

Case study: Dan

Dan, a young man in his early 30s, came to our course through a sheltered housing provider. He appears to have some learning difficulties and was really overweight. On his first lesson he told me that the only vegetable he'd ever bought was a potato! He said he and his family (parents and sister) eat nothing but ready meals and takeaways every day. Dan's father has severe social anxiety and won't leave the house so they tend to get takeaways delivered or get shopping in from Iceland.

After the first lesson, Dan bought a bag and went home and cooked the food for his family. They really loved it, and he was delighted that he'd been able to do it on his own. He said "I don't know what you're doing, but it's working!" – he'd never cooked before and despite having made some effort to go on cooking courses previously, had never put anything into practice after the lessons.

He came to all the lessons on the course and his enthusiasm grew and grew. He came along to a subsequent course 6 months later when I saw him again. He had really lost a lot of weight and I could see he was chopping with so much more confidence. He said that he cooks for his whole family at least twice a week now and actually cooked chickpeas the night before!

I really enjoyed working with Dan and it was so satisfying to see the progress he had made. I felt we really bonded and he had told me all about his challenges at home with his family so it was great to see they are all benefitting from his cooking.