

# WALTER'S STORY

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"I was lost, and that affected my mental health," Walter told us when describing his condition before getting in touch with HOS.

In 2017 Walter was discharged from the Armed Forces; he had served in Afghanistan, where he sustained a leg injury. Inadequate housing significantly affected his mental health, and as he was suffering from depression, he would rarely leave home to connect with the outside world. Walter's housing conditions and a long-lasting struggle to find a more suitable home had a severely negative impact on his everyday life and on the well-being of the whole family.

When Walter contacted us, he was living with his wife, four children and their dog. They were renting a house from a private landlord who had just served them a Notice to Quit, giving them three months to find a new place. They had been seeking more suitable accommodation for four years due to their home feeling overcrowded and too small for a family of six. Still, they had not been able to find anything alternative that was spacious enough to fit them all. Finding a 3-4-bedroom home can be challenging, and Walter's family was renting in the private sector due to a lack of suitable social housing.

Walter knew how difficult it would be to find a new home. He had lost his job due to mental health reasons, which he felt was already a burden on his family and, as his wife works from home, being evicted and put in temporary accommodation would have had further financial consequences on his household. Walter had previously registered with his local authority housing services. Still, when he contacted them after receiving the Notice to Quit from his landlord, he discovered that they had been removed from the waiting list. It was a grim situation and Walter felt unsure of what to do.

This was when his local Citizens Advice Bureau and veterans' charity organisation suggested he seek support from HOS.

"I had no idea where to start looking for housing, and then HOS got in touch with me; Ryan came in and took charge of everything. He got in touch with housing associations, with SSAFA, and from there, everything went in a positive direction [...] I wouldn't have known where to go, all the processes, I had no idea how to do it all, and you guys stepped in and made it so much easier for me".

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Walter eventually accepted an offer for a house from one of the housing providers we got in touch with, and this had a positive impact on the well-being of the whole family from the earliest stages of the letting process:

“When they made me an offer, I took my family with me [to the house viewing] to look at it, all at the same time. And I watched my family, and for the first time in years, I could see them happy. They were so happy; that’s what made up my mind [to accept the offer].”

We asked Walter about his new home where he and his family moved in a month ago, and he said that they love living there: “the beach is about 5 minutes walk, the house is surrounded by play parks, there’s a stadium, we’ve got everything at a walking distance”. It’s a 3-bedroom house over two floors, with a garden, and Walter said that “it’s actually fantastic”.

“If HOS weren’t there”, Walter added, “my family would have been homeless or in emergency accommodation”, and his advice for other people looking for a home is “try not to do it all yourself, on your own, because this can drag you down, ask for help from Ryan and HOS”.

*This case study was written by a Veteran Volunteer, as part of the Veteran Volunteers programme, as funded by the Veterans Foundation.*

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