

# RESIDENT STORY



“

I now look forward in my life, instead of dwelling on the past

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Sarah\* lives at Victoria Road in Hartlepool, a supported housing service which provides accommodation and support for young people aged 16 to 25, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. To mark Housing Day 2020, which aims to highlight the importance of having a safe and secure place to call home, she has written this blog to share her story so far.

\*Name has been changed.

Before I moved into Sanctuary Supported Living's Victoria Road, my life was a mess. I was drinking alcohol a few times a week; my mother is alcohol dependant and has a codeine addiction and I hadn't seen my father for a number of years. My whole world was chaotic, and every day was a struggle.

I was kicked out of my mother's house by her partner, he is a violent man and was jealous of the relationship I had with her. He had hit me before, but the final straw was when he actually flung me around my bedroom like a rag doll, locked me in and then told me to get out of the house and not to come back.

I then moved in with my nana and grandad. I started drinking alcohol daily at this point, drinking anything and everything, and going to parties in people's houses. When I did go to school, I would finish at 3pm and go straight to someone's house where I would drink and smoke cannabis until the early hours.

There was a lot of drug taking, and it makes me feel sick to think back to the dangerous

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situations I was in. I remember being in bed half-asleep after yet another party and hearing loud footsteps coming up the stairs; a gang of lads wielding knives had come into the house and were trying to get at some rivals. I was terrified.

I was always being reported to the police as missing, my nana and grandad couldn't cope with my behaviour and eventually I started working with a care worker who got me a placement with Sanctuary Supported Living.

Initially I was given a crash pad, then after two weeks I moved into a room. I was very nervous at first and I can remember just wanting to walk out, but I couldn't; I had no choice but to stay as I had nowhere else to go.

I didn't leave my room much at first, and I never spent any time in the communal areas. I always felt angry and frustrated. After a while I started to work with the staff and began to trust them, once I did this, I started to feel a lot better in myself and more relaxed. I made friends with other residents, and little by little no longer needed to drink every day to block out the pain and anger I was feeling.

I now live in the independent flat at Victoria Road and it's fantastic. I have the support from staff when I need it and I also have my own front door to close when I need my own space; my flat is my own personal Sanctuary and it is my HOME.

Even though I couldn't see it at first, I feel so thankful that I was given the help I needed from Sanctuary Supported Living. I really don't know where I would be now if I had continued on the dangerous path which I was on. I've made some good friends here and I know that staff are always there to talk, listen or support me if I need it.

Looking back, I can't believe how far I have come in the last year. I no longer drink alcohol, which I achieved myself with support from staff. My support worker has helped me to create a daily diary of things to do, I need this as I suffer with anxiety and having something to think about and do each day helps take my mind off it and stay focused.

I was supported by staff to get a job in a local sports store a few months ago which helped me gain a lot of confidence. I am now ready to pursue my career goal of working in the care sector, my keyworker has sourced me a training course on mental health which will really help too.

I now look forward in my life, instead of dwelling on the past, and my future looks bright. I feel happy and settled and I cannot thank staff at Victoria Road enough for helping me to get my life on track. I am hoping that in a few months' time I'll feel ready to look for an independent flat of my own, and do you know who will be there to support me every step of the way? Sanctuary Supported Living.