

Donna



Donna had a fairly typical childhood. She grew up in a nice neighbourhood with both her parents. At the age of 14, she was the victim of a sexual assault. Donna and her parents found it hard to access mental health support to help her process the trauma. She started smoking cannabis as a way of self-medicating. Her friendship group fell apart and she made friends with other people who were involved in drugs. At 16, she got pregnant. After the initial shock, she was looking forward to becoming a mother but her baby sadly died at 3 months old from SIDS. Her mental health spiralled down after that.

Her parents found it increasingly hard to deal with her erratic behaviour and kicked her out of the family home. Donna went to live with a friend for a while.

She met a new boyfriend when she was 18 and she moved in with him rather quickly. Her new partner was financially, emotionally and physically abusive but without much of a support network, Donna couldn't see a way out of the relationship.

She had another child at age 21. Donna worked as a carer for a while but she had to give up paid work to care for her own child. Her child is autistic with high sensory needs which means he doesn't cope well with noise and overcrowding.

A year ago, Donna fled the family home with her son and now, lives in temporary accommodation. The accommodation is an hour's journey away from the child's school and they go there by bus which leads to daily meltdowns. Ideally, the child needs specialist school but the council refused to issue an EHCP following a needs assessment. Donna may have appealed this decision but she couldn't afford a solicitor and did not have the confidence to make the appeal on her own. She jointly owns the property that her partner has remained in which affects her benefits and limits her access to Homechoice.

Donna is creative and is trying to earn a living around her care commitments by selling jewellery on Facebook Marketplace and at fairs. But she finds it hard to work consistently as she suffers from poor mental health and PTSD. She also still smokes cannabis regularly as a way of coping.

There is currently no court order in place with regards to visitation of the child. However, Donna was worried that her partner was going to use parental alienation as a way of removing her son from her care so she has given him the address of her temporary accommodation so he can pick up and drop off the child. But this means he is still able to control and terrorise her regularly. She would like to move to a different accommodation, somewhere safe and quiet that would be more suited to her child but ideally, she also needs some sort of community that she can lean on for support.

She needs more support with her child and she's probably not claiming all the benefits that she is entitled to but she is currently so overwhelmed, she can't face all the forms she needs to fill in. She would also like to have mental health support that she can access around her childcare commitments.

