



# Making recovery visible

*In Sheffield we know that there are 100's if not 1000's of untold stories (often shared in closed groups) that the general population don't get to hear about. Sheffield Recovery Forum is STILL on a mission to change that.*

START client

## What was life like for you before – what was happening at this time?

My life at the time I was in active addiction was what some people would call a normal life, I had a good job that I was on the management scheme of, I had a long-term partner that I was engaged too, didn't have any money problems and lived in a gorgeous part of the country. But underneath all of the good things that was happening I was very depressed I was also very lonely, although I had a long-term partner I didn't really have any friends and I had no hobbies that I could enjoy I was very socially awkward and found it hard to talk to people. This led me to drink very heavily and before then to make myself feel better I would have used drugs but as I was not in Sheffield, I couldn't get hold of drugs as I had no idea how to get hold of them so instead as well as drinking I turned to pornography to be able to make myself feel better. I have done so many things I regret because of my addictions to drink, drugs and pornography, that I have had long lasting effects on my mental health.

## What was the turning point for you and how did this come about?

There has been 2 points in my life I would call tuning points the first point was when I knew I needed help and was desperate for help but I was scared to ask for help or didn't know where to go for help the second point was when I was arrested because of my addictions and I lost everything money, home, job, partner and some members in my family now don't talk to me because of the things I have done, when I went to prison my whole life changed in so many ways I struggle to get a job and I have difficulty in making friends.

## What has helped in your recovery – agencies, peer groups etc?

So the first thing that helped in my recovery was after I was arrested the fact that my ex-partner didn't just have a go at me and swear and shout at me, we wrote to each other a couple of times when I was in prison and although we both knew then that our relationship was finished she was honest with me and really wanted me to get help to overcome my issues, this really helped me move on a little bit.

The second thing was when in prison I asked for help from the drug recovery team inside and I went through the 12 step program in prison and after that started working for the drug recovery team which also helped me as I was helping others that was in the same situation I had been in. The third thing was that my parents and brother have stood by me and helped me first through prison and second been reintegrated back in the general public and then the next thing has been the work and social activities I have done with Addaction (before it changed to the NHS service recently) this has helped me get my confidence back that I lost so many years ago its helped me gain new friends who understand the issues addictions can bring and understand the issues I struggle with involving my mental health, Addaction helped me get active by getting me involved in playing football, I lost my passion for playing football a long time ago due to my issues with addictions but now I love it, it's what keeps me physically fit and it is what keeps my mind from turning to my previous problems.

## What is life like now?

Life now is hard to explain I still struggle with my mental health quite badly, and sometimes depending on the situation I can have bad anxiety attacks and I have to live my life around these factors. I worry about people judging me because of my previous issues and I am always careful how I talk to people and what I tell them about my past due to not wanting to cause offence and also I want to be able to move forward as a new person. I have just started to get myself a little bit of work here and there labouring and stuff like that and this has helped me feel useful again and has given me back some pride in myself.

I really want to start helping other people that are struggling with addictions as it helps me stay grounded and makes me realise just how far I've come. Although I've lost so much because of addictions I feel happier now than I've felt for a long time and really feel like I can get my life back on track with the support I've got from Addaction, family and my therapist.

Life now has made me grateful for what I still have and what life can still offer instead of feeling bad for what I've lost. How are things different? I have a completely different outlook on life, I try to stay organised and live my life day by day instead of stressing about what's to come in the future it's helped me stay stress free and it has also helped me mature as a person and understand a lot about myself and my previous issues.

I live my life differently health wise and try to look after myself in general which helps me. I also speak to people about my problems and talk about my issues before they become a problem which has massively helped me.

### **How have you managed with the events of the last few weeks in relation to substance use and mental health?**

The last couple of months have been a test to my new self and has shown me I can get by clean without turning to my previous issues and has also shown me that I have got a lot to offer work wise and has helped me to move forward in general.