FOYER OXFORD CASE STUDIES

**Daniel’s Story**

Daniel\* was struggling to keep things going at high school. What the other students at school probably didn’t know was that conflict with an emotionally abusive family had escalated and he was kicked out of home. The lack of stable housing was having serious impacts on his mental health. As a result he was bouncing from crisis accommodation to mental health institutions and back again. Daniel had a significant history of self-harm and suicide ideation as a response to the significant stressors in his life and when he turned 16 he made a serious attempt on his own life, and spent 3 months in hospital. Despite everything going on, Daniel maintained a strong focus on completing his high school education and eventually finding his own place, but that didn’t look realistic from a bed in the Adolescent Unit. That’s where he heard about Foyer Oxford.

Daniel really connected with the way that his Foyer Oxford Case Manager, Ali, treated him like an individual, focused on his strengths and helped him keep connected to and take control of the relationships he had with his mental health supports. Ali helped Daniel to focus on his passions and connected him with professional career guidance to develop a long term career plan. A talented artist, Daniel decided to pursue graphic design and found a university pathway that interested him.

Daniel’s initial support needs were quite high. Weekly structured meetings with Ali focused on assisting him to adjust to the Foyer environment, maintain his schooling and look after his mental health – and being 16, looking after your own place is a very new thing. During his time at Foyer Oxford Daniel often accessed after hours support from staff to develop his independent living skills, particularly around property maintenance, cleaning and resolving conflict with other Foyer residents. Daniel was also a participant in a number of small group activities that provided information and skills around nutrition, physical health and exercise, budgeting and leadership skills.

The thing that had the most potential to trip him up was his mental health condition. Ali developed a close relationship with his mental health workers, and helped to negotiate what can be a complex system. Ali supported Daniel to manage his own recovery, and when things were going badly and he was particularly distressed, Ali would make sure that Daniel was safe, using the wrap around support of the Foyer team to help him put in place plans and strategies that would get him through.

The regularity and structure of meetings reduced over time, as Daniel became increasingly confident and capable of living independently. Foyer’s partnership with Ladder Inc assisted Daniel to connect with recreation activities, and develop a physical fitness routine as part of his mental health recovery plan. By the time Daniel was 17, he graduated from his outpatient program, and 6 months later he no longer required specialist mental health intervention, and could use his GP and psychologist for ongoing support.

There were definitely times where Daniel’s mental health threatened to derail him, but throughout that Daniel had education as a focus, and an aspiration to turn his art into a career.

That focus took Daniel all the way through year 12 WACE and landed him a place at Curtin University. Now to focus on work. Foyer Oxford provided work experience in a partner organisation’s marketing team, where Daniel used his talents to submit design work for a national journal. It told him that the course he had chosen was the right one, but it also led to work opportunities in hospitality (the crap job you need while you’re at Uni). The economic sustainability that brought meant that the private rental market was a realistic picture and Ali helped him to develop a rental portfolio.

Daniel nailed his first semester at Uni and left the Foyer program having stayed just over 2 years. He decided to defer the second semester of his studies after his newly found social networks combined with his employability and rental history gave him an opportunity to travel and work in North America for 6 months.

Daniel is now back in Perth, working in retail, living in a stable shared house with friends, and saving for his next travel adventure. He uses his talents in a blog online, sharing experiences not only of travel, but of life generally. Uni is the next thing – but South America is calling.

That might seem a small dream – but it’s one that young people like Daniel rarely get to have.

*“Foyer Oxford is an amazing opportunity. For me, it has given me rent history from the age of 16, 24/7 staff support, lifelong friendships and the chance to make something of myself with support through first graduating high school, and now university and part-time work, when for a while it looked like I was going nowhere in life. It’s not perfect, but the staff and residents continuously work on making Foyer a positive environment. Foyer works best for people who are at the stage in their life where they have decided to take their own life into their own hands, and are prepared to take responsibility in rising above the trap of homelessness, through getting a job and making a better life for themselves.”*

*Daniel, 19*

FOYER OXFORD CASE STUDIES

**Tom’s Story**

Tom was only 19 when he left prison after 9 months in custody, and almost immediately he reconnected with old peer groups and fell into the problematic amphetamine and cannabis use that had been part of his life for a number of years. His drug use had led him to juvenile detention in younger years, and it was drug and stealing offences that had put him in prison this time. The relapse led him back to prison for a few more months, but after that, he began an intensive supervision order and was mandated to connect with treatment around his drug use.

Tom identified that growing up in an unstable environment with his mother, and exposure to her drug use and offending had been a factor in his own drug use. It had resulted in him developing a history of using violence and struggling to manage his anger when faced with conflict, but since being released from prison he worked hard with therapeutic supports to build strategies to understand and manage his anger.

Tom applied to transfer directly into Foyer Oxford from a drug and alcohol rehabilitation program he was living in. As is the case in these situations, Foyer staff agreed that he was a potential Foyer resident, but it was important for him to first demonstrate his ability to manage drug and alcohol use outside of rehab. Problematic drug and alcohol can be a big risk for the Foyer community.

Tom had limited experience living independently; having lived with his father prior to being in prison. Although he had worked on his independent living skills while in detention and in drug and alcohol treatment services, he had no experience with private tenancy and maintaining a lease.

Tom was working towards rebuilding his relationship with his family, years of substance use had resulted in him being ostracised and excluded. At the time of moving into Foyer, Tom was not allowed to visit his father’s house and had limited contact with his siblings.

Tom had strong connections and peer supports through his drug and alcohol treatment service, and was involved with their physical exercise and sport programs as part of his recovery. Tom identified that although he had made significant changes to his social networks since entering into drug and alcohol treatment, the majority of his networks comprised of people who were still either recovered drug users or still actively using, and this was a risk for his own future.

In terms of employment and education, Tom’s history of offending and drug use had left a significant gap in his history. At the time of his application for Foyer Oxford, he was motivated towards building a pathway in community services.

Tom was offered a planned entry pathway, and began being supported by a case manager at Foyer Oxford prior to his entry.

As part of the planned entry pathway, Case management liaised with his drug and alcohol workers to coordinate Tom’s entry into a specialist drug and alcohol transitional housing program for a period of 3 months prior to his entry. Tom was also assisted by Foyer Oxford case management to link in with North Metropolitan TAFE and applied for a Certificate IV in Community Services. Through liaison and effective collaboration with his other service providers, Tom was able to meet his planned entry expectations and transition into Foyer Oxford.

Tom engaged well with case management at Foyer Oxford and was supported to develop an education and employment pathway plan, focusing on his aspirations to become a Youth Worker. A significant focus of case management was supporting Tom to build and map out career and employment pathways, as well as looking at longer term accommodation options.

It soon became obvious, that Tom’s extensive criminal record was a significant barrier to finding employment, volunteering or work experience placements. During the course of his Community Services studies, his lecturers were unable to find Tom a placement due to his offending history and he considered dropping out of the course. In case management he worked on his motivation and skills in employment applications and provided support, resources and advocacy around how to disclose and represent his offending history, as well as helping him target opportunities that were more likely to be accepting of his past. As a result of this Tom was able to connect with services at which he could complete the practical placements.

Through his determination, Tom completed his Certificate IV in Community Services, the first qualification he had ever received. Tom was linked in with a professional career guidance service through North Metropolitan TAFE and as a result decided to apply for a place in a Bachelor of Behavioural Science at University.

When Tom’s partner became pregnant, Tom’s perspective and priorities changed dramatically. He was referred to relationship counselling to improve what could be a complicated relationship, and also to parent education programs to assist him to come to terms with his impending role as a father. Becoming a father shifted his goals to a need to be a provider for his family and he focused more clearly on securing employment and accommodation for the long term.

Tom’s case manager provided job search assistance, and using some philanthropic funding gave him access to first aid training to assist in the job hunt. After 2 months of searching, Tom secured first part time work in hospitality and then was offered full time work in warehousing. Tom’s previous learning about the way to disclose his offending history helped him to talk to his prospective employer about his past. The employer called Tom’s case manager at Foyer and after explaining how positive Tom had been at Foyer Oxford, the employer was willing to take a risk and try him out on a probationary basis.

Tom passed probation with flying colours. With a stable income behind him, he began the search for a private rental with his partner.

Foyer staff assisted the couple to set goals jointly, and resolve the natural conflicts and stressors that come when children are soon to be born. Foyer staff helped Tom and his partner to decide together how to solve problems and become a strong couple.

While living at Foyer Oxford, Tom held a full private tenancy lease and was able to ultimately develop the skills, knowledge and confidence to independently manage his tenancy. It was no problem for Foyer Oxford to provide a rental reference, and his case manager assisted him to build a tenancy portfolio that included references and his new job history.

Tom and his partner were successful in finding a private rental perfect for their needs, and close to her family, in Baldivis in July 2015. His employer had another store nearby and agreed to transfer him, recognising his skills and abilities.

Tom has gone from strength, and is now the assistant manager at the Baldivis store. His daughter was born in November 2015. Tom and his partner have a secure relationship, and Tom’s family have begun to rebuild their relationships with him, providing great support to this young family.

Tom’s story demonstrates the complexities that can happen through a resident’s time at Foyer Oxford, and the way that the Foyer team walk alongside their journeys. For Tom, Foyer Oxford created an opportunity to explore and define who he wanted to be, to connect to new relationships and then a build pathway to a new identity, away from the image he previously had.

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**Ellie’s Story**

Ellie\* entered Foyer Oxford as an 18yr old young parent with her 6 month old son Bobby\*.

Ellie had been in and out of foster care since the age of 6, had a history of childhood trauma and no positive relationships or family support. Ellie had completed a year 10 level of education and previous retail work experience but was unable to further her studies due to falling pregnant at age 17 to Bobby’s father.

Ellie was in a domestic violence relationship with Bobby’s Father and ongoing incidents led to the Department of Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) involvement and Bobby was temporarily removed from her care. Bobby was returned to Ellie’s care with a CPFS supervision order and conditions required to keep Bobby safe. Ellie moved between several transitional housing services and refuges because her violent ex-partner has a habit of tracking her down.

Along with experiencing ongoing homelessness and domestic violence, Ellie also identified struggling with anxiety, self-confidence and health issues.

Ellie and Bobby were referred to Foyer Oxford by another service and moved into a young parent apartment in March 2014. They lived at Foyer Oxford for the full two years.

Ellie’s main goals coming into Foyer were to regain full custody of Bobby, address some health issues and work towards completing study and gaining employment.

As obtaining Bobby in her full-time care was her main priority, Foyer supported Ellie to maintain her obligations with CPFS, attend regular case conferences and safety plan review meetings.

Through case management, Ellie was supported to link into domestic violence counselling, access legal advice and support around Family Court processes and apply for violence restraining orders. As a result of Ellie’s hard work towards keeping Bobby safe, the supervision order ended, CPFS closed the case and Ellie obtained full time care of Bobby.

During her stay, Ellie identified needing support around eating disorders and was referred to a Youth Focus counsellor. Ellie engaged in weekly, consecutive counselling sessions and also found this helpful to address previous childhood trauma and anxiety. Constant liaison occurred between the counsellor, case manager and child support worker to support Ellie around these issues.

Ellie participated in regular sessions with Foyer Oxford’s child support worker (funded through a philanthropist) to develop her parenting skills and was referred to Holyoake’s Art & Play, a program for mothers with a history of alcohol or other drug use and their children. Using art and play, it aims to build the mother-child relationship while reducing parental stress, providing support and improving communication. Ellie was linked in with the on-site REACH child health nurse for regular check-ups and to ensure Bobby was meeting his developmental milestones. Ellie also accessed the on-site health and wellbeing program through Ladder and engaged in regular health and fitness workshops. Through the on-site programs Ellie developed strong relationships and social connections with other Foyer Oxford residents.

Ellie did well to manage her own tenancy but initially struggled with passing her house inspections. Ongoing support was provided to assist Ellie to develop skills in household management and resulted in Ellie passing all her inspections. Ellie was also supported with budgeting and set up payment plans to address previous debts.

During her stay Ellie was linked into many education and employment opportunities. Ellie initially found it difficult to focus on education and employment due to her CPFS obligations, the demands of being a single parent with limited supports and dealing with ongoing personal issues. Child care was also a barrier due to the high fees and lack of vacancies in surrounding areas.

Support was provided through case management to research and locate childcare centres and to advocate for discounted childcare fees, applying for Jobs, Education and Training (JET) Child Care Fee Assistance and working jointly with Ellie’s CPFS case worker to apply for the Special Child Care Benefit. Ellie had aspirations to study Beauty and Art and study pathways were explored.

Ellie was referred to Foyer Oxford Consortium partner, North Metropolitan TAFE for career guidance. Ellie had set her heart on studying for a Certificate III in Fitness but unfortunately, failed to gain a spot due to issues with literacy and numeracy. With the support North Metropolitan TAFE, Ellie was assisted to enrol in the Learning Advantage Program to complete a Certificate II for General Education for Adults (CGEA).

When Ellie graduated from the CGEA, she enrolled in the Certificate III/IV in Visual Arts course for the follow semester but was unable to complete it by the time of her exit from Foyer Oxford. Although she did not complete all units, returning to study built Ellie’s self-confidence and after the CPFS case was closed Ellie focussed on gaining part-time employment. Employment support was provided through case management and Ellie completed her Responsible Services of Alcohol and First Aid Certificate. Around 18 months into her stay, Ellie was successful in obtaining part-time employment in retail four days per week. Ellie enrolled Bobby in full-time childcare and continued her employment for the duration of her stay.

Ellie continued to meet regularly with her counsellor, case manager and child support worker to plan her exit into her own independent housing. Ellie was referred to a Housing Support Worker who assisted Ellie to apply for private rentals.

Ellie was successful in gaining a private rental property and exited Foyer Oxford in March 2016 into a rental property with her two year old son Bobby.

Ellie continues to work four days per week and Bobby is in childcare four days per week.

Ellie developed confidence in her parenting skills and continues to be a positive safe role model for Bobby. Bobby left Foyer Oxford with a strong attachment and meeting all of his developmental milestones.

Upon exit, Ellie had no CPFS involvement and the file was closed. Ellie applied for another 2 year extension of her domestic violence restraining order against Bobby’s father and this was approved. Ellie continues to follow her safety plan and has developed insight into domestic violence relationships.

Ellie left Foyer Oxford as a confident, assertive individual. Through counselling, Ellie worked towards addressing her eating disorder, health issues and strategies to manage ongoing anxiety. Ellie continues to meet with her counsellor for ongoing support.

Since moving out of Foyer Oxford Ellie still remains in contact with friends she met at Foyer Oxford.

Ellie plans to eventually pursue study and become a Tattoo artist but for now is focussing on working and saving money until Bobby goes to school.

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**Jason’s Story**

Jason entered the interim Foyer program in August 2012 when he was 16. He had become homeless because of domestic and family violence, and the escalating impact of his mother’s boyfriend’s drug and alcohol use and mental health issues. Jason disclosed significant ongoing conflict and violence at his mother’s house and that he had been physically assaulted by his mother’s boyfriend and had his property destroyed on several occasions. Jason reported that his relationship with his mother was severely strained, and that she was unable to support him due to prioritising her partners needs above her own and those of her son.

Jason’s biological father was also not a suitable replacement, with violence so much a part of his life that a restraining order needed to be in place.

Jason suffered a serious stroke when he was 6, which resulted in him being hospitalised for over a year and needing rehabilitation in order to learn how to walk again. The stroke left Jason with permanent mobility impairment on his left side, though this did not impair his capacity to participate in sport or physical activity. His recovery period also resulted in him missing significant periods of primary school and subsequently Jason found it difficult to form friendships upon returning to school. He described being bullied and ostracised by his peers throughout his primary and secondary schooling due to his mobility issues.

At the time of application to Foyer, Jason was studying year 11 at a mainstream high school, though was having trouble keeping up with his schoolwork and had ongoing conflict with staff and other students at the school. He had been seen by the high school psychologist on several occasions over a 2 year period for assistance in managing his anger and symptoms of depression. He had not been formally diagnosed with depression, and was reluctant to connect with support around his mental health.

Jason was employed part time at a roller skating centre, and also was well connected with a rugby team that provided him with strength and a sense of connection.

Upon entering Foyer Jason struggled to adjust to living independently, felling isolated and lonely, which led to some impact on his mental health and stability. Access to consistent and regular informal support by residential youth work staff in the evenings provided Jason with a sense of stability and security that assisted his adjustment into independent living. Jason was provided guidance and assistance to develop his communication skills and manage dealing with other services through structured case management sessions. Jason was referred to a youth counselling service, where he completed 6 sessions that assisted him to better manage his anger and low mood.

Jason was supported to transfer high schools at the end of year 11 to a school closer to the Foyer. As part of transitioning to the new school, some of the student services staff from the new school were invited to visit the Foyer site in order to develop their understanding of some of the specific needs and pressures that young people living independently had. Regular liaison with his school’s support and teaching staff ensured that there was consistent support and encouragement, and that the school was able to better support Jason in the classroom setting when problems arose that would historically have been triggers for Jason’s anger and conflict.

Career development was an ongoing part of case management, and Jason’s focus and goals shifted several times throughout his journey at Foyer as increasing emphasis was placed on finding a pathway that would lead to realistic employment opportunities. Jason was supported to develop his resume, job interview skills and assisted to apply for various employment opportunities that helped him along his career path.

Jason was studying a school based pre-apprenticeship in painting and decorating as part of his WACE, but in July 2013 suffered a serious knee injury that required reconstructive surgery and prevented him from completing his course. The injury also made it unlikely he would be able to undertake an apprenticeship after school due to the recovery time from the injury. Jason was provided intensive support around linking in with treatment and rehabilitation services, negotiating compensation claims and general support to recover from the injury and maintain his attendance and engagement at school.

Jason’s injury left him needing to reassess his career and employment future, through a combination of case management and completion of a career guidance module of the North Metropolitan TAFE Jumpstart course, Jason was able to identify a clear career pathway towards his long term dream of becoming a palaeontologist, through completing TAFE courses in Aquaculture that would directly lead to employment.

During his time at Foyer, Jason was supported to develop skills relating to managing a tenancy with a particular focus on understanding the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords. Jason initially struggled with dealing with his tenancy manager directly, and would often seek support from his case manager to resolve any issues. Throughout his first year at Foyer, Jason required high levels of support with a particular focus on supporting him to develop his independent living skills and confidence in managing his own affairs. Once Jason had established a clear employment pathway, his case manager began a planned reduction in levels of support in order to encourage him to develop personal responsibility and independence from support services. Jason was encouraged to resolve problems using his own natural networks and mainstream services. With a planned reduction in support Jason became competent at independently managing his tenancy; and looking after his own needs.

Jason achieved a number of positive education and employment outcomes over his time at Foyer, successfully graduating year 12 with his WACE in 2013, completing a Certificate III & IV in Aquaculture in 2014. He was also supported by Foyer to complete a forklift license, recreational boat skipper’s license and a SCUBA qualification. Jason was able to gain and sustain part time employment to supplement his income while studying, and given him the financial independence to afford a private rental.

Jason was also able to maintain and improve the relationships he had with his family, and equally his sense of isolation was overcome through a connection with the community of residents at Foyer Oxford where he formed friendships with others that gave him Jason a sense of belonging and connection.

In December of 2014, Jason moved out of Foyer Oxford into a shared private rental, with the goal of continuing to work part time and apply for entry into a university bridging course in 2015 so that he could further pursue his employment dreams.

When contacted about his story being used in a case study – Jason provided the following quote;

*“It’s not a place to party, it’s a place to take two years of your life to work out what you want to do and sort things out. It gave me a stable place to complete my education and follow my dream of becoming a palaeontologist. If I didn’t come in to Foyer I would have just moved around friend’s houses. I probably would have dropped out of school and never gone to TAFE or believed that I could achieve my dream.”*