongst others) Jobcentre Plus, Citizens Advice Bureau, Probation Services, Adult social Services and Supporting Leicestershire Families (the local Troubled Families programme).

In 2012 Melton was selected as a Universal Credit pilot site which prompted greater focus on working age customers. At the same time Melton began running a small-scale Employment and Skills programme supporting people furthest from the labour market.

In late 2013 the opportunity to bid for European Social Fund support provided the ideal opportunity to bring together all of the work to date into a single co-ordinated programme. A successful bid enabled this to happen and led to the introduction of Me and My Learning from April 2014.

### **Me and My Learning:**

Me and My Learning (M&ML) represents a significant cultural change. It represents an ethos, an approach. M&ML:

- supports people to become digitally, financially and socially independent
- will, wherever possible, help people to move into sustainable employment
- uses a triage/assessment process to identify the barriers individuals face in becoming digitally, financially and socially independent
- provides an individual, agreed, holistic and co-ordinated journey to independence
- brings partner organisations together under a single co-ordinated “umbrella”
- features local community involvement and ownership

The M&ML approach aims to transform the way in which support services are provided, particularly to people who face multiple barriers. By doing this M&ML will increase people’s ability to live independently (and so reduce their demands on public services) including, where possible, securing and maintaining sustainable employment.

Previously the barriers to independent living that people, often those furthest from the labour market, faced were addressed in a piecemeal and uncoordinated manner. Dealing with barriers in this way runs the very real risk that some are not addressed, which in turn reduces the chance of achieving an overall positive outcome (e.g. a move into sustainable work). Such an approach will inevitably end up costing more, for example through ineffective service delivery and the need to repeat interventions.

The M&ML approach sees an end to inefficient and ineffective silo-based service provision. It enables people facing multiple barriers to work with a range of service providers in a managed and co-ordinated way. This ensures that service providers complement one another and achieve maximum impact from their intervention. This results in people being more able to live independently, with less demand on public services, and, importantly, where possible move into sustainable employment.

M&ML provides a coordinated approach to the delivery of support services. It begins with an initial triage which is carried out when an individual presents, for any reason, at the Council or with one of the partner organisations – for example Jobcentre Plus. If, during that initial conversation, it is identified that there may be additional needs this is followed by a detailed needs assessment during which an individual personalised programme is agreed.

This identifies the barriers the individual faces, the interventions needed to address those barriers and the service providers who will help to do this. The approach focuses on employment being a key enabler in achieving and supporting independent living. Peer Mentors work with individuals on a 1:1 basis helping them to progress through their agreed programme.

Referrals are made to a wide range of partner organisations (for example, Clockwise credit union, CAN drug and alcohol support, Voluntary Action Leicestershire, Loughborough College – see supporting documentation for a full list of partner organisations) that operate within the M&ML umbrella.

A key element of M&ML is that partner organisations are able to refer participants to other providers if, in the course of their intervention they identify additional issues that need addressing for example, Remploy whilst working with a disabled client identified that the individual may have had an alcohol problem. Remploy were able to directly refer the person to a worker from CAN Drug and Alcohol support.

M&ML learning operates through a hub location which brings partners together. This encourages the sharing of knowledge and learning between partners and develops close links that allow partners to cross-refer clients ensuring that all their needs are met.

From the outset M&ML has adopted a pro-active approach to information sharing between partners – not allowing what can often appear to be constraints around data sharing to hinder the delivery of services.

Sarah's story:

Although Sarah was looking for work she had very low confidence and self-esteem which meant that she hadn't had any job offers.

Sarah was referred to Me and My Learning by her Jobcentre Work Coach.

Working with a Family Support worker and a mental health advisor Sarah also attended group sessions and one-to-one sessions.

Through the support provided by M&ML Sarah regained her confidence and is now working.

See supporting documents for Sarah's full story

## Is it working?

M&ML has been fully operational since June 2014 and as at the end of March 2015 had achieved the following:

- 790 referrals (526 individuals as some people have been referred more than once)
- 362 people accessing services
- 125 people accessing more than one service with 19 accessing four or more services
- 53 people moved into work
- 6 people have taken up a full time college course
- 1 accepted for University and will be starting in October 2015
- 20 people have obtained BTEC level 1 workskills
- 20 people have secured a Construction Skills Card

Recognising that many of the people supported by M&ML face multiple barriers and are furthest from the labour market this represents significant and on-going success.

As well as making a significant difference for the citizens of Melton the M&ML approach also supports a range of wider initiatives, for example Universal Credit and in particular Universal Support – delivered locally, the Social Justice Strategy, the Child Poverty Strategy and the Government's drive for digitalisation.

Paul – a Me and My Learning service user

Paul describes the service he has received as 'outstanding'.

Paul says "I can't praise M&ML enough. It's having all the services under one roof but it isn't just about that, it's about the people. I know I can come here to see my CAN [drug and alcohol services] worker and if she isn't available then there is always someone else to talk too. I feel at home here".

When asked how his view of the future has changed since engaging with the project, Paul responds "it's changed massively. I finally believe that I can do something and achieve something in the field I now want to work in".

See supporting documents for Paul's full story.

## Next steps

Melton's intention from the outset has been that the M&ML approach should become the way in which everyone in Melton is dealt with – “the way we do things around here”. Consequently we have set in train a phased approach that will take us from this year's successful implementation to self-sustaining business as usual.

Supporting this phased approach Melton has secured Transformation Challenge Award funding for 2015-16. This will allow the continued development of M&ML but, perhaps more significantly, will see the extension of the approach into a neighbouring authority – Blaby District Council. Blaby is a significantly larger borough than Melton (around 95,100 residents) and primarily urban. It represents an ideal opportunity to further develop the approach in a different local environment.

As well as extending the approach into Blaby we are also exploring extending the approach to other local authorities across Leicestershire.

As part of the process of developing M&ML, Melton is looking to develop further the early intervention and prevention approach that has been successfully started through the tenancy support activity that is now taking place.

You can follow what we're doing on:



@meandmylearning



Me and My Learning

## **Supporting documentation**

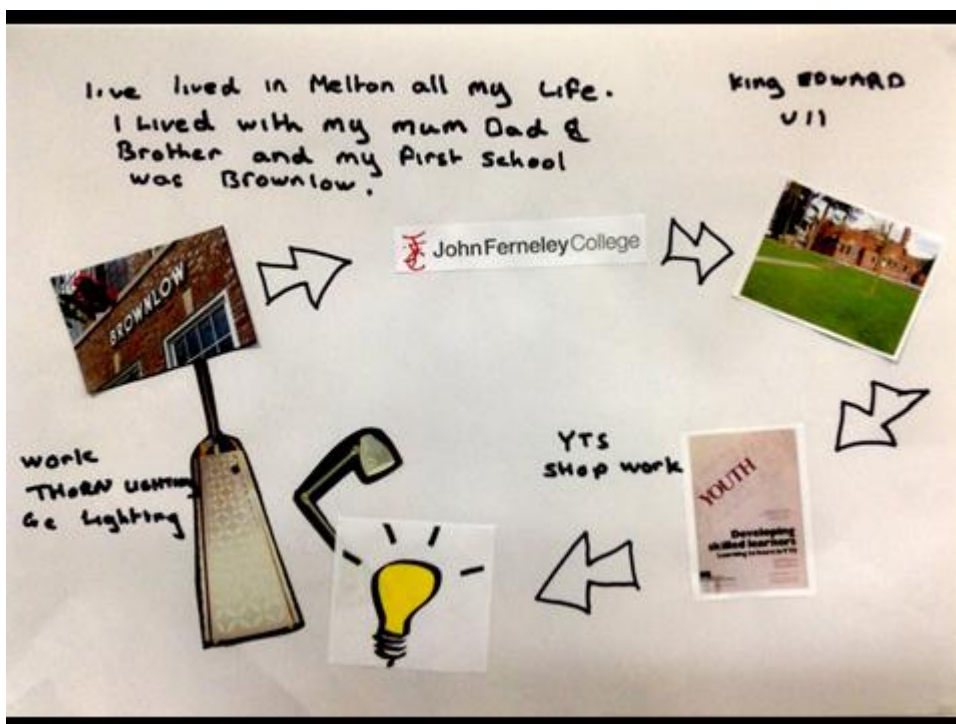


This is Dale.

Dale is 47 years old

He is single, does not have children and lives alone in a council rented flat.

Dale has been out of work for 22 years



Dale has lived in Melton all his life, originally with his Mum, Dad & Brother.

He went to school in Melton and attended the governments YTS Scheme and then moved in to his first full time employment.

He loved this job, he made new friends, he felt valued, he felt like he had a future.

9.5 years later, at the age of 25, Dale was made redundant.....



Dale had a few (in his words) failed relationships, this along with the redundancy from a job he enjoyed made him feel useless and alone. He was in a situation which he felt like he couldn't control.

He started to drink heavily to cope with the way he was feeling.

He went to the Job centre to make a claim for benefits, but he was struggling emotionally.

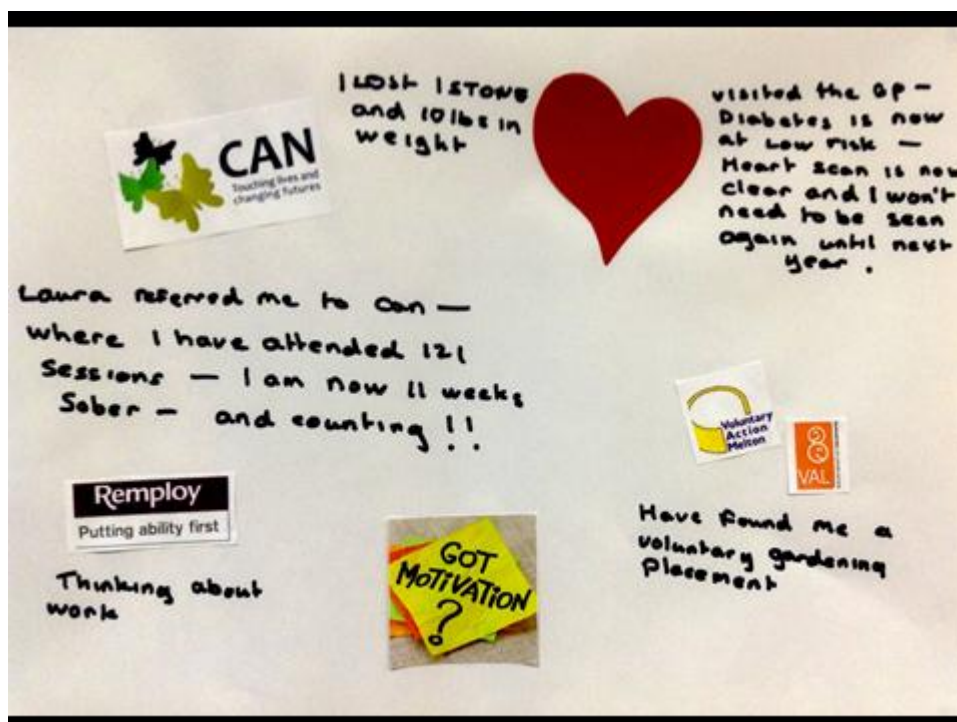
He was referred to the New Deal programme, which he attended but didn't find work, he was referred to Flexible New Deal, which he attended but didn't find work.

He started to feel unwell during this period, he was out of breath, sweating and felt like he was having heart palpitations. He went to the GP who told him that there was a problem with a valve in his heart, his drinking had affected this and stress was also a factor. He was also told that due to his drinking he was at high risk of diabetes.

He was then referred to The Work Programme which he attended but didn't find work; he went back to JCP as a work programme returner, changed his benefit to ESA and was referred by the Jobcentre to me.

The first time I met Dale I could tell he was nervous, he was withdrawn, he wasn't very confident. He was sweating and looked unwell. I explained about Me & My Learning Hub, the services that he would have access to and we booked our next appointment to be at the Hub.

During our next appointment I assessed Dale, we talked about family, health, hopes for the future and Dale disclosed to me that he had been drinking heavily since he was 25 years old, that he felt guilty, ashamed, and very low and he wanted someone to help him.



I referred Dale to CAN Partnership for support with his alcohol dependence. My-self and CAN agreed that making a referral to Voluntary Action Melton would be beneficial not only to get him in to a routine and give him some confidence but also so he could make new friends who were not alcohol dependant. We also made a referral to Remploi for Mental Health support.

What are the results? well Dale has been sober for 20 weeks and counting!! Dale has lost nearly two stone in weight, at his last appointment at the GP his heart scan was clear, no issues and this is due to the fact he is sober, he is now low risk for diabetes.



# Working Links ESF Family Support Case Study

Family Consultant – Laura Swift

Referring Organisation – Melton Mowbray Jobcentre Plus

Customers name has been changed to protect the identity

**Customer background:** Sarah was referred to me via Jobcentre Plus as she was in receipt of JSA, her job search was good, and she had had a couple of Job interviews but hadn't received any job offers yet.

Sarah's Jobcentre Work Coach contacted me directly to explain that Sarah presented as having low confidence and self-esteem and they felt this may be impacting on her Job search.

The first thing that I noticed about Sarah was that she was very nervous, she struggled to make eye contact with me, and she looked very emotional.

Sarah had a back problem which she was still in recovery for, this resulted in her being managed out of her last role, on health grounds, by her previous employer. As a result Sarah felt let down by her employer and colleagues; she felt worthless and thought if her previous employer didn't want her then why would anyone else. This mind-set was having a negative effect on Sarah's health, on job applications and job interviews.

## **How we helped the customer:**

I knew that Sarah had very low confidence and self-esteem; she had trust issues from her previous experience and she needed support to build her confidence and regain her self-worth.

- I advised Sarah that I would always be her Advisor through the process, I discussed Remploy's community mental health contract within Me & My Learning, we met with the Advisor who discussed how they could support her to become more confident generally, but also for interviews.

- I referred Sarah to Remploy and she had an appointment a week later, her Advisor assessed the support that Sarah would need and they agreed that Sarah would attend 1-2-1 support sessions, support sessions with both the Remploy Advisor and myself and group confidence and self-esteem sessions.

- Sarah attended 3 group sessions, 2 sessions with the Remploy Advisor and myself present, 3 1-2-1 sessions and received continued support from me.

## **Results & what's next?**

Sarah has gained so much more confidence since our first appointment, and she now has a job. She came to visit us just before she was due to start work to thank us for all our help and support. She explained that before she came to see us at Me & My Learning she thought her situation was hopeless, her confidence had taken a real knock and she wasn't sure how to get it back. We advised we will continue to support her whilst she is in work, and wish her every success in the future.

## CASE STUDY (November 2014)

Paul began using cannabis age 14. He was hanging around with older lads and wanted to fit in. By age 15 he was using cannabis and amphetamine; by 16 ecstasy use had begun and Paul was also committing petty crime in the form of theft from vehicles and shoplifting. Mental health issues had started to present and he was first prescribed anti-depressants at this time.

Age 17 or so Paul began to drink alcohol regularly and by his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday he has drinking heavily and had added cocaine to his regular drug cocktail. By 21 it is said he was a notorious drug dealer and criminal suspected of burglaries, industrial theft and a number of violent offences. He was 'a face' in his old town: people would go out of their way to be seen with him and nightclub owner would rope off areas for him and his friends. He was also by this time in a relationship and a young father responsible for 5 children. At this age, the age of 21 Paul described hitting his first 'rock bottom' and he made an attempt on his life that medics stated he was lucky to have survived

Somehow he dusted himself off from this, was sent to an alcohol worker, filled in a drinks diary for a session or 2 and then carried on with his substance misusing and criminal lifestyle with a new addition to the party in the form of crack cocaine.

Age 22, Paul's relationships became untenable. He and his then partner had a chaotic lifestyle and the children regularly witnessed Police raids and 'daddy' running in and out of the house with a crow bar. He moved out but the 2 adults kept trying to rekindle their relationship for about 3 years until in 2005, age 25 through what he describes as 'massive drug and alcohol use' Paul fell out with a number of people and moved to Melton Mowbray to change his life.

Paul's criminal lifestyle certainly changed and he held down regular employment from 2005 until 2013. His substance misusing lifestyle continued.

For 2 years after moving here Paul describes 'keeping a lid on it' in terms of his drug use and alcohol use. By his own admission however the alcohol use increased and the drug use followed. By 2012 whilst he was living with a new partner and her child he was 100% back to old drinking and drug using ways.

July 2013 Paul hit another 'rock bottom' and to use his own words he 'broke down, smashed up his whole house and then began to cry'. Paul was signed off by his doctor and has not worked since. He was referred in to drug and alcohol treatment and has been abstinent from alcohol and class A drugs since August 2013.

When I (his drug and alcohol worker) met Paul almost exactly 1 year later practically his first words to me were "I just want to say fxxk it to my recovery and have a drink'. He didn't do that and was subsequently able to be interviewed about his Me and My Learning journey.

In summary, Paul began using Me and My Learning when he visited the Council July 2014 to discuss a discretionary housing benefit issue. He met with a peer mentor who triaged him and referred him on to CAN

CAN is a service to support those with drug and alcohol issues. Paul accesses CAN for 1:1 support and also attends the Recovery group every Thursday. The focus of the work has been on reducing cannabis use and remaining abstinent from class A drugs and alcohol. This has included

work on self-esteem/ high risk situations, mood management and challenging unhelpful thinking. He has also been involved with drug and alcohol awareness sessions run at Me and My Learning and recently told his story at a princes' trust group.

Paul was referred by CAN to VAL to consider voluntary work to fill his time and act as a distraction. Initially he was unsure that anything suitable could be found for him. There was! He did a few sessions volunteering for a local youth group and is now a regular volunteer for The Hub, a project that works with young people outside of mainstream education and has just started delivering a drug awareness qualification on a one to one basis with young offenders

Paul was also referred to Remploy, a service that provides support for his mental health issues and employability. He has attended two different group work sessions, updated his CV to include his recent achievements and been supported to apply for and then attend 2 job interviews for part time work, one with the Prince's trust. This is looking hopeful.

He is currently alcohol and drug free, engaging in voluntary work and actively seeking employment. He continues to access all the services as described above.

He describes the service he has received as 'outstanding'. Paul says "I can't praise Me and My Learning enough. It's having all the services under one roof but it isn't just about that, it's about the people. I know I can come here to see my CAN worker and if she isn't available then there is always someone else to talk too. I feel at home here". When asked how his view of the future has changed since engaging with the project, Paul responds "it's changed massively. I finally believe that I can do something and achieve something in the field I now want to work in".

We wish Paul all the very best for his future.

## Me and My Learning Partner Organisations

Organisation	What they offer
CAN	Drug and alcohol charity supporting people to gain recovery from drug and alcohol issues
Clockwise	Not-for-profit community bank providing a broad range of services including savings and current accounts, jam jar budget accounts and loans
EYS	Courses on construction and for the care sector
Housing Options team	Work closely with residents facing potential homelessness
Learn Direct	Skills, training and employment services
Leicestershire Adult Learning Service	Help with upgrading ICT skills, English and maths skills and help with CV writing
Let's Talk Wellbeing	Psychological assessment and treatment for mild to moderate common mental health problems
Loughborough College	Digital life skills programme
Melton Learning Hub	Work with challenging young people aged up to 25 years to improve their life chances and help them to lead productive lives, contributing to their local community
Money Advice Service	Providing financial and debt advice
Prospects	Information, advice and guidance on careers
QDOS	Maths and English functional skills
Remploy	Moving people with mental health problems and disabilities into sustainable employment
Voluntary Action Leicester	Getting people into volunteering
Women's Aid	Working with women who have experienced domestic abuse/violence
Working Links	Employment and skills support
Work Pays	CV completion, covering letters and making a positive impression at interviews