

withyou

## A path to recovery: Kelly from Darlington shares her drug recovery story

**For immediate release**

*"I can't change anything that happened but it's not what defines me – today is what defines me." From spending £300 a day on crack cocaine to working with a charity that helped save her life.*

Kelly from Darlington began 'experimenting' with drugs in her late teens, using a mix of substances including cannabis and LSD. She was first introduced to crack cocaine at the age of 22, using it alongside other drugs and alcohol.

Having started to use crack cocaine, Kelly found the strength to reconsider her decision and stopped. It was after a family-related bereavement, a difficult relationship which included domestic violence and post-natal depression that Kelly began taking crack cocaine again alongside cocaine and alcohol in 2022. She was spending up to £300 a day on crack cocaine and she worked to support her family and to help fund her drug use.

Kelly was able to mask her substance use for a time but after deep struggles with her mental health alongside drug use, her children were placed into care.

After reaching breaking point, Kelly sought support from local drug and alcohol support service, WithYou in Darlington at STRIDE. She built a strong relationship with her key worker, Heather and other members of the team who helped Kelly find a path to recovery.

Kelly's children have been legally returned to her care and she is now working within the Darlington team and partners Recovery Connections, to support others through their own recovery journey. You can hear from Kelly directly as she tells her own story in this powerful video: <https://f.io/QbJUkkrA>

**Kelly said:**

"I'd gone through postnatal depression – almost died from giving birth to my little boy. I had to be strong, so I just masked everything that was going on with me and drugs.

"There was so much going on with my mental health – so much hurt. My sister's partner died in 2015, I was in a toxic relationship – he was a heavy drinker, there was domestic violence. The person that I was, was very chaotic; I dealt with things in the wrong way. I was irrational and up in the air.

"The day I ruined myself was by picking up crack cocaine again. It was just a release for me. It just took away all those emotions and those feelings. It had such a detrimental effect on my mental health – I didn't want to be here any more. In April 2022, my children were temporarily removed from my care.

"I came to WithYou absolutely broken. It was the hardest time of my life. I wanted my children home. I wanted to do anything I had to do – I had to reach out. I wanted anything and anyone to help me sort my life out, and thankfully I got that help.

"I saw Heather and she was my WithYou key worker. She was amazing – such a mother figure and someone who understands and had that belief in me. I ended up being part of the furniture. As opposed to running to a drug or running away, I'd come here to talk and get some clarity rather than knocking on a dealer's door. I knew I was getting better and healing and making the right choices and decisions. I had to get my head down and push through under difficult circumstances.

"It's being around people who understand you, who aren't judging you, who have got the answers – you have to do the work but you've got guidance. It's not about people looking down on you for your mistakes or choices – they're giving alternatives. They're giving you that second chance when you need it the most.

"I'm proud of myself. I'm grounded and content and positive and I love myself and the people around me. I want to be able to support others. It is achievable and doable and I know I'm living proof of it. I wouldn't have gotten to where I am today without WithYou."

Thanks to the determination and support of Kelly and WithYou, it has been nearly two years since the last time Kelly used crack cocaine. Despite a number of huge challenges and legal processes, her children were legally returned to her care; a "beautiful" time for Kelly and her family.

**Gary Besterfield, Head of Service Delivery at WithYou in Darlington at STRIDE, said:**

“Every single member of staff including our partners are proud of Kelly. From being in the place she was to being able to fully engage with the help offered and achieve what she achieved through sheer determination, is incredible.

“It might seem overwhelming to others who find themselves in a similar situation, but there is help, there is light and we are ready to support you – without judgement.

“We really want to encourage anyone who’s struggling with alcohol or drugs, to reach out for help. We are with you, every step of the way.”

Kelly is concerned about similar challenges faced by others, especially mothers and wants to advocate for them, addressing the stigma often associated with addiction or accessing support. Kelly is grateful for the support of WithYou and partners like Recovery Connections, and proud of her strength and determination which helped heal her family and herself.

**Kelly added:**

“Visible recovery is massive, especially from people with lived experience who are relatable and not going to hide. I can't change anything that happened but it's not what defines me – today is what defines me.”

If you or someone you know is struggling with alcohol or drugs in Darlington contact call 01325 809 810 or visit the website [wearewithyou.org.uk](https://wearewithyou.org.uk) for more information or to use our free, confidential webchat service.

**ENDS**

**Notes to editors**

- Supporting photo of Kelly
- Video of Kelly telling her story: <https://f.io/QbJUkkrA>
- A spokesperson from WithYou will be available for interview (upon request)

**For more information and spokespeople requests, please contact the WithYou press office at [pressoffice@wearewithyou.org.uk](mailto:pressoffice@wearewithyou.org.uk) or by calling 07929877401**

**About WithYou**

WithYou is a leading drug, alcohol and mental health charity operating across England and Scotland. Each year we work with more than 100,000 people in over 120 locations, providing a free and confidential service without judgement to adults and young people experiencing issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health. [www.wearewithyou.org.uk](http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk)