

# RESIDENT STORY



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Petra Smith, who lives with a learning disability, says that living in supported housing has given her the vital support she needed to achieve her lifelong goal of transitioning from male to female.

In 2012, Petra moved into Sanctuary Supported Living's Gleneagles Close in Chester. The service specialises in supporting people with learning disabilities. She said: "I had a gambling problem and had been struggling to cope in my own home, so my social worker referred me to the service."

When she first moved in, Petra's main areas of support were around finances and personal hygiene, but she soon confided in her project worker about what she would really like. She said: "Since I was a teenager I had felt that I would like to be a woman. I used to dress in women's clothes in private, but as I had a learning disability I never thought I'd be able to carry these thoughts forward."

After the now 59-year-old had spoken to staff at the service, they began to have regular discussions about what she would like to do. She was supported by her project worker to talk to other residents about the changes she wanted to make to her appearance, and to find an LGBTQ+

community group that she was comfortable with.

Today, Petra is attending a gender identity clinic who is supporting her to fully transition, and she gets help from her key worker to make decisions about clothes and make up.

Petra said: “The support I have received from Sanctuary Supported Living, and especially my key workers, has helped me achieve more than I ever thought I would. I have so much more confidence and I’m looking forward to continuing my journey to becoming a woman.

“I have also really boosted my life skills; I have stopped gambling and I’m budgeting my money well, and my environment and personal hygiene have both greatly improved.”

