

Overcoming adversity: Carla's story

Carla was no stranger to adversity. She was living with her partner and three children, but it was far from a picture-perfect home. Her partner John was violent towards her and both of them were using illegal drugs, including methamphetamines and heroin. She was struggling with life and her mental health was unstable.

Carla started to become violent towards others. She wanted to get better and was seeing a psychiatrist, but she wasn't taking her medication. She felt she couldn't keep living this way. When the Department Communities Child Safety and Disability Services were notified by police, due to domestic violence concerns, Carla was referred to the support she needed.

The Department, through the Family Support Alliance, made a referral to UnitingCare Community's Intensive Family Support Service – a service provided by the Helping Out Families program.

UnitingCare Community staff member, Trudy, worked with Carla and identified her strengths in her open communication, her awareness of her situation needing change, her love and commitment to her children and her willingness to accept help.

Although she had accessed help, Carla was still facing significant issues. She was living in public housing accommodation, however John's continuing violence and threats presented a need for her and her children to relocate. Additionally, her depression was impacting on her attachment with her youngest child Isabella, who was only three months old.

Her choice to engage with the Intensive Family Support service was consensual and she was open and honest about the difficulties facing her. She was determined to get better and do the best by her children.

Her case worker Trudy identified key actions that needed to occur for Carla to keep custody of her children and for the family to be safe, healthy and secure. Trudy was supporting Carla to obtain parenting orders, and referred Carla to the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, where she received specialist counselling and assistance to gain a Domestic Violence Order against John.

A referral to the Health Visiting Program provided baby Isabella with health checks and vaccinations. Trudy also connected Carla with other UnitingCare Community

services which provided her with the skills to run a home and stay on track including domestic, budgeting and parenting skills and behaviour management.

After 10 months, Carla had made considerable gains. She was continuing her counselling, kept regular appointments with her psychiatrist and remained on medication for her depression.

After hard work and the right support, Carla now feels she is in control of her life. Her parenting and budgeting skills have improved and she is now maintaining an appropriate home for herself and her children. She is enjoying her time with her children and is committed to stay on track.

*The names in this case study have been changed to protect the identity of the people involved

