

Former Ruth House resident returns for student placement

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In an inspiring turn of events, a former resident of supported housing for teenage parents has returned to the service on a student placement - a decade after she first sought refuge there.



In 2013, Loren, a care leaver and survivor of domestic abuse, arrived at Sanctuary Supported Living's Ruth House in search of safety and security. Accompanied by her infant daughter, Loren was young, vulnerable, with no family in the area and in need of support.

Ten years later, Loren is back at the teenage parents supported housing service in Grays, as part of an elective placement for her university midwifery course. Drawing from her personal experience, she is working alongside Ruth House's health visitors, attending key working meetings, and providing a safe space for current residents to discuss their future plans.

As Christmas fast approaches, Loren also been actively involved in festive preparations. From organising Christmas Jumper Day, to collecting donations for toys and gifts – she's played a significant role in spreading some holiday cheer for those who need it most.

Reflecting on the pivotal role of supported housing in her journey, Loren said: "I was extremely fortunate to live at Ruth House many years ago and I'll never forget the incredible support of the team. When I first got there, I felt empty and just a shadow of my former self. I barely said a word to anyone. I just wanted to feel safe.

"With a little bit of time and patience, and a whole lot of care and compassion, staff helped me

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to rebuild my confidence, meet new people, and I felt part of a robust support system for the first time in my life. With renewed self-assurance and continued support, I took out an injunction against my abuser and looked forward to living independently.

“After I moved on from Ruth House and settled into my own property, I began to contemplate my future and my life’s aspirations. Having a child was the making of me, and the idea of helping expectant mothers bring their own joy into the world seemed emotionally fulfilling and an amazing privilege.

“I worked here, there, and everywhere to save money and develop some life skills, and I attended night classes to re-sit my GCSE’s. I was thrilled when I started an access to nursing course at my local college, and five or six years later, I enrolled at university. Throughout those years, I was really lucky to stay in touch with friends I’d made at Ruth House.

“I’m in my final year of university now, and when it was time to choose a setting for my elective placement to broaden my knowledge beyond midwifery - it had to be Ruth House. To be able to come back and observe from a professional viewpoint, and to have the opportunity to support young parents and their families alongside the team is an honour, and a huge highlight in my career. I am, and always will be in awe of the work that the team do.”

Loren’s journey is a reminder of the transformative power of supported housing and its role in fostering resilience and a sense of empowerment.

She added: “If it wasn’t for Ruth House, I’d probably be on the streets. But they changed my life. I wouldn’t be where I am now without them.”