

Claudia's Story

Claudia is a fifty-five year old lady who moved into a full time supported Norton House property in 2005.

Claudia has a long standing history of depression and physical health problems. She was referred to Leicestershire Partnership Trust in December 2004 following her return to England. She had previously moved to the USA with her husband where she experienced traumatic relationship problems. On her return she had no money and no home. A policeman gave her the money for the bus fare to Leicester where she knew a few people.

In Leicester Claudia stayed temporarily with friends and acquaintances, moving every few days. She became depressed and suicidal. Claudia was admitted to a psychiatric ward. Her psychiatrist found that, in addition to her depression and suicidal thoughts, she had social phobia, fear of crowds, was tired all the time, had lost interest in activities and had low self-esteem.

Claudia was discharged to a temporary hostel and supported by the Crisis Team having been told she could not access Social Service accommodation due to her failing the residency test. She describes the hostel as "horrendous", finding herself surrounded by people who misused alcohol and drugs. She began to drink herself and despite finding it very difficult to go out, went to LPTs Day Hospital simply to get out of the situation and to get a meal.

Claudia's RMO noted that at this time her mental state was deteriorating and she became more depressed, anxious and agitated, with marked social phobia. Claudia was referred by her RMO to Norton House and was delighted to be offered a place.

Claudia explains that she hoped her move to Norton House would give her a new chance in life. She wanted to be able to do things again and live somewhere decent where she felt safe and not scared of what might happen next. Claudia acknowledged that at this point her confidence and self-esteem were very low, she felt she needed "someone to hold my hand" as she redeveloped daily living skills.

Claudia feels very grateful to her Support Worker for her patience and support. Claudia explains that her Support Worker spent a lot of time with her in order that they would get to know each other and build trust between them. Whenever possible the Support Worker would invite Claudia to go with her to appointments or shopping, to build up her confidence. Claudia admits this was very hard to do at the time but feels she needed someone she trusted to "push her" to take very small, slow steps towards recovery. Claudia says there were setbacks, but because she had a secure, stable home and a Support Worker she trusted, she gradually became more confident and was, for example, able to use public transport on her own a year later. Previously she could not go on a bus as "everything would close in on me" and she would have a panic attack.

In 2007, Claudia made the decision to move to her own flat where she would receive floating support from Norton House. Despite setbacks, Claudia says she is now enjoying life. She walks to the shops and can go into town on her own. She will also sort things out herself first now, rather than relying on someone else.

Claudia is a sociable person and enjoys having friends around, including friends she has made at Norton House. She also has a cat who she loves looking after.

Claudia continues to see her psychiatrist on a three monthly basis and has built up an excellent relationship with her Floating Support Worker. She says "it's important to know that I can pick up the phone and speak to my Support Worker if I am having problems between my weekly visits.

Claudia adds "it's very important if you are ill to have someone to support you who really knows you...not a stranger"