

Ian's voyage

Ian Yearbory, Support Worker

Ian Yearbory is a seaman and chef turned support worker. It was the desire to do something meaningful for other people that saw him join Pathways' Christchurch team.

Ian started his career as a chef in the Royal New Zealand Navy where he worked for six years. His time with the Navy saw him travel around South East Asia onboard HMNZS Waikato, on a survey boat around Milford Sounds and spend time in East Timor onboard HMNZS Canterbury.

He left the Navy to cook for engineers at Christchurch International Airport, but the sea voyaging didn't stop there. During the next six years he was also involved in expeditions around New Zealand, the Ross Ice Shelf and the Kermadec Islands.

He describes his 12 years as a chef as an "awesome experience", but by the end he felt it was all very shallow. "I was sure I could help people more than just cooking them a feed, and then having them turn around and ask for the tomato sauce! I thought my purpose is more than this! Yep, I'm over this cooking buzz."

Ian first heard about Pathways several months later when a friend was explaining the role of a support worker. He felt a smile come across his face. "Yeah man, this spins my wheels. I like the sound of this." So, without a background of working in the mental health sector, he sent off his CV.

Ian joined the Christchurch team as part of Enhanced Community Support Services. The service provides intensive support to people with experience of mental illness in their own home, an alternative to living in staffed residential accommodation. He says the career change was a huge culture shock. "Swapping the ship's galley/shore establishment kitchens to working in an office, rocking around town seeing different people, learning about medications and medical jargon was huge and to be honest it took me the best part of a year to get my groove."

Ian explains that one of the challenges in those early days was working out how to judge job satisfaction. Talking to his colleagues he found they were hugely satisfied, yet for him he was only noticing small successes. After a time of working closely with the people using Pathways' services he found he built a strong rapport with them "Now I can see the good things and successes that happen in people's lives more readily and can enjoy them alongside the person."

Ian reckons his job is true love. "Being a support worker in my opinion is the bees knees, where what you do means something bigger than just yourself."