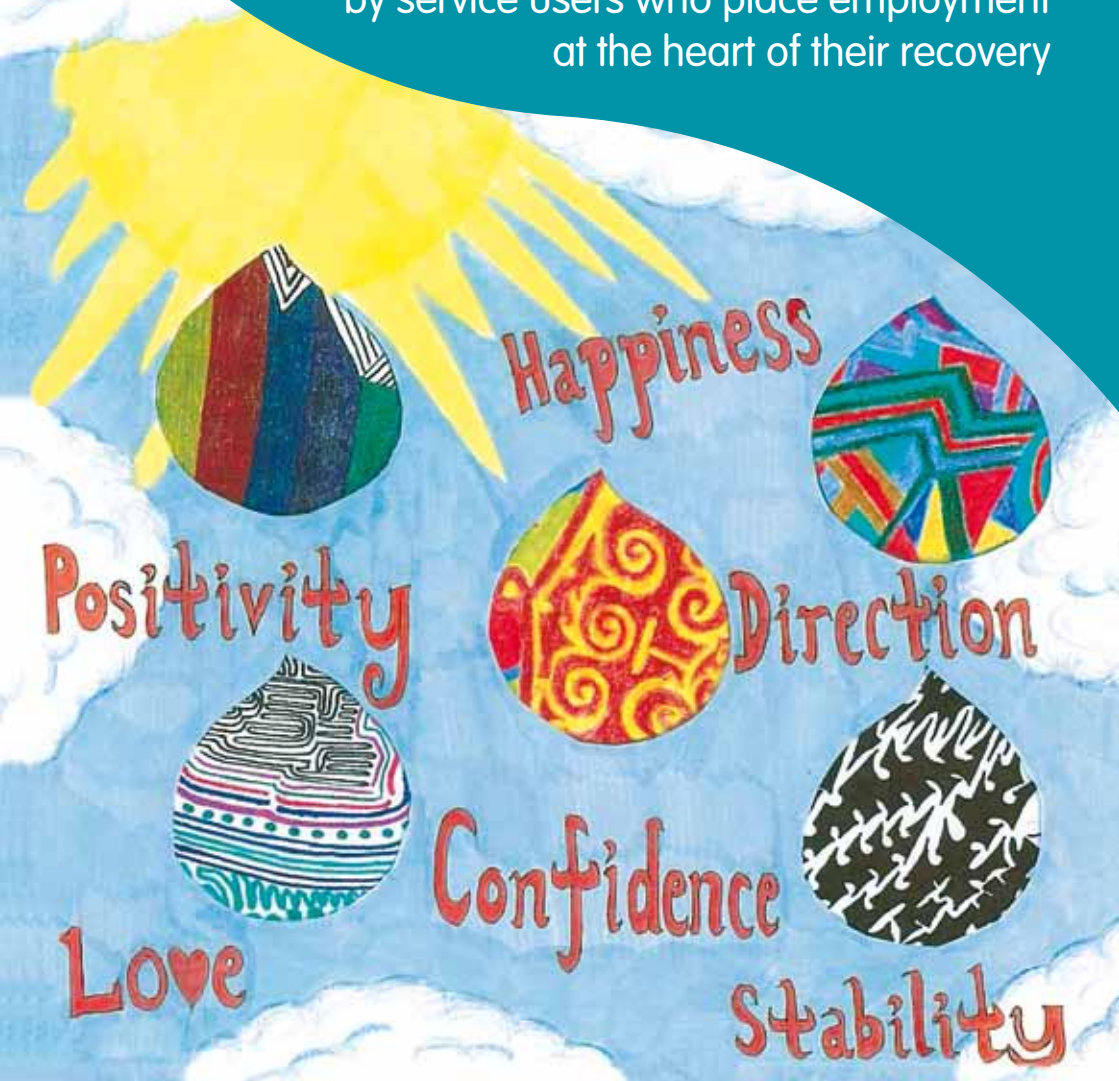


Addiction Services

Recovery Stories

A collection of personal recovery stories
by service users who place employment
at the heart of their recovery



Introduction

As the recovery stories in this booklet clearly demonstrate, people accessing addictions services consider getting paid work as a key component of their recovery journey. Getting the right job with the right support can provide structure, social networks and a sense of achievement; as well as improved mental health and confidence.

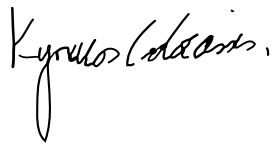
CNWL is committed to improving access to employment for our service users and as such delivers two very distinct programmes. The User Employment Programme (UEP) was created to assist service users gain employment and time limited work placements within the Trust and the Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS) which supports service users to find open employment opportunities outside of the Trust.

Key principals of the IPS model:

- The Employment Specialist and clinical team are based in the same office and work together.
- Competitive employment is the primary goal.
- Job search is rapid, beginning within one month. The aim being to support people to develop work skills on the job.
- An emphasis on service user choice in relation to readiness to start the return to work process.
- Job search is based on service user preferences.
- Availability of time-unlimited and individualised support for the individual and employer.
- An emphasis on building relationships with employers in order to access the 'hidden labour market'.
- Benefits counselling is provided to support the person through the transition from benefits to paid work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have taken the time to write their recovery story, as well as the staff across the Trust who have supported people to achieve their employment goals.

If you would like to find out more about how to access support to get back to work, please speak to your key worker.



Kyriacos Colocassis
Vocational Project Manager

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I write this foreword to our first employment recovery stories booklet created by our Addictions Service Users.

We are recognised as a 'Centre of Excellence' for the work of our vocational services and the Trust takes pride in the success of its employment services which form a key component of the recovery orientated services we are committed to delivering.

We continue to expand a network of employment specialists, based in teams across our mental health and addiction services, who are committed to delivering the Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS) and who, with the individuals they support, have achieved quite remarkable outcomes despite the challenging employment market.

An appreciation of an individual's journey of recovery is best understood by the telling of a personal story and, once again, I would like to commend and thank those contributors who have taken the time and found the inner strength to so generously share their experience in writing. The stories reflect those principles of personal recovery such as hope, self determination, inclusion and choice, which we all value and how for so many of the individuals we work with, the importance of work is central.

I hope this recovery stories booklet provides further encouragement and inspiration to those who are receiving services and to those supporting them whether they are family, friends or professionals.



Claire Murdoch
Chief Executive



“I DON’T KNOW WHERE I WOULD BE TODAY OR IF MY CHILDREN WOULD HAVE A MUM IF I DIDN’T HAVE THE SUPPORT I’VE HAD.”



RECOVERY STORY 1

“I’ve been on drink and crack for 20 years plus. I was clean for nearly 5 years when I had a re-lapse, had a drink for a few days and somehow within a week, I was addicted to heroin. This was one of the scariest moments of my life; I didn’t know where to go, or what to do.

I broke down and mentioned to my doctor in Ruislip Road that I had a problem. She asked if I was ready to give up and put me in touch with my key worker at the Ealing Drug & Alcohol Service. I was under her care for about 1.5 years. We met every couple of weeks for a chat, and she always listened to me and gave me strong, sound advice, I could ring at any time if I had a problem. I could not have got clean without her.

While I was looking for work, my key worker put me in touch with the Employment Specialist (ES) linked to the team. She was very helpful as well. I had



been looking for work for about 6 months and the job centre wasn’t very user-friendly. I applied for a job and then met with the ES who helped me with interview skills and guidance. I got the job, but the doors of help from the job centre and council were closed to me. They did not want to help with getting to work or with clothes. I was able to phone the ES and was very upset. The ES gave me support. I don’t know where I would be today or if my children would have a mum if I didn’t have the support I’ve had.

My confidence is building and I have passed my exams 3 months on and am very happy in my job where I have gone from part time to full time. I want to thank the ES for helping me through a difficult time, I love my work and won’t be looking back. I am sure if there were more skilled people like my key worker and the ES there would be fewer addicts. These projects really need to be supported, I can’t thank them enough.”



RECOVERY STORY 2

“Mental illness really can affect your life, I suffered mental illness all my life with mild depression to anxiety leading me to drink. It was never really treated and I was left on an antidepressant that I felt had no effect and diazepam which I purchased without my doctor’s knowledge.

I managed to mask my mental illness by taking a diazepam every time I felt a little anxious, this could be 10mg x 5 to 20 times a day, how I functioned is beyond me. The abuse soon caught up with me affecting my work, social and family life. Working abroad, I spent many lonely evenings in hotel rooms and I felt fear burning up and frightening thoughts, I didn’t know what was happening to me and I just broke down.

With the help of my doctor I realised the anxiety and depression was caused by my mental state and my addiction to diazepam. I tried for a year to function and hold my job down. I didn’t look after myself, I didn’t eat properly, didn’t exercise or get much fresh air, I was scared of people and felt really tuned out around people. All I did was get up, go to work come home and worry about how I was going to go to work the next day.

After getting into repeated trouble at work, I was asked to leave, in many ways I felt relieved as I couldn’t cope with the responsibility any more as I felt so ill. My mental health got worse; I started to fall into a very deep dark depression and overwhelming anxiety I really wanted to

“MY EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST SIGNED ME UP TO JOIN A JOB CLUB SHE RAN ON A WEEKLY BASIS.”

die. I felt hopeless and was convinced there was no way I was going to get through this.

After reaching breaking point HDAS tried to keep me going but realised I needed help. During this time I was seeing the careers adviser and undergoing psychotherapy but their efforts were wasted as my mental health got worse. It was advised that I cancel a job interview that I had and take some time out under their care. HDAS started me on new medication and started to give me objectives, thankfully I responded to the medication and through a gradual process came off the diazepam and gradually my mental health improved.

However it left me with no job, a poor reference for my performance at work and a real lack in confidence to getting back into employment again.

My Employment Specialist (ES) met with me and put together a plan of action to change this. We started with a mock interview that I felt went miserably wrong from my point of view, as I never really knew how to sell myself. My ES felt positive and assured me I didn’t do as bad as I felt, and gave me feedback on how she felt I had done. This was a good opportunity for me to have insight from a professional’s point of view on where I was going wrong. My ES signed me up to join a job club she ran on a weekly basis. Job club really was a great opportunity and along with regular meetings with my ES I regained skills and the encouragement to really sell myself. I never understood why I was unsuccessful

(continued over)

“I NEVER UNDERSTOOD WHY I WAS UNSUCCESSFUL WITH JOB APPLICATIONS AND INTERVIEWS IN THE PAST.”

(Recovery story 2 continued)

with job applications and interviews in the past, I just assumed I didn't qualify for the position. Job club started from the beginning of the application process with how to construct a successful CV that would stand out, to writing a covering letter for a particular job. To do this we learned how to recognise skills we possessed and matching those to the job criteria. My ES really helped me to identify my skills by looking at my strengths and weaknesses and to draw on jobs that I had held in the past, along with hobbies and personal skills I used in day to day life.

I never fully understood how to complete a job application or I would look and think I wasn't good enough for the job. I developed the skill to assess what I had to offer a job and to recognise the skills I had to match the job spec. My ES also asked me to attend another mock job interview; this was a great opportunity to really have insight to how employers assess you and how to sell yourself drawing on experiences and examples from previous employment. My background is

customer service but I never really knew how to sell myself, I just rambled on in my past interviews but now I knew how to break it down and have a beginning, middle and end to my answers. I also learnt how to prepare for interviews by researching into the companies I was applying to and to break down the job I was applying for.

I could never play the game, as I like to call it, at assessment days for cabin crew. However when I finally got another job interview for BA, my 3rd attempt, I knew how to play it this time. I could see where I had gone wrong in previous applications, I knew the do's and don'ts in group exercises, how to assert and present myself at the interview stage. I understood exactly what the employer was looking for and how I could really sell myself. I really felt positive when I came away, I felt I had given my best shot on the day. That evening I received a phone call to say I had been successful. I was so delighted. My whole life was shattered by mental illness and now I was being offered a job that I had always

“MY EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST ALSO ASKED ME TO ATTEND ANOTHER MOCK JOB INTERVIEW; THIS WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO REALLY HAVE INSIGHT INTO HOW EMPLOYERS ASSESS YOU AND HOW TO SELL YOURSELF...”



wanted. Fortunately I didn't stop developing my skills and attending job club and drop in's with my ES, as days before starting, the offer was whipped away due to a negative reference that I had dreaded had come from my previous airline. I was so upset.

My ES stayed positive and assured me that this was a learning opportunity for how to approach employers with the poor reference I had from my previous employer. My ES helped me break down what had happened to me, caused by previous health issues, and how to explain in a formal way what had happened, keeping it simple, to the point and how I'd learnt from it.

Continuing job club and working close to my ES, I applied for other jobs. I was fortunate to be invited to an interview for easyjet at cabin manager level. As I like to call it, I played the game attending these interviews and applied the skills and knowledge I had developed. I was successful for the easyjet role as cabin manager for who I am employed with today.

I never thought I would get back into employment as cabin crew and was worried I would not find a job in this current climate. However with the help of my ES and my own determination and efforts I'm back in employment in a higher position and better paid. I still keep up to date with the job market by staying in touch with my ES who gives me support and advice in my current post. I really don't think I could have made these changes without the support, input and opportunities to self develop with HDAS and my ES.”



RECOVERY STORY 3

“I came to the Community Drug and Alcohol Service (CDAS) after having had a complete breakdown while living in Brighton, I had tried to access services while in Brighton but found it very difficult to get any level of support or understanding.

Upon my first day at Crowther Market I was met by a lovely lady who truly understood my problems and really assured me that I would be supported through a carefully developed and agreed treatment plan.

At the time I was utterly addicted to pot, valium, tamazepam, and any other benzo/ non-benzo type drug I could get my hands on. I had nothing, no money, no home of my own (sofa surfing with relatives and friends), no job, few friends (that were not addicts themselves!) and could not see any way out! The CDAS team along with my family got me down to the centre and then with constant support and guidance got me to commit to getting on the right track.

I started to reduce my usage immediately and worked closely with my key worker to try and see what other support I needed to access. As a result I was referred to a psychologist who was just amazing and went on to help me over a period of about 18 months within which I looked at in detail all the issues that had brought me to my current situation and how I could change my way of thinking and change my habits and beat my addictions. I was also referred to an Employment Specialist (ES) whom, again, was just simply amazing!

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“I WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD THE CONFIDENCE OR THE SKILL TO ACHIEVE ALL OF THIS HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE SUPPORT I HAVE RECEIVED FROM MY EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST.”



(Recovery story 3 continued)

At that time my confidence was at an all time low and I had little to no motivation around getting back to work. This individual has worked with me to gain that confidence back and move into full time employment. I completed a User Employment Programme (UEP) placement, where I got to use skills I had built up before my breakdown, to help CNWL head office move locations. I was given a lot of responsibility and ended up designing the waste and recycling procedures for the new offices.

We also applied for many jobs and I had a few interviews, although these weren't successful. When The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games (LOCOG) began recruiting for people to work on the London 2012 Games, I contacted my ES as I really wanted a chance to work there! We wrote an application together, and I was given an interview, which we spent a lot of time preparing for.

After the interview, I didn't hear from LOCOG for two months. I was sure that I hadn't been successful, and while we were waiting for an answer we made applications

to other jobs. However, after two months I got a great telephone call – they wanted me to work for LOCOG in a management role!

Once I started it was difficult for me to get to CDAS during their opening hours – as you can imagine I had to work really long hours in my Olympics job. My ES met me after work to pass on my prescription and to offer support and advice around my job. I have now just finished working at a very senior level within the LOCOG Olympic Team to deliver what has easily been one of the very best games in the history of the Olympics!

I would never have had the confidence or the skill to achieve all of this had it not been for the support I have received from my ES. I want to name the person as they deserve every bit of recognition they can be given but I think this is meant to be utterly confidential so I just want to say that I truly could not have come this far without them! I am now confident that I can go on to integrate myself in a very positive way back into a working society and be a fully contributing member of that society.”



RECOVERY STORY 4

“I started taking heroin in 2007 at the age of 18. I started treatment at The Junction a couple of years later and there my key worker introduced me to the Employment Specialist (ES). I had thought the only option for me was the job centre.

She was very reassuring and took me seriously even though I could not believe that anyone would think I could work without qualifications or skills. (I had dropped out of school). She explained to me about the assessment and we discussed jobs and if there was any training I might need. She also helped me a lot with my CV.

Within one week she secured job screenings with two big retail companies and I was successful with one as a junior supervisor and moved to the next stage. The ES travelled with me to the interviews and encouraged me.

I relapsed twice and in this period, I lost focus and felt very ashamed. I hung out with the wrong crowd and got involved in

the wrong things, I lost a lot of respect from my family and younger brother who looked up to me. All that time the ES never stopped calling me and I wondered what faith she had in me. My key worker was very kind and patient too and I was soon back on track and became abstinent in 2011!

We had some meetings during this time and the ES sent my CV to another Super Store for a trial. I was accepted and gained a lot of experience there. I worked very hard and the ES received a report from the manager and I had scored very highly. I was very proud! I attended a job interview with them and was offered the role of a counter assistant in the food section.

I am clean now and doing my stuff. (I am active in local football tournaments) and I often ask my friends why they do it (take drugs). I am grateful to my key worker for introducing me to the ES. I have a new purpose in life, my family are proud and my younger brother sees me as a role model now.”



“I WORKED VERY HARD AND THE EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST RECEIVED A REPORT FROM THE MANAGER AND I HAD SCORED VERY HIGHLY. I WAS VERY PROUD!”



“THE EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST WAS FANTASTIC. HER ENTHUSIASM AND OPTIMISM IS INFECTIOUS.”

RECOVERY STORY 5

“I first started treatment at the Junction Service about five years ago. Since then I have been in and out of treatment for heroin and crack cocaine 4 or 5 times. My most recent treatment started in September 2010, a methadone programme, which I have finally managed to stick at without also using on top.

I knew what work I would like to do but it wasn't the job I had done previously so I would need to start afresh, get experience and gain new skills. The ES was fantastic. Her enthusiasm and optimism is infectious and she gave me confidence and the belief that I could achieve anything if I went about it the right way.

I started meeting with the Employment Specialist (ES) about four months ago, when I began to feel I was more stable in my recovery and I started to think about how I could try to rebuild the mess that was my life! I hadn't worked for a good few years and the thought of trying to find work, going to interviews and trying to fit back into a 'normal' kind of life was absolutely terrifying!

She has given me invaluable advice and ongoing support every step of the way. This has helped me progress through various voluntary and paid projects which has given me the experience, contacts, confidence and ability to get out there. As well as the practical aspects with finding work, she also has motivated me to stay strong not only in my recovery but also in realising a rewarding career.”



“MY EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST CONTACTED LOCAL FOOTBALL CLUBS, AND MANAGED TO GET ME AN INTERVIEW FOR A STEWARDING JOB.”

RECOVERY STORY 6

“I've had a lot of problems in my life. I have a learning disability, slight physical disability and I also had a problem with using heroin and crack. I paid for my habit with crime and that has meant I have spent time in prison, including long sentences for robbery and intent to supply.

We talked about what we would tell employers about why I had been out of work, and agreed what we would say and how we would say it. We looked at weekend jobs with fishmongers and also drainage companies, but we didn't have any success, so we had a talk about what other options I might want to do. He knew I liked watching football, so he suggested I could get a job at one of the local clubs. That sounded like something I would really enjoy.

I was also homeless after my mum asked me to leave her flat. I'm settled in a nice hostel now, but I spent a lot of time sofa surfing. That made it really difficult to stop using, as most of the friends I would stay with used heroin or crack. My local drug and alcohol service helped me to cut down my use, and when I moved into a hostel I was able to stop using on top and start to reduce my medication.

My ES contacted local football clubs, and managed to get me an interview for a stewarding job. He told them about the problems I have had so I didn't need to talk about them at the interview and helped me to prepare before meeting them. We talked a lot about what I could say at the interview. He also got me an appointment at Suited and Booted, a charity that provides clothes for unemployed people to wear so they look smart for interviews.

Once I was settled I felt ready to look for work, but I didn't know where to start. I worked in local markets when I was younger, as a fishmonger. I've also done some drainage work, but it was all casual. I wanted something more official. My key worker referred me to an Education Training and Employment (ETE) worker, who referred me to my local Employment Specialist (ES).

The interview went well because they could see I really wanted the job. They gave me some training about being a steward and now I'm working at every home game. I've got extra money coming in each month, and I'm trying to save it up for a holiday. Things are really looking up.

I told him I wanted to get a weekend job, do that for a while then look for full time work once I had got used to working again. It would help me fill my time on the weekend, which was when I felt more likely to lapse, and also give me a bit of cash in my pocket. My ES advised me on what work I could do without losing my benefits.

In the future I plan to get a full time job, and I'm sure that my ES will be able to help me to find one I like. I'd like to thank him for everything he's done and let people know – if you want a job, speak to your Employment Specialist!”

“MY KEY WORKER REFERRED ME TO THE EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST. WE GOT ON REALLY WELL AND HE FOUND A JOB FOR ME WITHIN A COUPLE OF MONTHS, WORKING IN A WAREHOUSE.”



RECOVERY STORY 7

“I’ve had a problem with drugs for a long time, mainly crack, heroin and benzos. The key workers at my local drug and alcohol service have been really good, providing support and making me feel better about myself. I’ve gone from having drugs as a major part of my life and friendship group to something I feel is in the past.

Work is something that is important to me and for the last few years, after I got stable in treatment, I’ve been looking really hard for a job. I felt that if I had a stable routine doing a job I liked, I’d be able to stop drug use completely. I used to go to services in my borough and neighbouring boroughs to get help to find a job, but nothing I tried worked.

I suffer from depression, and part of what made this harder to cope with was the feeling that my life wasn’t going anywhere. Living on Job Seeker’s Allowance was really

tight too, especially as I was paying back some Crisis Loans, and I was getting frustrated and upset with not being able to find work.

My key worker referred me to the Employment Specialist (ES). We got on really well and he found a job for me within a couple of months, working in a warehouse. Unfortunately the company didn’t do so well in the recession, so they made some cutbacks and I was out of a job again.

My ES didn’t let me give up, and we kept looking for work. I had quite a few interviews but unfortunately wasn’t successful in them. I then got news that took my mind off job searching – the hostel I lived in was closing as the owners were selling the land for development. I had been given an eviction notice and was going to be homeless in two months! My ES helped me to find a solicitor who could challenge the eviction notice and gave me information about some

organisations that could help me to find a new place. Luckily, just in time, I was offered a flat just before the date I had to leave.

Although I was happy to have a secure place, and ready to start a job, my ES got me a Better Off Calculation and we found out what I would have to earn in order to have more money in my pocket – it was much less than I thought! Some of the jobs we were looking at wouldn’t pay enough, or wouldn’t have enough hours, but lots of them would.

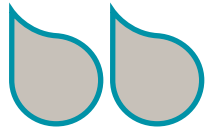
Through his contacts at the job centre, my ES got me on to a training course to work as an aircraft groomer. This free course lasted three weeks and was really hard work. However, I really enjoyed it as I have always been interested in aviation and the course was really hands on. One day the class got back from lunch to find every table in the classroom covered in guns, grenades, swords, gas canisters, knives and other dangerous things! It was quite a surprise, and we were told “If you see any of these things, RING THE ALARM!”

“It’s now three months on, I’ve finished the probation period and have been taken on permanently.”



Anyway, I finished the course and the next week started cleaning aircraft for a well known airline. My ES helped me with filling out forms for security checks, and also with contacting the job centre to get benefit references for my five year checkable employment history. He helped me sign off benefits, and made sure that I got everything I was entitled to. Also, when I ran out of money just before my first payday (it had been a month since my last benefit payment) he got the drug and alcohol service to pay for my travel to work for a week!

It’s now three months on, I’ve finished the probation period and have been taken on permanently. It is hard work but I’m really enjoying it, and I would like to say thank you to all the team at the service, especially my ES, for all the support I’ve received.”



RECOVERY STORY 8

"I came to my drug and alcohol service because I was addicted to heroin. The nurses there were really good and got me the medicine and support I needed to stop taking it. Once I was comfortable on methadone I started thinking about what other changes I wanted to make in my life. I spoke to my key worker about support with finding work and she referred me to the Employment Specialist (ES).

I had been out of work for over four years and was not feeling very confident. At the start of working with my ES I was not even happy to speak to employers over the telephone but with his support I soon felt comfortable doing it. He was very positive and made me feel a lot better about myself. We prepared a CV, wrote covering letters, and set up an email address – all things I had known I had to do but had not had the motivation to sit down and work on.

I wanted to find a delivery driver job, so I cut down my methadone until I was completely free of the drug (it's illegal to drive while taking methadone unless you have permission from the DVLA). We contacted employers and made lots of applications together and I had several interviews. Unfortunately, these were not successful.

Around this time I was given an eviction notice as they were developing the building where I lived into luxury flats. I was really worried that I would have nowhere to stay. My ES helped a lot, giving me a letter of

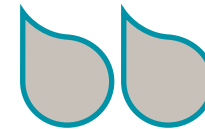
support, helping me access legal advice and putting me in touch with agencies that could help me find a new property.

Even though I was worried about my housing my ES also made sure we kept focussed on job searching. As well as us making applications, he also advised me to drop in and talk to people. A lot of small businesses don't recruit online or through the newspapers. I spoke to a tool hire company in the borough I live in who gave me a day's trial. That turned into a full time paid job! And I have now saved enough money from that to pay for the deposit on a new room when I need to move out of my current place.

I'm enjoying work and am feeling a lot more confident and happy than I have for years. I really appreciate my ES's help as he helped me to find the confidence to get out and get back to work."

"Even though I was worried about my housing my Employment Specialist also made sure we kept focussed on job searching."

"IT WAS IN JAIL I GOT FOCUSED AND STARTED TO FORMULATE A PLAN."



RECOVERY STORY 9

"It wasn't until I was sitting in a cell at Wormwood scrubs that it sank in, the severity and stupidity of my actions had landed me here. Now a lot of people who use the Hillingdon Drug & Alcohol Service (HDAS) have been in and out of jail, some are even proud of it! However I am not.

When I first started using I didn't use everyday and had a job and generally wasn't doing too bad, but then I lost my job due to drugs misuse, the usual, showing up late or not at all! I then started hanging around people who lived only for drugs and eventually I was only living for drugs. All the time thinking "my next fix, next fix" then, of course, my money ran out, I'd sold anything I had of value.

What to do? At the time I thought I had 2 choices, go and rob something for money, or sell for dealers in the area. In hindsight the 3rd choice of 'get clean' was the best option but at the time I didn't even consider it. Anyway I chose the 2nd option, as I thought it was the easier one. It was a



rut though as, which happens a lot, I was taking more and more each day and ended up owing the dealers, worrying about customers trying to rob me (it happened on more than one occasion I can tell you, and people will do anything for drugs). Police kicking in my door every few weeks, until eventually the judge said "custodial sentence".

At the time I thought it was harsh and unfair but now I really want to thank that judge as she may have just saved my life! There is only 2 outcomes in life for those who use heroin, 1 is jail (thankfully that was my outcome!), the other is dead.

So we fast forward to release day, pausing for a second to reiterate it was in jail I got focused and started to formulate a plan. The whole time I was in jail I was maintained on a 30ml methadone script. So I'm now at East Acton tube station and 2 lads who have been released with me are going to score, and ask if I was interested, I told them I'm going to take this as a lesson, that I've got a plan and I'm sticking to my

(continued over)

(Recovery story 9 continued)

script and support from HDAS and Drug Intervention Programme (DIPS). They said and I quote "you're a sad loser", well you can make your own opinion on that!

So it's the day after release I'm on my way to Uxbridge Bank House to be honest at the time to sort out my script and prevent myself from going into withdrawals and using. The first key worker I saw there was brilliant! Not only did she ensure my script and that side was sorted, she also spoke about actually "where to go from here". I actually didn't know to be honest. The ambition I had from before drugs was slowly coming back but I didn't honestly

know how to get back into society and work etc.

My key worker told me about HDAS employment services, which helps people who use the service get back into work. That week I came out I was fortunate, as the Employment Specialist (ES) was putting people in the service through to a company called Bluesky who employ ex prisoners only, and at the time were offering a free Construction, Skills, Certification Scheme (CSCS) card. I went and got my CSCS, unfortunately I didn't get employed as there is a waiting list for Bluesky. It didn't matter too much though as I was sticking to my

script (which was being reduced 2ml a week) and as I had been put forward for the CSCS opportunity I was on the ES's files. I'm going to point out at this point that I received a lot of help from HDAS and DIPS and as such would like to thank everyone. I have to give separate thanks to the ES though as she probably (no disrespect to my key workers!) helped the most. We had 1 on 1 interviews each week where she would ask what do you want to do in the short term? What do you want to do in the long term? etc.

Originally I wanted to get into plumbing, so she found out all the info and e-mailed me the companies and course etc. She also kept looking for work I could start right away just to get back into the working world. Months went by however and I wasn't having much luck, I attended all interviews and always kept to my script (which was all the while being reduced, until I didn't need it).

Finally I got a chance to enrol at Uxbridge College as an apprentice electrician; I found a firm and enrolled straight away! So now I'm 4 months into my apprenticeship, attending college 1 day a week and working 4 or 5 days a week, this is going to sound really cheesy but I'm actually really happy for the first time in years! I enjoy my job and my college, it's a lot of fun and it helps as the people I work with aren't addicts so it helps a lot.

My message to all users by the way is the first thing you need to do is change the company you keep! And also if you use any of the services Bank House has to offer, take

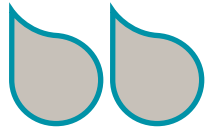
"I GOT A CHANCE TO ENROL AT UXBRIDGE COLLEGE AS AN APPRENTICE ELECTRICIAN."

the help they give you and respect them for it as I've sat in the waiting room many times and there is a group of people saying "just want my script, why do they talk s*** for? This is long!" (Just to point out I know the grammar is awful in that last statement but it's a direct quote, not my words!) But anyway that's not the right attitude to have as they are there to help you and they will help you if you listen to them!

I was called a "sad loser" by someone who was in a similar situation, he is now back in Scrubs and to be honest I can't see him changing his attitude and getting clean, I'm learning to be an electrician, so I say I'd rather be a sad loser than an addict!!

Once again I would like to give thanks to all at Bank House. And a very special thanks to the ES, who helped not just for the work she did with me but the positive mental attitude and ambition she helped me attain, thank you!!"

"I'm actually really happy for the first time in years! I enjoy my job and my college, it's a lot of fun and it helps as the people I work with aren't addicts."

**RECOVERY STORY 10**

"I've been in treatment quite a few years for problems with addiction, anxiety and depression and I've found my local CNWL addiction service to be really helpful.

I first made contact there when I was working in an office job and finding it really stressful. I was being bullied by my manager and in order to cope I was drinking too much and also taking methadone. Around this time I got signed off sick, and I went from smoking heroin occasionally to having a full addiction.

My local service was very supportive during this difficult time. They helped me get stable on a prescription, so I wasn't buying methadone on the street, or using heroin.

"I met with my Employment Specialist weekly to look for work. We first talked about what type of work I was looking for, and where I was willing to travel to, and made sure that what we looked for fitted in with my needs."

They gave me emotional support through key work, as well as access to complementary therapies, which helped me through this difficult time.

I found another job, as a trainee outreach worker working with homeless people. This was really hard work, and the job also involved completing an NVQ, which I found too demanding, along with the stress of dealing with the challenging behaviour of the people I was working with. I stayed in this job for a while, but I had to leave it as I wasn't able to complete the NVQ. It was around this time I was referred to my Employment Specialist (ES).

He was really helpful. He helped me to deal with the job centre, so that I was receiving the right benefits. He also helped me to negotiate with my housing association, which I needed to do because I'd run up some arrears after problems with my housing benefit. Another helpful thing he did was telling me about the Money Advice Service, who advised me on my debts. After I met with them, things got easier with my repayments.

I met with my ES weekly to look for work. We first talked about what type of work I was looking for, and where I was willing to travel to, and made sure that what we looked for fitted in with my needs. My health problems meant that I couldn't work full time, so we concentrated on jobs that had the right number of hours, but would still leave me better off than on benefits. We made a lot of applications and I had several interviews. Unfortunately these weren't successful, even though we did a

"I DON'T THINK I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET THE JOB WITHOUT MY EMPLOYMENT SPECIALIST'S SUPPORT."

lot of preparation. I found myself getting upset and frustrated at the lack of success, but my ES kept me positive and focussed on continuing the search.

One interview, for an outreach worker position with a housing association, went really well. My ES supported me to make the application and prepare for the interview. I was disappointed not to be offered the position, but I was told that I interviewed excellently and I would be offered a job when they received the funding for it. Unfortunately they didn't know when this would happen. My ES helped me to negotiate with the housing association, and supported me to keep in contact so that I would be ready once the funding came in.

While waiting for this, I replied to an advert from a clinic who needed night shift staff. I got the job, but after a few weeks I found that there were not enough regular hours for me to make the money I needed to pay my rent, so sadly I had to quit.

Soon after this disappointment, the housing association contacted me and offered me the outreach worker job! The job is well paid, and the hours suit me. I'm getting lots of training and I'm really enjoying it. I don't think I would have been able to get the job without my ES's support, especially with staying in contact with the employer while we waited for the funding to become available. I really appreciate his help, and all the other support I have received from the local service."



