



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.

Maria Sievewright

What was life like for you at rock bottom?

I'd say that my rock bottom was the first time I went to hospital. They told me that day I only had a 20% chance of walking out of the hospital alive. I was having nosebleeds, hallucinating and in complete paranoia. My skin was yellow, I just looked awful.

My neighbour saw me and took me to the doctors and he sent me home and told my neighbour to stay with me while we waited for an ambulance. It was 8 days before I came round in the hospital. I woke up in one of those heated sleeping bags, with tubes coming out of me all over. I didn't leave the hospital for over 3 weeks, that's how poorly I was. I had Acute Hepatitis of the liver and my organs were all shutting down. And this is all from drinking.

Looking back to where it all started, my Dad died when I was 10 years old. I started drinking as a 14 year old, most evenings and all weekend. I started experimenting with drugs too and everything just spiralled from there. As an adult I lost jobs and nearly lost my kids, but luckily they went to live with Grandparents so they stayed in the family and stayed safe. But once they went, there was no reason to stay sober any more, so my drinking just got worse. I was 24 when I first went to hospital and it shocked me to my core, but then I've been back 3 or 4 times since and completed a few detoxes too.

What was the turning point for you?

In 2013 I got sober properly and stayed that way for 4 years before I started to drink again. Then in February 2018 my partner died and that was truly horrific to see. I was with him when he died, and went into shock and started hallucinating so ended up being admitted to hospital myself.

I swore that day I would never drink again. I was doing really well and then lockdown happened in March 2020.

I was really frightened about what was happening and started to drink those first couple of weeks. I had no coping mechanisms and because I suffer from anxiety and depression, I didn't know what to do or how to process everything that was going on. I know a lot of people felt the same way at first. It was a really scary time for me.

What helped?

I spoke to the team at Sidney Street and my doctor and they both gave me advice but there was nothing practical they could do at the time with everything locked down. I basically had to detox myself again. I'm now 5 weeks sober and back on my anti depressants. As everything is opening back up I'm feeling more in control and more stable. A few years ago when I came out of a detox in 2013, I walked straight into a gym and haven't looked back since.

Exercise saved me, it's given me purpose and a focus, and it's what's helped me through this recent detox. I love being able to go to the gym and work things out there instead. I go to meetings at De Hood and use the exercise equipment there too after one of their recovery sessions. The people there are really supportive and have become friends.

What is life like now? How are things different?

Life now is brilliant. My kids are amazing - they are 22 and 19 now and have stuck by me through everything. To think of what I've put them through and still they are there for me, I think it's incredible really.

The regular routine of my life helps me. I've got a part time job again, I'm seeing friends, and I'm engaged to a new partner. When things are working as they should and I have my routine back it feels safe for me, like I'm in control and can manage.

People comment on how different I look now. When I was drinking I used to retain water and got all puffed up, but now I look so much better. It makes me feel good when people mention how much better I'm looking. I know I've made great progress.