



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.

Rob, from The GREENS

What was life like for you at rock bottom?

My family are all Irish by descent, so drinking was always a part of life, you know. It was for me anyway. I was brought up drinking. I'd always worked though, factory jobs, construction, so real macho environments. That's just what we did. We worked and then we drank. I thought everything was fine, didn't see any problems, but other people around me could see that I was drinking more, bingeing more and having more time off work. It was affecting my relationships too.

I split up with my wife, and she went to social services to stop me seeing my daughter. My anxiety and depression just went off the scale. I attempted suicide three times. Twice by taking an overdose and once by nearly throwing myself off a bridge. I ended up in hospital and woke up with tubes in me and no idea how I'd got there. People found me passed out in the middle of the day in my local area. I was just exhausted by life. Totally sick of it all, the pressure, everything.

What was the turning point for you?

Last year my Mum helped organise a charity event for breast cancer, and I went along to support her. Had a couple of drinks, you know. I ended up taking a full bottle of vodka that was a raffle prize from her fundraising event and was just walking the streets in the early hours of a Sunday morning drinking from the bottle.

I passed out in the park and a man found me out walking his dog that morning. I keep thinking now what a shock it must have been for him to come across me just passed out. I think he thought I was dead. Can you imagine what that must have been like for him? Could have ruined his life, could have ruined everyone's life!

I woke up in hospital and knew something had to change. My daughter is my absolute priority. She needs me, and not like I was. I was so selfish, all that mattered was getting a drink. I knew then that it had to stop.

What helped?

Coming to The Greens has changed everything for me. My family tried to get me to come last year, but I wasn't ready. I wouldn't have done it properly if I'd come in then. I got here in January and think it's great. The staff and everything, the other residents. I feel properly supported.

I have lapsed once though. My Uncle died, and I just couldn't deal with the emotions. He was important to me, and with lockdown it was limited to how many family members could see him. I attended his funeral where drink was being passed around to pour over the grave as a toast, when I found out we had to drink half and pour half on the grave, I put my bottle back. However I then just went out and bought a bottle of vodka and drank it in my room. The difference was that I admitted it to them straight away. I didn't want to trick them. I knew that if I'd got away with it that time, I would have done it again the next time something happened or I was feeling depressed. I'm determined to do things properly.

What is life like now? How are things different?

I've stayed in touch with my daughter by having Zoom chats with her each week, and have applied to get contact and they've approved my request. I'll be seeing her in a couple of weeks and I'm really looking forward to it. We'll probably just cry the whole time as we've missed each other so much. I've not seen her in person since Christmas Eve. Being in here and having time to think and going to the groups has helped open my eyes to what I was missing out on by drinking all the time. I can see now what life without drinking will look like, and what I'll gain.

I'm moving onto the next stage at The Greens now and getting my own flat. I'm discovering lots of things I'm really good at that I never knew, like painting, drawing and building cabinets. I'm keeping fit and healthy in a way I never had before. I'm not phased by not having a drink any more. The cravings are still there but I can cope with them when I'm in here, and they don't really bother me. I know I need to work some more so that when I move on from here I'll be able to cope outside too. I've grabbed this opportunity and am determined to make the most of it. We are all lost souls here. We're not bad people, we just got lost along the way and need help.