



# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

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**Name:** Jo Wilkinson

**Job title:** Head of Housing

**Can you tell us a little about your role?**

As Head of Housing – I'm responsible for our Council Housing stock and all the services that support the delivery of that, Homelessness within the District and our Home Improvement Agency.

Housing isn't just about bricks and mortar it's about people and being able to make a difference, that's why I love what I do.

**What are the key moments in your career journey so far?**

At school I always thought I'd be a dentist but when I flunked my A-levels I found myself through clearance doing Criminology at Blackburn College. I was the first person on that course to manage to get a 1st, but at the end of four years I had rent to pay and needed a job. Having done a module on 'housing' on my uni course I signed up with a couple of housing temp agencies I didn't envisage I'd still be working in housing nearly 20 years later.

Being a temp gave me the opportunity to move around a bit and try out different roles in the housing sector, I've worked in Wythenshaw and Preston in local housing offices collecting rent at counters, and met Jack Straw whilst working in Blackburn on Housing Market Renewal programmes.

When that contract ended my boss put a good word in for me with another department who were looking for some agency cover and the rest is history – I fell in love with local authority homeless work.

I ended up getting a permanent job over at Stockport Homes and was lucky to get opportunities to work on different projects and manage different teams, which is why when I saw my current role advertised I felt in the position to be able to go for it.

I'm lucky that I work with some of the best people across the council and we've carried on delivering services in people's homes safely over the past two years, we managed to bring all rough sleepers in off the streets, we've won various national awards for the work we're doing, and we've opened two shops for customers to visit us.

**Are there any particular lessons or advice that you would like to share?**

Career wise – never say no – it can often lead to new opportunities, but equally don't be afraid to ask for help either or admit that you don't have all the answers. Most importantly though be authentic, passionate and honest about what you do.

