

Glow's Changing Futures Case Coordinator Kath has supported 47-year-old Jessica* since August 2022.

When Kath met Jessica, she was living at local homelessness charity Concrete's female only service in Stoke-on-Trent. Concrete and Glow are both part of Honeycomb Group in Staffordshire. The charities work closely together to create happy homes and support people across the region.

For many years Jessica had been a sex worker. She had been very glamorous and travelled across the Mediterranean as part of her work. Kath explained that Jessica is now a completely different person. She's doubly incontinent due to health problems so is often covered in urine and faeces. Kath said she tries hard to clean herself up, but still struggles.

Jessica is also a heroin user. Around seven years ago she went into rehab, gave up sex work and stopped taking drugs. She stayed clean for several years but eventually relapsed. Kath said that Jessica has no intention of giving up heroin and will also use monkey dust as a substitute when she cannot afford heroin.

At Concrete's female only service, Jessica had a large support network of peers and staff. She would find it hard to trust people so Kath worked hard to slowly get to know her and built up a really good relationship.

One of Jessica's biggest wishes was to move on from Concrete's female service and have her own tenancy – she didn't want to go into supported housing. She expressed this and was invited to attend an MDT meeting to discuss it. Kath said that it was really important for her to attend to represent and advocate for herself with agencies and professionals.

After the meeting it was decided that if some care support could be provided, Jessica could go to live in a homeless unit on a six-month license. If she was successful at maintaining her accommodation there, she would move on to her own tenancy afterwards. This was great news for Jessica as it was exactly what she wanted.

A homeless unit was sourced for Jessica, alongside care support, so between Concrete, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Changing Futures, plans were put in place to move her into her new accommodation. Jessica and Kath used her Changing Futures personal budget to make her new flat feel like home – this included a washer, dryer, home accessories and comfort items.

Kath said that Jessica's transition into her new flat has been 'a great example of joint working' between different local services. Jessica had a large team around her at Concrete's female service, but now she has a smaller, yet still effective, team at the homeless unit. She has 12 hours of support each week from Trident to help her with shopping and attending appointments but is otherwise really independent.

Jessica enjoys cleaning her flat and likes to keep it tidy. Kath said it's her way of showing how far she's come, how independent she is and how seriously she's taking her new responsibility. Jessica has also enjoyed doing 'normal' things with Kath, such as going to Hanley for a couple of hours to shop and have lunch, which she said was 'lovely'.

Jessica has been at the homeless unit in her own flat for three months so far and is doing really well. Kath said that it 'means a lot' for Jessica to have been given this opportunity to have her wish of living more independently. Her next steps are to complete her six-month license and move on to her own tenancy.

Kath said that Jessica will always need support, both from Trident and Changing Futures, but she's doing well, learning to pay her bills and becoming more independent. Kath is proud of how far she's come and will continue to support her for as long as she needs it.

*name changed