

# STAFF story

## Alison Notman

**Alison has worked in health and social care since the age of 17. Throughout her career, she's been a Bank Support Worker, Support Worker, Team Leader, Deputy Local Service Manager and finally Local Service Manager, a title which she's proudly held for the last ten years with Sanctuary Supported Living.**



Alison Notman started in the care sector as a teen, working for private families and running a playgroup until she joined Bible college in 1992. It was in her final year that she took a placement at Sanctuary Supported Living's Old Milton Road, which has provided care and support for adults with a range of learning disabilities for three decades. When Alison first came to Old Milton Road, it was managed by a different provider. Alison said: "After I graduated, I realised that my life was taking a different direction and my vocation for learning disabilities and supporting people became apparent to me."

"Looking back, I was very familiar with learning disabilities and how they affected people. I used to visit an old style, learning disability hospital with my Mum, who became a voluntary visitor when I was young. Since I'd witnessed the 1970's institutionalised way of people living with learning disabilities, and the beginnings of change in the early 1980's, perhaps my change in career path wasn't a surprise. When I had the opportunity to support people and empower them to make their own choices in life, I couldn't wait to start - I was very passionate about it."

Old Milton Road was transferred to another provider, and Alison completed her NVQ4 and Registered Manager qualifications, before she was asked to continue with Sanctuary Supported Living, when it took over in 2013. Alison says: "Since continuing with Sanctuary Supported Living, they committed to investing in me and supporting me in my development. Now, as a Local Service Manager, with the skills, knowledge, and experiences I have, I'm

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always prepared for my ever-changing responsibilities, and I'm well equipped to manage my fabulous team, who work hard to provide the very best care and support to residents."

"Together, we create an environment where residents with varying levels of disability can fulfil their potential and live their best lives. As we prioritise going above and beyond to support people to live as independently as possible, we encourage their differences, celebrate their achievements, and make sure everyone is treated with dignity and respect. The best part of my job is seeing residents achieving things that they thought they couldn't do."

Recognised for her strong leadership, especially during Covid-19, Alison was shortlisted for a Care Home Manager Great British Care Award in October 2020. She was shortlisted again in September 2021 for a National Learning Disability and Autism Award, for her creative penguin-themed techniques that she and her team devised to help residents understand social distancing and feel comfortable wearing masks.

The penguin characters became so popular that they even had their own YouTube channel, Facebook page and Twitter feed, to spread their 'smile and wave' social distancing message to others with learning disabilities. With Alison and her team's guidance, residents play an active and valued part in their community, and have raised money for the BBC's Children In Need by doing sponsored waddles, raising nearly £500 for the cause last year. These are some of Alison's proudest work-related achievements.

The most challenging part of her job, however, is recruitment which she thinks stems from the stigma that experience is essential to work in adult social care. She adds "If you're interested in a career in supported living – go for it. All you need to start are your personal qualities. You need to be committed, creative and good at problem solving. The only essentials are flexibility, and a sense of humour of course! For everything else, there's training. If you're putting residents at the heart of what you do, you'll be making a difference to peoples' lives every day. That's a pretty good reason to get out of bed in the morning."