



# *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.*

**Shane kimberly**

## **Tell us a little about your background?**

I was born in 1973 at the city general hospital in Stoke-on-Trent. I am the eldest of 4 children and for a long-time things were normal in my life. It wasn't until I was around 6 or 7 when things changed, my dad had left home and this bloke arrived called Chris. He went on to father my two sisters, I hated this man and I remember him punching the shit out of my mum and him making me watch it and him telling my mum to say that she deserved it. I was scared of him and so was my mum. There were 4 of us living in a council flat, but then just like that my dad reappeared and Chris vanished never to be seen again. After that my life was normal, or so I thought. We didn't have much: we never went on holiday, we made our own fun, swimming in the rivers, rope swings, motorbikes etc. I can say my childhood made me who I am today. There were never any boundaries as a child, I could come and go as I pleased. My parents were only interested in their issues, my mum went out every night drinking and my dad stayed at home, he never worked during my childhood and we grew up very poor living off benefits. In about 1984 I was sexually abused by a friend of the family. I did report it but nothing ever came of it, I was offered no support and my mum or dad never mentioned it again. I started hanging about with older lads, getting into trouble - stealing cars, breaking into schools and shoplifting. I stopped going to school and nobody cared, I did one year in high school and never went again.

## When did you get introduced to drugs?

I got introduced to drugs by lads off our estate and from that first time it was like nothing else mattered, my mum had left us by now, my sisters went to live with her and me and my brother stayed in the family home. I was smoking weed every day, sniffing glue and gas. I was happy I had found something that made me feel good, it blocked out everything else and all the shit that had happened to me when growing up.

Things really started to escalate pretty quickly, I started injecting amphetamine and it was from then that I started going to prison. Small sentences at first (3 months, 9 months), I was still only 19 so went in to the YOI. Half my housing estate were in there and it was like a home from home. I got a bed, 3 meals a day and most of my mates were there, it was great. My first time in a adult prison was very different, I shit myself. I can remember walking onto the wing of a prison in Stafford having just been given 4 years. It was during that sentence that I was introduced to heroin, it was like nothing I ever felt before, better than anything I had ever taken. It made me feel so good so confident and I felt so strong, I never thought about my childhood once. I never looked back for 15 years. I was in and out of prisons. Birthdays and Christmases went by and I didn't give a shit, as long as I got what I wanted I went back time and time again, I was one of the lads! During that time, I had a daughter but paid no attention to her, in the early years my mum brought her up. I didn't care as long as I didn't have to do it. I never even thought about treatment until one day in 2003 I was 18 months into a 5.5 year sentence, I remember my mum and daughter coming to see me on the Sunday, I was ill and rattling, I stayed on that visit for 15 minutes before telling them I had a cold and left, I wanted to go back to my bed.

## What was the turning point for you?

One night I was queuing up for tea as normal and there was this notice board, there was a "thank you" letter from another prisoner thanking the CARAT team for changing his life. It went on to say about how much better his life was now than before. He had been transferred to a rehab in Devon at HMP Channings Wood. I thought about this letter all night and decided to speak to the CARAT team and see what is what, I can remember her saying to me the morning I left Stafford prison "it's going to be hard work, are you ready for that?". "Yes" I said and off I went.

I got there on the 4th April 2004 and from that day I haven't used any substances at all. It was hard letting go, I have hurt a lot of people during my addiction and done a lot of things I am not proud of, I have dealt with a lot of demons, I did 22 months in TC (therapeutic community). On the 31st January 2007 I got parole and went straight into Phoenix Futures adult residential in Sheffield. I felt I still needed time addressing my recovery, many times I got out of jail before saying I would never use again only to crack on the first day, so I did another 9 months in there and resettled in Sheffield, it has been the best thing that's ever happened to me.

### **What is life like now?**

I have my family back; I have friends that want nothing but friendship. I have to say it's not been easy, and life still throws up problems, but I can deal with them now and if I can't then I have a support network of friends that can!

### **What are you most grateful for?**

There's a lot of people in my life that I have used with that are not here anymore which makes me sad, but for me and my life I am thankful that I chose to stop using and take a different path. I am glad I got stuck in that dinner queue and so thankful for seeing that letter that day it changed my life too. I got involved with service user involvement when I came out of Phoenix Futures in November 2007, it is called the ambassador scheme today and still going strongly. At the time it was run by the DACT and a guy called Oliver Brain facilitated it, he was and still is the most influential person in my life, responsible for me and most of my peers getting into work in today.

I took a placement at the Archer Project after the course finished and after 12 months of volunteering there, they offered me a job in the project as activities co-ordinator. I worked there for two years and it was my first ever job, unfortunately I was made redundant and shortly afterwards a job came up at Phoenix Futures. I went for it never expected to get it and did I got the job of my dreams. I am still with Phoenix today in housing, working with people in addiction and in recovery, which is my passion, I am giving back and supporting people who need a little guidance in life as I once did.