

## Leah's Story

Within my first few years at college I had many teachers ready to give up on me, luckily I had some teachers that stuck by me.

*“I stayed at someone's house on the floor for 3 months...”*

When going to the doctor's about my difficulties the response was *'I am just a happy girl'*. My family relationships broke down due to lack of understanding, my mental health was affected. My GP then misdiagnosed me with Cyclothymia. I was then referred for a mental health assessment. March 2014 I was diagnosed with ADHD, but she felt there were other issues that she could not work out, this highlights the importance of professionals understanding female traits in Autism. Three months after I became homeless, I was moved into student accommodation which I then got referred for treatment for my ADHD. Two months after I was given medication for my ADHD and also diagnosed with Aspergers. Reflecting on this part of my life already highlights how different things may have been if my conditions were identified by professionals. Two GPs were unable to identify ADHD or Autism and one psychiatrist was only able to identify ADHD due to the obvious hyperactivity signs. If these professionals picked up on my traits earlier it may have not had such serious effects on my mental health but also may have enabled me to receive the right support that I required.

*“Two GPs were unable to identify ADHD or Autism...”*

I progressed onto a university course at the college. I had amazing tutors by my side, helping me learn strategies to enable me to deal with many difficult situations.

I became homeless again in June 2017 due to demolition of the student accommodation. I was given no support including being refused help from social services. I was refused help from hostels due to being in education. I was told to quit my degree to get a home. I stayed at someone's house on the floor for 3 months, this had a massive impact on my mental health as I was very close to not wanting to wake up any more. I begged many services for help to get me somewhere to live, I received emails explaining they could not do anything, again I was left on my own. It was hard hearing time after time from different services how they could not help me, usually down to funding or my conditions not being severe enough. Eventually, November 2017 I moved into a council flat, where I now feel settled. After all my challenges I have now graduated receiving a 2.1 BA Hons in Early Childhood Studies and now support children with Autism.



I'm part of an amazing group at Resources for Autism with incredible staff that try to understand my Autism and ADHD as much as they can which I'm really thankful for. I don't think I would be managing so well without having that group to go to. This highlights the importance of support being available with trained professionals to accept them for who they are.

*“...my ADHD just wants to go crazy and against everyone around me whereas my Autism just wants some order and structure...”*

Many people that support individuals from becoming homeless do not think of the barriers caused for people with Autism and ADHD, due to my Autism I struggled communicating with other support services due to my anxiety answering phone calls this then seemed to them that I no longer needed the support when actually that was not the case, then when looking at how my ADHD was affected, I found my impulsiveness was much harder to control but also the urge to resist alcohol was even stronger as I felt that was one thing that enabled me to go into my world and forget everything however my ADHD symptoms were so much harder to control when drinking. Having ADHD and Autism is like a battle of two brains against each other, my ADHD just wants to go crazy and against everyone around me whereas my Autism just wants some order and structure, so when homeless it was both conditions that struggled just as much, even though ADHD loves to go a bit crazy I needed the structure to contain my impulsive symptoms. This highlights how these conditions can be impacted in many different ways when no support or structure is provided, my mental health overall was at crisis point but if this support was provided it may not have got to that point.

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