

Changing Lives at Andrew House

Andrew House is a residential community for men seeking recovery from trauma which has been run by the charity Changing Lives, since December 2022. Some of the men have experienced challenges such as drug and/or alcohol abuse, homelessness and mental health challenges, among other things. By offering residents a combination of volunteering opportunities, fitness activities, healthy eating advice, group work and counselling means that the men in the house are provided with a holistic support package to find freedom and wholeness.

The physical activity opportunities were delivered by Simon Flett from 3C Mentor Me. Simon himself is a fantastic advocate for the fitness sessions as he was in the same position as the current residents over a decade ago. After his time at Andrew House, Simon left and gained his qualifications which turned into becoming self-employed with the intention to use his passion for fitness and his community to support people's health and wellbeing.

Changing Lives utilised the funding to purchase some at-home gym equipment for residents to use in their own time as well as to pay for Simon's time to deliver sessions and teach correct techniques and progressions that can be applied independently. The sessions themselves are a mixture of circuit exercises and the incorporation of non-contact boxing with gloves and pads. The weekly sessions has allowed residents to embrace the culture of being active and reap the rewards of physical improvements, further social connections and improved mental wellbeing.

When speaking to the gents who were a part of the sessions, it really demonstrated the importance of physical activity that if offered as part of the support offer. Some of the residents' comments about the work that is done at Andrew House really shows that the wrap-around provision is pivotal to their personal journey and development.

- My diet has come along so much more. I used to buy chocolate and ice cream but now I'm eating more fruit, eating chicken. I had 96 cans of coke but I've moved them, I just want water now.
- I was feeling anxious but I wanted to take part. Slowly as the sessions are going on, it's getting easier and I'm finding my stamina and breathing is getting better.
- I find the sessions really beneficiary and not just for my physical health but my mental health as well. It's really done a lot for me when you walk out at the end and you get that feeling that you don't get from other things. The only other feel good factor I got was from using drugs but I don't want that anymore.
- I've been married and got kids and you know she's never had a husband and they haven't had their dad. Now they could do. They get to have the better individual that I've turned out to be without the use of drugs. I can live my life without drugs now. I never thought this life could be possible and it's all to do with Andrew House.

