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LIFE

“I heard stories of removals men sending creepy messages. Now I help women move house after toxic break-ups”

BY GEORGIA GREEN · 2 DAYS AGO



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When Hannah Crawford, 29, posted in a Facebook group in April 2025 offering to help other women move house, she was inundated with messages of moving horror stories and cries for help. Over 200 moves later, she shares how Han With A Van grew from a way to get herself out of the house to providing emotional support to women going through break-ups, leaving their childhood homes and escaping toxic flat shares.

I've always been quite a practical, hands-on person – my background is in theatre producing, so I've spent a lot of time organising the logistics of moving props and costumes around – so when the idea to help other women move house came to me, it felt like a natural fit. I'd been working as a business coach since 2020, which meant I mainly worked from home and, as I was single at the time, this felt like a nice way to get myself out of the house and around other people.

But when I posted the idea in a few Facebook groups, I never expected the reaction I got. I was immediately inundated with messages from women who loved the idea and wanted my help. Even more messages detailed horror stories of moving companies who turned up hours late, rushed people through the process and broke items – and then there were the stories of intimidating middle-aged men who sent creepy messages afterwards, now knowing where they live or where their single mum now lived on her own.

It made me question why women and queer folk still have to steel themselves for a stressful experience when they need the help of a tradesperson? Moving house is a stressful enough experience as it is – why shouldn't people be able to book someone and know they can expect a positive experience? It made me realise how needed this service was, and Han With A Van was born.

Over the next fourteen months, I helped over 200 women and queer people move across the country, from London to Bristol, Glasgow, Birmingham, and Manchester. After one of my social media posts blew up in July this year, I started getting 30-50 enquiries a day, so I now manage a network of women across the country who I've passed on my expertise and wisdom to, so I can scale the business into a nationwide service.

But after hundreds of moves, what has surprised me most hasn't been how physically hard or mentally exhausting it is to help people move house – but

how much of an emotional support I provide people with. Moving is always the end of one chapter and the start of a new one – sometimes that's a welcome shift, but even then it's still a stressful and emotional time. It often comes after months of emotions, paperwork, engaging with estate agents and solicitors, packing and decluttering.

But for those in a less-than-desirable situation, it's even harder. Since starting the business, I've met people in all manner of different life situations: women who were leaving a partner after a break-up, who had fallen out with their flatmates, who were moving out of their parents' house or who were starting a new job in a new city. They've got so much apprehension about what lies ahead already, so I really wanted Han With A Van to provide 'big sister energy'. I turn up with the van and a plan of how the day will go, but I'll also work around them. It's: "I've already found a parking space. We're going to stack the boxes like this. Let's have a water and snack break. Do you need a cuddle? Do you need to have a cry before we leave? I'll give you five minutes by yourself to have your moment and say goodbye."

“Moving house is always the end of one chapter and the start of a new one”

It's the service I wish I'd had when I moved out of my parents' house in rural Scotland. I come from quite an abusive childhood home and I finally cut ties with my parents and moved out aged 20. Standing on the pavement outside Kings Cross station, crying because all the tubes were cancelled and with all my worldly possessions in as many bags and suitcases as I could carry by myself, stuffed toys and picture frames tucked under my arms – for someone to just take my hand and say, "I've got this," would have been invaluable.

That's why I feel so passionately about providing that 'big sister energy' for other women in vulnerable situations. I remember one young girl who I helped move from Newcastle to London. She'd only recently left the care system and was moving to London on her own to pursue an acting career. When we arrived at this tiny east London flat she'd rented, it didn't quite look how she remembered from the pictures: the paint was peeling, it smelt a bit damp, it was dark because the light bulb was broken and there was a crack in the wall. There was a moment when she stood in the middle of the living room and looked so scared and small. I remembered a box that she'd labelled trinkets, so I asked her to find it and put some of her things out around the place to make it feel more like hers. I went off to buy her a light bulb and some milk and when I got back she showed me her figurines she'd unpacked and we made her bed. By the time I left, I could see her resolve had come back and I knew I was leaving her in a stronger place.

There was another time when I was contacted by a woman who had just been dumped by her boyfriend. She'd moved from Australia for this guy and over the years she'd bent over backwards to make him happy, even quitting her job because it was too stressful for him. When he broke up with her, he sent her an HR-style email with a timeline of when she should move out of their flat by. She decided enough was enough and wanted to move out straight away, so three days later I was in her flat packing her boxes into a van. On the drive to her new place, we talked about everything – relationships, putting yourself first, setting boundaries, all the things you lose and gain in moments like this. By the time we'd unpacked her into her new place, I felt like I was leaving her with an inner strength that would help in the weeks to come while she got over

the heartbreak.

One particularly emotional move I did was for a girl who was moving out of her mum's house to live with her female partner for the first time. She had a brother who had already moved out, so she was the last child to leave, but she was also leaving quite a traditionalist Christian home to live with a same-sex partner. I could tell her mum wasn't that OK with it but she was trying to be, plus she was trying to hold it together while her last child flew the nest. There were a lot of big emotions being processed that day, so I told the girl to take as long as she wanted to say goodbye to her mum. "But I don't want to waste your time," she said. I said it didn't matter; I'd wait at the next place for her to arrive.

There have been lots of happy times, too, like when a group of friends are moving in together for the first time and we put on a 2010s pop playlist and have a bit of dance party in the van. They'll sometimes ask me to stay and have a gin and tonic with them afterwards (which I have to decline as I have to drive the van back), but I'll often stick around and hang out or they'll invite me to their birthday or housewarming party at the weekend. But at the end of the day, when people tell me, "I was so apprehensive about today, but I've actually really enjoyed it" – that's all I could ever ask for.

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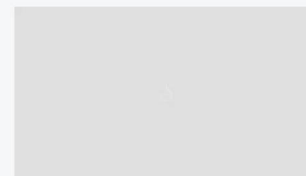
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