

Pro-Chancellor,

Tessa Corner has drawn on her own experiences of addiction and rehabilitation to lead a charity that helps people recover from drug and alcohol dependency.

Tessa is the co-founder and Chief Executive Officer of StreetScene Addiction Recovery, which runs residential treatment centres, move-on accommodation and after-care services across Bournemouth and Southampton.

Her own journey into addiction began at the age of 14, when following the trauma of losing three of her grandparents within a six-month period, Tessa began smoking cannabis. She recalls the feeling of release it gave her, followed quickly by feelings of guilt which would then cause her to repeat the cycle. Over the next ten years her drug use became more severe. On completing her education, she moved to London and secured a well-paid job as a computer programmer for a major bank. Tessa recalls working hard by day in a corporate environment, before returning to a squat each evening and spending most of her wages on drugs.

Falling pregnant in 1987 proved to be a turning point. Having asked her parents if she could return home, she completed a rapid detox and, following the birth of her daughter Genevieve, moved into a mother and baby unit and attended a self-help group. On finishing her treatment, Tessa became the first former addict to volunteer at a Bournemouth-based drug and alcohol service and within 18 months had opened her own residential centre.

As well as providing practical support through StreetScene, Tessa has furthered understanding of addiction through research. She has collaborated with academics from BU on research into digital addiction and in 2023 achieved a Master's of Philosophy on the conceptualisations of addiction. Tessa had set out to complete a doctorate but paused her studies following a cancer diagnosis. Having now been given the all-clear, Tessa says that the experience has made her reassess life and to work a little less.

When asked to describe her approach to rehabilitation and recovery, Tessa cites a favourite quote that says: "All addicts are broken, but broken crayons still colour".

Pro-Chancellor, I have the honour to present Tessa Corner and I ask you to confer upon her an Honorary Fellowship of Bournemouth University.