

WEST LoTHIAN WOMEN'S AID CLIENT TESTIMONIES - 2020

Testimonies from women who have used the service

In 2018 I finally got the courage to leave my long-term relationship of 8 years I was in from the age of 16 years old. I was 26 years old with my little boy who was only one.

I had experienced many years of domestic abuse which I wasn't aware that was abuse. Financially I was affected along with emotionally. I wasn't aware that domestic abuse can come in all forms and it doesn't need to just be 'physical abuse.'

Eventually my mental health took affect and I had to better the life for me and my son. I used Woman's Aid service with my son and the support I received was fantastic. They honestly have changed my life for the better. I can now dream again; I've gained my confidence back with losing 2 stone in weight and have begun to love myself again.

My life was a blur before, the only thing that kept me holding on was my son but I knew I had to better not only myself but the life I want for him, and thanks to West Lothian Woman's Aid I have managed this.

I have managed to build myself up again making my house a home. Financially, they have given me the support to sort the debt out I was left in, my son's development has come on leaps and bounds now he can see his mummy is happy and achieving in life.

Since the aged of 16 and with this being my first serious relationship now, I'm out

it I can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I can't thank this service enough. I was in an extremely dark place before I learned about what Woman's Aid do and how they can help and now I'm out the other end I've managed to Lothian Woman's Aid if it wasn't for your help and support, I wouldn't be where I am today.

I fell in love with who I thought was the love of my life, the first 6 months where amazing, I felt so special and the most loved woman in the world.

Then cracks started to show, and our relationship became strained. He got very jealous when I went out with friends, he started to comment on my appearance, but I just thought it was because he cared so much about me.

I then fell pregnant with his baby we were both so happy but again things started to be strained again. One night we were out, and he got angry with me and pulled the hand break up while I was driving. Again, I just thought that I had obviously done something wrong. Christmas Eve came in 2018 and he promised to make us all Christmas dinner. I bought everything in.

I woke up Christmas morning and he went out and never came back that day. My 3 children's Christmas was not how it should have been and my memory is crying
cooking Christmas dinner.

I forgive and forgot, and we got back together but again the awful comments came. I lost my job because all my confidence had gone.

Over the period of my pregnancy things were so hard. He came back into our life and left just as quickly. It was always me the reason that he had to leave because I was a liar and such a terrible person and a disgusting person.

I believed all this and hardly ever left the house I had lost my glow and the fun-loving person I was.

I gave birth to a beautiful baby boy and things were ok again but rest assured things turned for the worse again very soon. I was low in confidence anyway with lots of sleepless nights and not feeling good about myself.

I felt like every day my life and soul was getting hammered out of me. The only word I can use to describe who I was then was SAD.

Unfortunately, I got to a breaking point and things got really bad and it was at this point I contacted the Domestic and Sexual Assault Team in West Lothian. They were amazing. They then referred me to West Lothian Woman's Aid who could not have been more understanding. I really thought I was the bad person.

I remember the first time I went into the Woman's Aid office. I was made to feel so at ease and safe from the world I had been living in.

I went to stay in self-contained accommodation with my 4 children all the support workers were amazing and made sure I had everything that I needed. All 4 boys were given a welcome pack of games and fun things for us to do as a family. I couldn't remember the last time we had done this.

I was assigned a Support Worker who came out to visit me every week and was always on the other end of the phone.

My children really suffered through everything and they were also assigned a support worker.

We were given food hampers to help us get started and the boys were all given beds and bed sheets.

I couldn't believe how happy my children were here. We would lie on the couch and have movie nights and spend time together. I had felt like I had really let my children down We spent Christmas in our self-contained accommodation.

All 4 of my boys where gifted Christmas presents, and this took a huge weight from my mind. And for the first time in a very long time I was given a Christmas present and I felt so special and that someone cared for me.

Me and my family had a lovely Christmas and this would not of been the case without the help and support of Woman's Aid.

We stayed in our property and continued to get the help and support of my Worker and the Child Support Worker. The boys Support Worker went into the school to see them and this was amazing for the boys to have someone to talk to in complete confidence and really helped.

The world then went into a lockdown and things got so hard. You feel totally isolated and, in a home, where the kids didn't have any of their belongings or Wi-Fi.

It was at this point again that West Lothian Women's Aid gave us amazing support it was agreed to get Wi-Fi for us, so the boys where so happy. We were given food parcels every week and the boys got so excited when these arrived.

The support I got from my Worker helped me so much through this hard time just to have someone to talk to. I also took up the offer of a course to help me that Women's Aid offer in West Lothian called "Freedom" and the Worker who took this course has the most amazing bubbly personality and me personally just hearing her voice made me burst into tears as she is so understanding or gave me that fighting spirit.

I also continued to do counselling offered by Women's Aid through lockdown. It was over zoom so even though we were in lockdown having these zoom meetings happen through the week gave me that support and some adult conversation.

The boys where all gifted arts and craft to do through lockdown, games and the most amazing thing was they were given a trampoline my boys where so happy to have this and got them outside playing together.

Through these 6 months I had good days and bad days and sometimes I could not see that things were going to get better.

I remember having a conversation with my Support Worker telling her that I couldn't do it anymore I didn't want to be here.

I had never felt this low before, I just needed our forever home so bad to make a fresh start for us all but my Worker calmed me down and just listened to me and that's what I needed to pick myself back up.

Then that phone call came in August offering us our own home I felt like the world had been lifted of my shoulders and I remember the first person I wanted to tell was my Support Worker as they become your rock and someone you want to share the good times and bad times with. You know they want to listen and are just as excited as you are when you get some good news.

We were given our keys to our property and my Worker was right on the phone helping me with grants that were available to us.

The boys all got beds, we got all our white goods, we got everywhere carpeted except our Hall. We were given curtains, and this was amazing but then there was another grant that my worker got for us and this got the boys a trampoline for their forever home we got our hall carpeted.

We got a dining table so we could sit as a family and enjoy dinner time again together. The boys all got tablets and a laptop to help them with their schoolwork and there was so much more.

I decorated my house myself and was so proud and everyday my confidence built up again and out of nowhere. I started to feel like you can do this, and that fighting spirit came back. I woke up feeling good; my boys were all happy and we were completely settled in our new forever home again. Without the help of Woman's Aid to help us build our forever home things would not have been so easy.

I continued to get the support from Woman's Aid.

Then, came the time for us to be signed of as a family I felt a bit nervous about this but knew I was ready.

I will never be able to thank Woman's Aid enough for everything that they have done for me and my family. That's what we are now, we are back being a family in our forever home. My boys have started to talk to me again the good days outweigh the bad days and I wake up feeling good, safe and happy.

If I think back to the beginning of my journey as I said the only way to describe me was "SAD". Not anymore! I am happy, confident, and now don't take any negativity in my life I now have the approach that if people don't like how I do things in life then they are obviously not meant to be in my circle. I won't change who I am for anyone. I have everyone around me who is important and that is my 4 boys and my dog.

If anyone reading this is feeling unsure or nervous about approaching Woman's Aid for help please don't they are an amazing organisation. They help you feel safe and help you build your life back and find yourself again and most importantly bring that smile back on your children's faces.

I left my situation with my 4 children and now we are in our forever home and could not be happier thank you West Lothian Woman's Aid from the bottom of my heart

X