

Sarah

Sarah* is the latest recipient of a grant from the Eight Miles Away fund, which aims to break the cycle of homelessness for young people living in Brighton.



Inspired by local artist, Tony Mills, The Eight Miles Away project centred around a series of eight paintings, each featuring a homeless person in different scenes of Brighton, which were sold by silent auction with the proceeds going to Sanctuary Supported Living's Brighton and Hove Foyer, a supported housing service which provides accommodation and support for homeless and vulnerable young people aged 16 to 25.

17-year-old Sarah was referred to supported accommodation by social services, following a breakdown in her relationship with her family. After her parents' hostile separation, trust was lost which led to her struggling to maintain connections with members of her family. The extremely upsetting situation also led to a breakdown in her mental health.

Sarah quickly had to adapt to living on her own for the first time, while studying for a Level 2 Diploma as an Early Years Practitioner and working as an apprentice at a nursery on £3.90 per hour.

Her wages were not enough to cover the rent and when she attempted to address this, she found that the more hours she worked – be it 40 or 60 hours a week – the more was deducted from her housing benefit and Universal Credit. Despite still being a teenager, she was not entitled to additional help and fell into rent arrears through no fault of her own. The team at Brighton and Hove Foyer provided mental health support as well as advice to help her structure a repayment plan for the arrears. She is now on course to clear the arrears in full.

Having completed her apprenticeship, Sarah maintained her interest in childcare and was looking to enrol on an online teaching assistant pathway course with the aim of

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eventually moving into a career in childcare or teaching. She applied to the Eight Miles Away Fund for the course fees together with a laptop to complete her studies and has been granted a total of £1500 to cover this, together with potential costs including travel to job interviews and work experience placements. She also plans to begin driving lessons.

Receiving an Eight Miles Away fund grant means she is now hopeful for her future and the opportunities that has open up, after going through such a difficult period in her life.

Sarah said: “Not receiving the support that others received at my age was a painful experience that has lasted and shaped both my stay at Brighton and Hove Foyer and life as I grow. For someone like me, the Eight Miles Away funding is a life-changing sum. It means a decrease in the anxiety I feel towards my future and no longer feeling like I’m stuck.”

Jurgen Forster, Project Worker and Sarah’s keyworker at Brighton and Hove Foyer, said: ““I am rooting for her success. Sarah is always working, always ambitious, always planning. Watching her grow and hit her current goals whilst setting new ones that she would like to attain in the future is inspiring.

Getting the funding is beneficial to her and we know she appreciates this opportunity. It is important to know that it is also beneficial to those around her; they will see the success in her efforts and will try to work towards the standards that has been set. Awesome stuff!”

**Not her real name. Sarah’s name has been changed to protect her privacy.*