

Jess's Story



"The other day, when I was brushing my daughter's hair, she said, 'I love my long caramel hair.' It came so naturally to her to compliment herself. I loved that. I knew right there and then I'd keep encouraging her and my son to do the same – because confidence wasn't something I naturally had."

Jess lives with ADHD, depression and social anxiety. She'd never learned how to look after her own wellbeing – until she was referred to Home-Start Winchester.

"I was 17 when I found out I was pregnant. My boyfriend and I lived with my mum. When my daughter arrived, I didn't feel much – just numb."

"My midwife spent a lot of time with me. She was worried about my mental health and asked if she could refer me to Home-Start Winchester. I wasn't that bothered and didn't feel like I needed help. Mum felt differently – she'd been through postnatal depression herself and shared her concerns when Anne from Home-Start came over."

Anne offered to match Jess with a volunteer who would visit weekly. A week later, Anne introduced Kay.

"I was open with Kay and said I didn't see how she could help. She just asked me to give it a little time."

As Jess's relationship worsened, Kay's support became invaluable.

"Kay is so instinctive. She knew what I needed even before I did. When I broke up with my boyfriend, she helped me pick up the pieces."

Suffering from social anxiety and with few friends, Jess struggled to go out. Kay gently encouraged her to join baby groups and came with her until she felt comfortable going alone.

"When I did something by myself, Kay celebrated it. Every time she praised me, I felt proud. Without realising, she was building my confidence."

Kay asked Jess about her next steps. Jess mentioned college but felt it was out of reach.

"She told me about 15 hours' childcare funding, and suddenly college became a real option. I enrolled that September."

Organisation was a challenge, but Kay helped Jess stay on track—finding a childminder and supporting her to start a Level 2 motorsports mechanics' course.

"I became confident and capable. I had friends. I was studying something I'd always loved."

Kay supported Jess for over 18 months.

"When she said I didn't need her anymore, I cried. It felt like losing family. But I also knew another mum needed her as much as I had."

Jess went on to complete Level 3. Life had changed—she'd met a new partner and was pregnant with her son. When her midwife mentioned Home-Start again, her response was immediate.



"I bit her hand off. I asked if Kay was still volunteering – she was! Once again, she helped me get ready: baby clothes, a Moses basket, walks, coffee, chores. She'd take the children out so I could nap or catch up on housework. She even got a star chart for my daughter. Kay helped me become the parent I wanted to be."

Home-Start also enrolled Jess in their nurturing programme, focused on positive parenting.

"I made great friends. It boosted my confidence and got me thinking about my future. I started my own mobile maintenance business – doing brake disc changes and diagnostics on the doorstep." After a few months Jess was successful in securing herself a part time job in a local garage

Jess also joined Home-Start's wellbeing course. When she suggested creating a workbook to support the sessions, Jane from Home-Start asked her to help produce one. Jess then supported delivery of the course itself.

"I was asked if I'd volunteer at one of the family groups. I already helped out at sessions, so it felt natural." Jess completed the training for a group volunteer and now supports our young parents.

Now, Jess is thriving.

"I get such joy helping others. Volunteering is my way of saying thank you. Home-Start gave me the confidence to build the life I wanted. My business is growing, my kids are happy, and I'm in a position to help other mums deal with whatever life – or children! – throw at us."



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