

## Case Study – Tina

Connections UnitingCare through its SHIFT (Supporting Homeless Individuals and Families in Transition) program endeavours to break the cycle of homelessness by assisting clients to obtain stability and autonomy in their own lives. Here we share the story of one former client Tina, who was able to turn her life around after struggling for so many years.



From a young age Tina was exposed to many things that a child should never have to endure, things that she will hold with her forever. The eldest of three siblings to a single mother, Tina was raised in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. Life was never easy. Tina had grown up in a challenging environment exposed at a very early age to physical, mental and sexual abuse, she experienced depression and a key family member was unable to receive effective treatment for serious mental illness. It wasn't long until Tina found her life spiraling out of control...

*'I guess it was quite abusive growing up and I don't think I understood back then, whereas now I do; I know what's wrong.'*

Moving on from the family home at the age of 17, Tina, like any young person had dreams. She became a partner and a mother but soon found her situation changing. Separating from her partner, Tina had no choice but to move back to her old family home, where she soon found herself slipping back into old habits as the pressure of living in a house that held so many demons for her, quickly became too much.

*'I hadn't gambled since I left home, it had laid dormant in me. But I guess it was just a way to cover all the emotions that I was trying to block.'*

Attempting unsuccessfully once more to get her life on track, and with her addictions consuming her life, Tina and her young son began relying on her friends to provide them with temporary accommodation - arriving late and leaving early so as not to outstay their welcome. (Tina did this for many months only staying one or two nights at a time). It was at this point she realised that she needed help and was referred to Connections UnitingCare.

*'I wasn't being honest about my addiction and it wasn't until the day that I did, that I realised how long I had been screaming out for help.'*

It was through the relationship with Connections' SHIFT program that Tina was finally able to receive the help she desperately sought. Tina worked tirelessly with her Connections workers to put the pieces of her life back together. She was placed in transitional housing and was finally able to admit that she had a problem.

*'Through Connections, I worked on strategies on how to cope and how to recognise issues and just to work on things.'*

Now living in her own house and having a regular steady income, Tina is starting to see the benefits of having her life back on track. She attends her meetings on a regular basis and recently celebrated the milestone of being abstinent for one year. She has learnt how to feel emotions again and set boundaries for herself and her son, who is also thriving from having a mother who is there for him.

*'I guess in a way I know I did it myself but it was nice that someone was there to give me a bit of a kick in the bottom. My Connections worker was there like I had a partner, but she didn't live with me but she understood me.'*

**Connections UnitingCare is a community organisation with a long and proud history of supporting marginalised and disadvantaged people.** We offer a range of services across a continuum of care from preschool and childcare through to counselling and in-home support. We provide innovative and early intervention programs that support children, young people and their families giving them a better chance in life now and in the future.

For more information visit [www.connections.org.au](http://www.connections.org.au)