

The Nova Project, Reading:

Supporting women to leave homelessness behind for good

Last year we supported **2,166** women across our residential services. We recognise that a woman's experience of homelessness is very different to that of a man. That's why we continue to create innovative safe spaces for women accessing our services. Deputy Manager, Nell, looks back on opening up a women's only space, the Nova Project, during the pandemic.

This year has obviously been really challenging, so we were incredibly pleased and proud to open our doors in January 2021, providing 10 bedspace accommodation to women who have long histories of sleeping rough.

We are a safe space for the women who live with us. On arrival, people can sometimes feel a little overwhelmed, but they tend to relax quite quickly and start to feel safe after a few nights in their new home. What's special about our service is that there is no fixed timeline. So, we are here for residents for as long as they need us.

One of the biggest challenges from the pandemic was building relationships with residents while adhering to guidelines and wearing PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). We have overcome this through providing consistent and tailored support to each individual, while building up relationships based on trust. We also connect with partners to provide residents with support that's right for them, including health outreach, budgeting support, substance use services and tenancy sustainment. We also organise activities like 'Foodie Fridays' and 'Arty Afternoons' to help build up life skills.

One of the biggest rewards for me is seeing women that I work with starting to gain a sense of self again. You can see their confidence build as other things in their lives start to come together, like their physical health and their mental health. It's really wonderful to see them taking crucial steps towards leaving homelessness behind for good.



Nell, Deputy Manager of the Nova Project, and client



"This is the right place for someone who wants to change their life – this place makes you want to do well and thrive and I really enjoy the activities, especially the cooking on a Friday."

Resident from the Nova Project

Our impact in 2020-21

We supported
2,166
women across our
residential services.

