# Disability Champion: Sam

[Voiceover]

At 21, Sam seems to have it all together – he's at Uni and loving it.

But until recently, his life was very different.

[Sam, Disability Champion]

The future is looking a bit more brighter than it used to be. The way’s open now, like I've a road I can follow, not just wandering around in the dark.

[Voiceover]

Sam's on the Disability Support Pension. He's hearing impaired and he says it's one of the reasons his life went off the rails four years ago.

[Sam]

They do say that a lot of people with hearing impairment do lose their way. Guys when they start to notice girls, they might feel down because of their hearing impairment. They can't really feel like they can talk to them or whatever and they kind of lose confidence in themselves. That kind of turned people against me at school. Then after a while, I eventually looked outside. I had a car so it was easy to get into a bad group because all I had to do is drive them everywhere. You've got your mates and you get into drugs and drinking.

[Voiceover]

Then one day Sam made a decision, moved back home and started studying psychology.

[Sam]

I was working just being a machine in a factory job, just greasing trays and after a while, you just tell yourself, ‘I wish I got an education’. I just couldn't stand there day after day just making food or whatever. I wanted to make my life mean something. I just couldn't bear continuing drugs. I just decided, ‘stuff this, I'll make a change’. Once I started understanding I saw past all the smoke and drug haze, I passed that wall. I could understand more about myself. I could get my thoughts together, and get up and say, ‘that's it’. Psychology helped me a lot.

[Voiceover]

For Sam's parents, it was a harrowing four years – but in some ways they understood.

[Susan, Sam's mother]

A lot of people confuse, people with hearing impairment they think that they have other mental problems because they just go into themselves, because they can't hear what's going on. That’s what happens.

[Eric, Sam's father]

It just creates problems because they are different and it's always been the case with the thing with Sam, he’s just hated being different.

[Voiceover]

It's only early days but Sam has come some distance already – gaining valuable confidence from trying out different casual jobs.

[Peter, Employment Consultant, Personnel West]

Just a totally different person from the one who came here that didn't really know what he wanted to do and, you know, was always in a bit of trouble. Now he’s really focused on what he wants to achieve, and as far as I know, stays out of trouble.

He really has a goal and he’s pushing forward to work towards that, and he's doing most of it himself. We're just here providing that support to him when he needs it.

[Voiceover]

Sam's studies lead him to volunteering for his local Police Citizens Youth Club.

[Sam]

Psychology is the one I am most interested in because I want to work towards getting into forensics and criminal psychology. I applied to an apprenticeship at the police force but they didn't have any positions left available. So they directed me over there and if I do well enough in that period of time, then they will eventually offer me an apprenticeship in the police force.

[Voiceover]

Now he's helping kids with a disability.

[Sam]

It's good to help out other people with disability because of the ways you can relate to them, and you know that they want. They need help sometimes, even though they don't ask for it but sometimes they just need help.

[Voiceover]

Sam's wild lifestyle has taken a toll on his health recently and he has had to cut back on his studies. But he says there's no going back.

[Susan]

Eric said to me one day, this is the happiest we've seen Sam for so long, I'm too scared to think this is going to last.

[Eric]

Exactly. I think you can understand what it’s like, when they are having so many problems like that when all you want is for them to be happy, you know. To have what everybody else has got.

[Sam]

I want to make my life mean something and that's what drives me, so I will able to leave something on this world that’s in a good way for a change.

[Text on screen]

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