



Staying the distance

Sometimes the Safe Places team can turn around a young person's life over months, and sometimes it takes years.

Chris* was a child when he came into state care, having been abandoned and neglected most of his young life. He suffered severe emotional and physical harm and, as he grew older, his own behaviours become more extreme and aggressive.

Chris threatened to kill family members, used knives to threaten others and often hurt and harmed himself. He was extremely violent towards children and adults and could not co-tenant with other children in a residential setting.

Chris had a string of mental health diagnoses: attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), oppositional defiance disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and attachment-related issues. He couldn't even be left with other children, let alone attend school.

Chris's behaviours continued to be challenging for the first three years of placement, where he was supported by a two-youth-worker model, with additional staff as required. His carers had to be rotated regularly due to burnout and fatigue.

Sadly, this meant Chris also suffered grief and loss many times as those significant relationships he had built up over time fell apart. Safe Places staff, however, continued to carefully match Chris' new carers as closely as possible to his individual needs.

Resilient, compassionate and strong, Chris's carers stayed the distance and stood by him through many days and nights of escalations, actual assault and the threat of assault. Over that year, they saw a significant decline in extreme behaviours and critical incidents for Chris and his model of care was reduced to one-on-one. After four years, Chris had settled and was ready to trust again.



Life had dealt Chris a rough hand, but he struggled and strived to overcome all the hurt and trauma he suffered in his young years. I wish Chris nothing but the best for the next chapter of his life journey. I hope Chris will continue on to have a very happy, successful life.

Safe Places staff member and one of Chris' former carers

Showing the way

Once a child that had been labelled as "never to co-tenant", "extremely dangerous and violent", "unable to have relationships with peers", Chris was now able to share a home with another young person, becoming a role model for his co-tenant. Over time, a third child also came to live in their home.

Chris started to attend school regularly, even receiving school awards and achieving many certificates in mechanics. He participated in work experience and modelled positive behaviour to his co-tenants, even offering advice on "how to get their lives together". For the first time since being placed with Safe Places, Chris had a number of friends from school and a girlfriend.

* Name changed to protect privacy

Chris is now 18 years old, a young adult living independently in his own unit and building a life for himself. He's doing well and still catches up with his carers, who stood by him for the six year he was with Safe Places. Chris will always be grateful for their support, resilience and commitment to him and his future.

About Safe Places for Children

Founded in 2005, Safe Places for Children provides children and young people in care with individualised therapeutic residential services in Australia and the United Kingdom.

Our talented and passionate team is skilled and experienced in guiding young people towards a better future. If you'd like to help transform a young person's life, contact us on 1300 993 483 or mycareers@safeplaces.com.au