



Cooper's story

Individual Placement Support | Case Study | Cooper, 18yrs

Cooper is 18 years old and was referred to the Accoras headspace Inala Individual Placement and Support (IPS) service. He was keen to commence studying and searching for employment, but was struggling with depression and extremely low self-worth.

At the time of intake, Cooper believed himself to be worthless and undeserving of a job, and was lacking in confidence and direction. He placed enormous pressure onto himself to get into university, find a job and establish a career, and was very hard on himself if he happened to make a mistake. His Vocational Specialist observed Cooper to be a kind and thoughtful person who always pushed himself to improve.

Cooper and his Vocational Specialist worked together to set a number of goals, including for Cooper to commence a Bachelor of Education, attain his provisional driver's licence, explore potential Centrelink payments, and obtain casual or part-time employment with a large retailer.

Cooper engaged with his Vocational Specialist approximately fortnightly over seven months, meeting at headspace Inala or out in the community. A number of therapeutic approaches were used to support Cooper towards achieving his goals, including motivational interviewing, practical skill-building and interpersonal communication development. Cooper was supported to renew his resume, create a cover letter, role-play interview skills and use digital technology to search and apply for roles. Cooper and his Vocational Specialist also visited retailers in person to hand in his resume and discuss potential opportunities. Initially, the Vocational Specialist led these conversations, but as Cooper's confidence grew, he was able to approach and engage with potential employers himself. Cooper's Vocational Specialist also supported him to visit his local Services Australia office to enquire about his options and eligibility for payments.

As Cooper worked with his Vocational Specialist, their work together focused on identifying the value and meaning of working toward his goals, and shifting his mindset from seeing challenges as a problem to viewing them as opportunities for growth and learning. This was a challenging skill for Cooper to learn, and he really struggled when he failed his first attempt at his driving test and was scolded by the instructor, resulting in a hospital visit after a suicide attempt. Cooper also withdrew from his university course after one week, with the support of his Vocational Specialist, as he felt it was unsafe for him to continue given his current mental health difficulties.

During this challenging time, the Vocational Specialist worked closely with Cooper's psychologist at headspace Inala to assess and manage his level of risk, including through safety planning with Cooper.

After this, Cooper and his Vocational Specialist primarily focused on searching for employment, until such time as Cooper felt ready to retake his driving test. About six weeks later, Cooper sat for his driving test again, with key support provided by his Vocational Specialist before the exam, and successfully obtained his provisional licence.



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Cooper continued to submit applications for retail roles, and was successful in being offered an interview with a large local store. His Vocational Specialist assisted Cooper in selecting appropriate interview clothing, and they worked together to prepare for the interview. One day after his interview, Cooper was informed that he was successful, and was offered a casual retail position.

Cooper's Vocational Specialist provided continued support to him as he commenced in his role, including to assist him to learn information about the store and its layout. Cooper has now been successfully working in his role for over a month and is continuing to grow in his confidence and self-respect. He reported being able to purchase his mother a birthday gift with his earnings, and was really proud of this achievement.

Reflecting on Cooper's journey to employment, his Vocational Specialist says "Cooper is starting to recognise his wins, and I constantly remind him of how far he has come in such a short amount of time. He is an extraordinarily brave young man – he never gives up on trying to better himself. I am so pleased that he was able to achieve his goals and is thriving in employment. Words cannot describe how pleased I am with the hope that headspace and IPS support has instilled within him for the future."

IPS is also known as headspace work & study Inala and the youth employment support service (YES).

For more information on IPS please visit:

<https://www.accoras.com.au>