

Sheffield Recovery Month 2022

Brendan Sorby 35

'I was a lost soul and tried to commit suicide three times because of my drink problems, but now I'm 14 months clean and slowly getting back to a happy place where I'm confident in life'.



Brendan is a former bakery worker from Low Edges in Sheffield whose been clean for over 14 months following over 20 years of addiction to alcohol and drugs. When he left school, he followed his family and went to work as a cleaner at the nearby Gunstones bakery in Dronfield for seven years, but he lost his job owing to his alcoholism and eventually tried taking his own life due to his desperation and hopelessness.

'I started drinking and smoking at the age of thirteen when my mum used to buy cans of beer for me to watch with football on TV'.

'My local pub was called the Grenell Mower' and when I was young, I always used to walk past it and everyone used to be outside having a drink and I thought, I want to do that. I can't wait to be eighteen and we used to play on the local 'rec' and in the park taking cans of beer to drink'.

'My drinking began to escalate to 10-12 pints a day plus Jager bombs which are Jägermeister's mixed with red bull or other mixers'.

'I knew my drinking had become a problem when I was waking up in the morning wanting a drink, because I was on nights at Gunstone's bakery, and I always used to have four or five cans in the house and before my night shift began at ten o' clock, I used to have four or five pints before work'.
'My employers and workmates didn't know I was drinking every day and then I got promoted onto a day shift and it got worse because then my work hours were six o' clock in the morning until two o' clock in the afternoon'.

'After my shift I was going straight to the pub until closing time and then walking down into town and going into nightclubs to continue drinking and then going back to work at half-past five in the morning stinking of alcohol and being in a mess, wearing the same clothes as the day before'.

'I started having a lot of time off work as the result of hangovers and if I'm truthful, being a complete drunk and not going into work'.

'Eventually, the managers told me that they had no choice but to sack me because of this and I didn't really know then that it was a problem and so I still continued drinking and behaving in this way'.

'However, two years ago, I had open heart surgery after having problems and they discovered I had two leaking valves in my heart and the operation to fix them went wrong and I was in a coma for seventeen days and in hospital for five and half weeks'.

‘At round that time, my cousin, to whom I was very close, committed suicide because he was also struggling with addiction, and he couldn’t find a way out’.

‘But as soon as I came home to recuperate, I started drinking again and I was on a blood thinner called Warfarin and only allowed one can a day’.

‘I went back into the pub and started drinking non-alcoholic drinks and shandies and before I knew it, I was back on six and seven pints a day’.

‘I lost a lot of friends because of my drinking and my family were very concerned about me. My aunt told me that she was stopping me seeing my nieces and nephews because they’d just had to bury their son as a result of alcohol addiction and didn’t want the distress of seeing me going the same way’.

‘I went to the doctors for follow up blood tests and they were abnormal due to my drinking and so I tried to commit suicide by overdosing on my heart medication three times because I was struggling and couldn’t find a way out of my alcoholism’.

‘No one was listening, no one got me, and I was a lost soul, I was beaten’.

‘I managed to phone my sister and a good friend of mine, and he opened the window, climbed in and I was there sprawled out after taking around a hundred tablets with a bottle of vodka’.

‘After around four days in hospital they gave me a number to call if I ever needed help again and I wanted to talk to somebody and I was crying out for help’.

‘I’m now at Kickback Recovery Community, a small peer-led recovery support charity in Sheffield and it’s saved my life and family’s life as well because my parents have got their son back and my nieces and nephews have got their uncle back’.

‘I work on a day-to-day basis with a few little goals what I want to achieve but I don’t plan no higher than that because it can quickly baffle me and put me down’.

‘When I was first in recovery, I didn’t go in a pub for five months because I also had mental health issues with anxiety and depression and my family knew and a few friends came to support me’.

‘Then after around nine months of abstinence, I started going into pubs again and my local pub starting stocking non-alcoholic beer in for me to drink and everyone in that pub supported me’.

‘Now I can go into pubs, but I limit the hours I spend in there and understand my limits now and if people let me know about social event where alcohol is being served I can plan and deal with it but I can’t just go on the spur of the moment or that will set me back, I need to register it and be mindful of the triggers’.

I can’t work now because of my heart and mental health problems, and I now do a lot of volunteering with Kickback Recovery and from being a danger to myself I’m slowly getting back to a happy place where I’m confident in life’.

As told to Andy Kershaw

All interviewees have expressed their written consent to interview by print and broadcast media for Recovery Month (September 2022)