

Journeys

My Journey..... There I was Again!

....there I was again. After 24 years of active addiction and 6 months total abstinence I found myself back in prison and faced with the only options available to me at the time - keeping my addiction active! Only after being introduced to recovery did I realize that this didn't have to be the case. You see I had never in all of my years in active addiction known that recovery existed, and even after relapse, I knew that if I didn't use what I knew to find my way back, that maybe I never would. You see when I used again I never expected things to happen so fast. Within months I was walking the streets of Liverpool again and shoplifting whenever I could then I found myself up in court and faced with bail on the condition that I attended probation and went on a methadone program for the next two years. My future was mapped out yet again by a system that was only mapped out to keep people like me medicated, apparently to get me and my life stable again. As I waited in the cell downstairs I knew deep down that I couldn't go through with the bail application.

“ My family didn't know if I was dead or alive and I didn't bother to tell them. ”

It would have been suicide, and I was desperate to live, I found the courage to ask the judge for a custodial sentence, God only knows where I found it, but I did. My solicitor understood my plight and agreed that I should address the courtroom myself. I did, and the Judge really understood and commended me on my courage and thanked me for my honesty. So when I arrived at Styal women's prison, I was tested for drugs. The only drugs in my system by now were the ones given to me by the police doctor, so I tested positive for opiates (dihydrocodine) and benzodines

(nitrazepan). But you see because of this, methadone maintenance was yet again my only option given to me by the prison, dihydrocodine detox was not. Ironic or what!

Against my better judgment I agreed to go on to a methadone detox, even though at the time there was no methadone in my system. Also on the closed prison wing it's almost impossible to get a reduction and if you're seen reducing without permission your prescription is automatically stopped. If I wanted an increase in methadone that system is accessed much easier. I waited almost a month to see the detox nurse, it never happened, I was moved to Low-Newton were the detox facilities are much more advanced. I successfully finished my detox and whilst at Low-Newton I got back in contact with the Park View Project. It was my second attempt at recovery at Park View and I haven't looked back since.

14 months on I have completed primary and secondary treatment and I am still under the Park View umbrella with supported housing. I have attended Independence Initiatives and been introduced to computers and drug awareness courses. I have completed a Basic Counselling course; I am coming to the end of my computer course with Transit, and now work in a voluntary capacity with Genie in the Gutter, a film, theatre and media organisation that promotes recovery, using creative arts as a vehicle, to prescribed clients. I have benefited enormously from Genie: I performed a part in a production at the Actors Studio, directed by Pauline Daniels, and a part in the Everyman Theatre presentation which was part of the Genie In The Gutter launch. I do outreach work around Liverpool and on the Wirral and recently helped organise the event 'Icons and Dreams' held at St Lukes (the bombed out church) at the top of Bold Street. I also recently became the treas-

urer of an abstinent service users group here in Liverpool hopefully helping to influence services into introducing abstinence as an achievable option on first contact with clients. I have also been fortunate enough to rekindle an old love for writing my own songs and perform them here in the city at Sharps Vigil held at the Metropolitan Cathedral and I also sang at the Genie Jacobs cup Event and the Genie Event at St. Lukes. I have been in a recording studio at Creative Minds having my work professionally laid on to a C.D with an opportunity of a place on their album.

I am currently working on an outreach art project for Genie at the Park View

“ I am becoming a person I really like being ”

Project called the Wall of Hope and as you can see by everything else I am involved with my life is a work in progress.

Before I came into recovery my life consisted of drugs and crime. The only things I felt was crazy, withdrawals and cravings, even the drugs didn't change the way I felt anymore.

My family didn't know if I was dead or alive and I didn't bother to tell them.

Today my life consists of all the things that matter the most to me, family, friends, support and freedom from active addiction...I am becoming a person I really like being.

Ellen Roach

“ My future was mapped out yet again by a system ”