

Henry's Journey*

Old Leigh House, Essex
Residential Service with Nursing
for Men with Learning Disabilities

Henry's history

Henry spent his childhood in his family home and was diagnosed with ADHD at a young age, he completed his education in a mainstream school, although a later diagnosis of autism had remained undetected. At 16 he was diagnosed with schizophrenia and his mental health deteriorated rapidly, he became severely unwell and was sectioned as a result.

Henry spent the latter years of his childhood being moved to various placements across the country, each being unable to manage his needs. This was not only causing Henry's mental health to decline further, but was distressing for his family who were frequently travelling long distances to visit him. There were occasions where he would visit the family home and his family would often have to restrain him, they found it frightening to see him so unwell.

In Henry's final placement before moving to Old Leigh House, his family were advised that it was unlikely Henry would get any better than he was at that point 'they felt that everyone had given up on him.' In two years since his diagnosis there had been no improvement in the quality of Henry's life.

When Henry came to us

When Henry came to Old Leigh House, which was then registered as a High Dependency Complex Care service, he had spent a significant amount of time taking various anti-psychotics after being misdiagnosed with psychosis. None of these medications had helped him and he was still acutely unwell.

The time spent moving around in different services only increased Henry's anxieties and this caused aggressive outbursts which were happening on a daily basis. Since diagnosis, Henry's daily living skills had taken a backwards step, he could no longer tell the time and did not attend to his personal or oral care without prompting. Henry was not able to access the community due to the risk he posed to himself and others.

Henry's care

On admission to Old Leigh House, Henry was re-sectioned in order to maintain his safety. The team reviewed his medications, removed those that were not working and started him on Clozapine. The medication alleviated some of Henry's positive symptoms in order for the team to better support him.

Staff took a person centred and consistent approach with Henry in order to support him rebuild his understanding of daily living and also his emotions. They recognised that his earlier experiences had left him fearful of change, and took the time to introduce new things slowly at a pace that was comfortable for him. The team understood his abilities and ensured they engaged at his level. Henry began to trust in the team.

During Henry's stay, Old Leigh House was re-registered as a residential service, allowing the individuals to progress along their care pathway in a more homely and community integrated environment.

With the vast improvements in Henry's health, both family and staff agreed he should continue his care journey within the new residential service.

With Henry's aggressive incidents reduced and his positive relationship with the staff growing, he was able to start accessing community leave. He worked with the Occupational Therapy (OT) team to find enjoyment in meaningful activities, such as arts and crafts and gardening.

Henry today

Henry enjoys living at Old Leigh House, he has a fantastic relationship with the team who are now able to support him do the thing he most enjoys, like taking long walks, going out for lunch and visiting the family home. He now attends to all his personal care needs without being prompted and has enrolled at the local college.

Henry's mum has commented on the vast improvement in the overall quality of life, she said, "I'm extremely happy with the care provided at Old Leigh House, they are amazing!..."

The work they've done with Henry allows him to do things that I never thought I'd see.

"He still struggles sometimes, but any incidents are few and far between. Before it was happening every single day and it was so frightening to think that he might hurt himself or someone else.

"There are several members of staff at Old Leigh House who have been there right since the start of Henry's journey and that consistency has been so important. Consistency in routine and staffing are key, assisting in the getting well process, you have to be able to trust staff members and build that relationship."

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*Name has been changed to protect his identity.

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