

Words By ALEX JACKSON  
Photos by IAIN GARRETT

# A BRIGHT NEW START

FOR Gary Anderson gaining independence, choice and his own surroundings has been a dramatic shift in fortunes.

Before Gary recently moved into his new home in Bournemouth with the help of long-term friend and support worker, Alex Saraiva, life was challenging and options were very limited.

Having lived in a hospital unit for more than 10 years in Dorset, as one of 17 residents, he found there were a lot of barriers put before him. Strict routines were put in place, many tasks were done for him and the general living atmosphere was somewhat lacking in personal touches.

However, since moving out of the ward into a new home there have already been significant changes in confidence, quality of life and life skills.

Just one glimpse of his new surroundings shows a homely, warm and comfortable new flat. Gary has imprinted his personality on the place with a big television taking pride of place in the lounge, his favourite films strewn across the floor and steam train magazines and toy cars that adorn the sofa and shelves. It seems remarkably distant from where he was previously living.

“Now he has his own independence and choice to do what he wants on a daily basis whether this means going to the shops or attending events and clubs.”



Gary and Alex share a joke

Alex, who has known and worked with Gary for more than three years, has noticed the considerable shift in attitude and character since moving.

“Before Gary lived with many people, some of whom had extremely severe disabilities which could lead to a noisy and aggressive atmosphere at times,” said Alex.

“Now he has his own independence and choice to do what he wants on a daily basis whether this means going to the shops or attending events and clubs.

“It took him a few days to get a feel for the new place and adapt, but the transition has been wonderful.”

Alex credited Ridgeway for its support in making such a big change in a person's life and said there were many noticeable differences. From the most simple of things such as having his own privacy to choosing his own guests, meals, clothes and activities, small changes have considerably improved his quality of life. Before he would often break CDs, boxes and spread rubbish during the night, but is now sleeping perfectly in his new bedroom.

What's noticeable from a few hours in the company of Gary is that he has a very good sense of humour and strong camaraderie with Alex. At the first mention of steam trains he's up like a shot and the very sight of Alan Sugar on the television spurs him into a “You're Fired” quip.

“We have built up a special bond and Gary is always making jokes. It is great to see him happy and gaining independence and choice and using lots of the local services on offer in the community whether it be doing the food shopping or flirting with the local hairdressers,” said Alex.

“It is just those little things that have helped Gary gain confidence and learn new skills and gain hobbies. He also likes to keep busy and as a big film fan loves the cinema, as well as his beloved steam trains.”

Gary already has a host of events lined up for the near future from a steam train ride to a pantomime. He is also getting a lot more exercise and living a healthier lifestyle with his parents now spending a lot more time in the flat visiting for lunch and helping furnish the rooms.

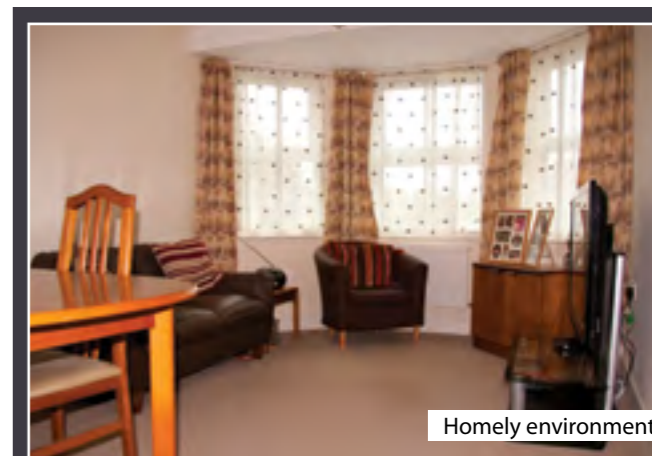
So as a content Gary sets off on a rain sodden day on another one of his Poole adventures, Alex helps bookend a rather uplifting story with the simple reflection: “Moving has made a noticeable difference to a good friend's confidence, and long may this continue.”

**Contact for further details**

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Homely environment



Gary heads off to Poole

**BUSINESS SUCCESS**

Two years of tendering and negotiating with Dorset County Council and Bournemouth Borough Council have recently culminated in the Trust being awarded the support packages for 17 people across the South East of the county. We are delighted with this result which takes us in to a new territory with special thanks going to Paula Hedges for overseeing the set up of the operation in Dorset, Dave Hughes for his costings and to the HR team for their ongoing work with transferring new staff over to the Trust.