



Jack's* Journey

Thornfield Grange, Co. Durham

Specialist residential service with nursing for adults with autism, learning disabilities and complex needs

Jack's history

Jack is a young man with a diagnosis of autism, learning disabilities, behaviours that challenge and dysphagia. He spent his childhood years at home with his family and in residential schools. When Jack left school his behaviours became more challenging and his family struggled with his growing needs. Once Jack turned 18, it was time for him to find his own home, however, due to Jack's complex needs he needed a lot of support to help him move from children's to adult's services and to live away from his family and the environments he knew well.

When Jack came to us

Jack had never been in care before so when he arrived at Thornfield Grange he struggled somewhat with the changes and also some of the other individuals who lived there.

He was extremely anxious at first and he didn't know how to control his anxiety, which led to him self-harming on a daily basis, an increase in challenging behaviour towards others and also self-isolating in his bedroom. Some days he would refuse to leave his room at all. This affected Jack's quality of life and his experience of being within a care setting.



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Jack's care

Due to Jack's refusal to leave his room, the team wanted to be able to give him options to go to another 'safe space' and therefore created a private lounge just for him. It took some time for Jack to venture into his new lounge. But the team worked at Jack's pace. They placed a member of staff in his lounge, at first Jack would not acknowledge them, but after a short period of time he would pop his head out of the door and interact with them.

As Jack became more confident with his surroundings, the staff team would encourage him to go to the dining room for his meals and go out in the service's vehicle for a local drive. Jack started to enjoy these drives, but he refused to leave the vehicle and get involved with anything in the community.

Through multi-disciplinary working and close contact with his family, the team were able to encourage Jack to take small steps, using visual programmes to help support his confidence and enable him to trust the team. This was not a quick process and they worked consistently with him over a period of time. After a while Jack felt comfortable to leave the vehicle and go for short walks.



When Jack moved into Thornfield Grange, he didn't have a formal diagnosis of dysphagia and it was always just believed that this was Jack and this is how he ate. However upon arrival at Thornfield Grange, the nursing team were able to assess his eating habits and requested a speech and language assessment to help support safe eating. Following this Jack, was given a diagnosis of dysphagia and recommendations were then put in place to ensure he was eating safely and that meal times were a positive experience for him. The staff team and Jack's family subsequently received person centred training from the speech and language therapy team to ensure that everyone understood how to best support Jack with his dysphagia.

Jack today

12 months on from Jack moving into Thornfield Grange and he has completely made himself at home. He never stays in his bedroom all day like he did previously, he spends all his time with staff in one of the many communal areas at the service. Each week he visits a local café with his staff team. The staff at Thornfield Grange have worked closely with the café to ensure they know him and how to prepare his food so it is safe for him to eat. He is now a regular customer and other members of the local community who visit the café, stop and say hello to him.



Since moving into Thornfield Grange Jack is now thriving, his incidents of self-injurious behaviours are very rare and by just sitting with him and having a chat you can see he is happy and content in his surroundings. As Thornfield Grange continue to support and develop Jack at his own pace they are always looking at ways to help support him in the community to take part in activities that he enjoys. The whole team have a great understanding about Jack's pace and that the primary goal is to provide him with his best life.



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*Name has been changed to protect his identity.

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