

READING ROOM

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Peter's story

In the past Peter lived at home with his mother and younger brother and sister. When he left school he moved into a shared house with three other men. He and the other men had 24 hour support provided by an agency which had been purchased by Social Services. Peter did not know that other men and over time found that he had nothing in common with them. Peter said that it was hard to live with these men, "one shouted a lot", he said, and another man could "hit and bite".

Peter said, "I want my own place, I want to do things myself." The team of staff supporting Peter said, "He is not ready for this – he has recently been in a road accident" "He needs help with cooking".

Peter was part of the local People First Group. They were running a course called "Listen to Me". The course was to help people to think about their lives and how they are supported and to plan for the future. Peter went on the course because he thought it was a way of him getting a place of his own.

On the course Peter was supported to fill out the "Listen to Me" workbook. The workbook asked lots of questions about what is important to Peter, such as family, friends, important possessions, important routines, food that he likes and does not like, and about his dreams for his future.

Peter chose who he wanted to support him. He chose a student nurse. This was someone that Peter knew and got on well with, because of the student nurse's involvement with a local Citizen Advocacy group.

Peter completed the workbook and put photos about his likes in the book. There were two very important parts to this workbook for Peter – the part about Peter wanting his own place, and the part about wanting a holiday. Peter wanted help to make these things happen.

The student nurse supported Peter to plan his meeting. Peter decided to meet in a pub. He invited the manager of the service, his social worker, his key worker, other support workers from where he lived, and Suzanne, another member of People First. He chose the date and the time of the meeting and telephoned people to invite them.

At the meeting everyone had a drink and a meal. After the meal Peter told everyone about the course and shared his workbook. He told people that he wanted his own place. The student nurse and Suzanne helped Peter to speak up. Everyone at the meeting said they could see how important it was for Peter to have his own place. It was agreed to help Peter to find somewhere. Regular meetings were held to check how things were going and to find out if a place had been found. This kept everyone focussed on Peter's dream.

He said, "I love living on my own. I have my own place, my own money and help when I need it. Now I want a job!"

Six months later a place was found. Peter visited and liked it. He now lives in a brand new flat and support is available nearby. He has help with his cooking and uses taxis if he needs to travel a long distance at night. Three months after moving into his flat he went on holiday abroad to Spain.

