

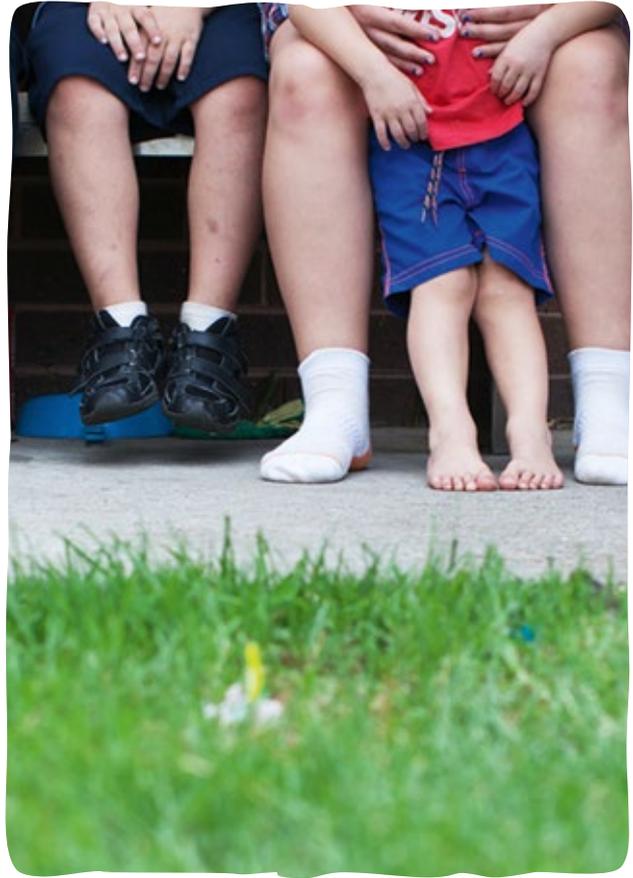
I was just four years old when we were first sent to live with our aunt and uncle.

I don't remember much about that time, but what I do remember is having to look after my younger brother James when we were living with Mum. I had to protect him.

Our mum and dad could not look after us, they had no money for basic stuff like food and nappies. We watched them struggle with drug abuse, which led to them neglecting us kids. Looking after four kids under 12 was too much.

My sister and two brothers and I have been living with Aunty Pam for 15 years now, this is home. Me and James even call her mum, she is our mum.

Things were pretty crazy when we first moved in. There was not enough room for us kids, our cousin and our aunt and uncle. We were living on top of each other – seven of us crammed into a three-bedroom house. There was never enough room.



A WELCOME CHANGE

The studio changed everything. My older sister Erin moved into the studio. Erin was 16 and needed her own space, privacy and a quiet place to study and the extra bathroom made a huge difference. Everyone was much happier and things at home started to settle down, things became more normal.

I received my first Kids Under Cover scholarship when I was in year 10. My sister Erin, and my two brothers also received scholarships, so did our cousin.

After our uncle died things were tough financially. Without the help of the scholarships Aunty Pam would not have been able to afford to pay for a lot of things. We had the essentials, but didn't have extra money to buy textbooks, pay for excursions or uniforms, let alone such things as a laptop or an iPad.

A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Not only did the studio make a huge difference to our family, the scholarships helped all of us to follow our dreams. My brother Tony is a qualified chef. James is now in year 10 and wants to be a painter, or a mechanic and I finished my VCE and am now a third-year hairdressing apprentice.

Without the helping hand of a scholarship I don't think we could have continued with our education, Kids Under Cover really did help us to follow our dreams and believe in a future.

— Amy

