

Helping give back childhoods to kids like Jack



Jack and his family lived with daily violence until we helped them rebuild their lives.

Eight-year-old Jack grew up shielding his two younger brothers and sisters from their father's violent rages.

Jack started missing school to look after the younger children. They often went hungry and became sick due to lack of hygiene.

One day, workers from Family and Community Services turned up with police and removed the children. They were placed with Barnardos short-term foster carers and received medical care for various health problems including conjunctivitis, lice and severe nappy rash.

Jack's mother was placed in Barnardos emergency accommodation and received domestic violence counselling to deal with her trauma as well as legal support. She also completed parenting courses to help rebuild her capacity to care for her children.

Jack and his siblings slowly got into a routine with their foster carers and visited their mum every week. Jack began regularly attending school and counselling for the trauma he had suffered. After months of intensive family support, Jack's mum was moved to a new house and shortly after was reunited with her children.

Jack is now doing well at school and making friends. He has ongoing counselling and the younger children have been supported with play therapy.

As Jack's mum says, "We're strong, we are in a good place now."



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Helping to break the cycle of abuse for more families



Baby Liam was in danger of being taken into foster care until his mum Kyla received the support she so urgently needed.

17-year-old Kyla was abused as a child and suffers from anxiety and depression. Her relationship with her ex-partner was physically and verbally abusive.

Kyla came to the attention of a Barnardos youth worker when she was six months pregnant a living in a friend's car. We immediately found her a safe place to stay in our temporary accommodation program and helped her set up everything she needed for her baby's arrival. We provided practical and emotional support throughout the birth of her baby boy, Liam.

Following the birth, Kyla suffered post-natal depression and her caseworker noticed she was self-harming. We were on hand to make sure Kyla received the mental health and parenting support she needed. Keen to learn more about how to keep her baby safe and healthy, Kyla completed our evidence-based SafeCare program, which focuses on building strong and positive interactions between parents and their children. The program has been shown to reduce child neglect and harm by 26 per cent.

"Barnardos believed in me even when I didn't. Without them I would probably be homeless, using drugs and could have lost my baby or worse. They helped me when I was at such a low point in my life when I had given up on everything. I learnt how to take care of myself and be the best mum for Liam."

Ten months later and Kyla and Liam are now doing well. They attend Barnardos supported playgroups and both mum and son are making friends. Liam also attends Long Day Care three days a week and Kyla is attending TAFE with ambitions to become a beauty therapist.



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Helping to build resilience in teenagers today



Troy supports teenagers to build their skills to cope with adversity.

Nyngan is a small, isolated town in rural NSW that has been greatly impacted by drought and where mental health amongst young men is a significant concern.

Aboriginal youth worker Troy is determined to make sure young men in his hometown of Nyngan do not go through the same hardships he did growing up.

After going down the wrong path in his younger years, Troy began mentoring teens in his boxing gym and teaching them how to deal with life's challenges.

"I'm probably lucky to still be here with some of the things I used to do", Troy says.

Troy was bullied quite savagely in his youth. As the tallest and biggest in his group, he would often be targeted in fights and get into trouble sticking up for his friends. Troy started drinking at the age of 15 and became involved with drugs. "I did have my own boxing trainer and I was going fairly good at it, then just got involved with drinking and drugs too young," he says.

Thankfully, Troy was able to turn his life around and now runs the boxing program 'Still Standing' from his gym. The boys involved in the program are all at risk of disengaging from school. A long-term impact of early school leaving is a far greater risk of homelessness and poor lifelong outcome in health, employment and contact with the criminal justice system.

The 'Still Standing' program really speaks for itself. Troy says, 'Life has taught me that we all face difficult struggles, whether it's physical or mental issues, but no matter how many times we get knocked down, we have to get back up again. What we teach them is to never give up on yourself, circumstances will get better, you just have to believe in yourself'.



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