

IAN'S STORY

“With the right support, people with drug addiction can turn their life around...Rebuilding a career has changed my life.”

Ian Fisher, an ex drug and alcohol addict from the Wirral has not only rebuilt his own life following drug addiction, but is educating others, using his own life experience as an example.

Before becoming dependent on drugs and alcohol Ian had a successful career as a Chef. After completing GCSEs at school, Ian undertook an NVQ level 1 and 2 in Craft Catering at college, providing the skills for work in the hotel and catering industry. Having successfully completed the course, Ian held a variety of catering positions for eight years. Most recently, Ian was Second Chef at a hotel.

During school, Ian had experimented with drugs, and this increased as he began his working career and had access to money. Soon Ian became a chaotic user of both drugs and alcohol, and in 2002 was given a three-year prison sentence for the possession and supply of drugs.

Ian was released from prison in May 2004, having served eighteen months, and was determined to not only to beat his addictions, but also to help other addicts.

Ian was introduced to Tomorrow's People Nextstep initiative – Advice on Learning and Work - by Frank Flood, representative of Progress2Work on the Wirral, a government initiative designed to support individuals affected by drug use to find work.

At the time, Ian was claiming Income Support due to long-term health issues caused by his drug and alcohol dependency. This included pancreatitis, which is irreversible and means that any consumption of alcohol puts him at risk of internal bleeding.

Following regular meetings with Tomorrow's People, it became clear that Ian wished to return to full-time work as a qualified drug support worker and mentor, rather than returning to his career as a chef.

Tomorrow's People helped Ian update his CV and assisted with application forms and helped him approach other charities in his search for funding to join a support worker course. Ian secured funding and started two courses in September 2005. The first will lead to an NVQ level 2 in drug and alcohol awareness. He is also undertaking an introduction to counselling course.

In addition, Tomorrow's People helped Ian acquire a dictaphone and access to a computer to enable him to complete his course. Ian had difficulty writing, as he has a broken bone in his right hand following a sports injury, which was operated upon in October 2005.

Case Study



Whilst in prison, Ian not only gained NVQs in Maths and English but also gained an NVQ Level 2 in Performing Arts. Since leaving prison he has performed in a popular drug awareness play called 'Mad House', which has had a large demand for performances in schools and youth groups throughout the North West and at various events, often organised by the National Probation Service.

In addition, whilst attending his current NVQ training as a support worker, Ian met with the founder of a charitable organisation by the name of 'Solve It.' The organisation is involved in youth work supporting individuals at risk of solvent abuse. Ian now acts as a volunteer for the charity, visiting youth clubs and schools to help educate people using his own life experience as an example.

Sarah Thompson, Client Adviser at Tomorrow's People Merseyside said: "Ian is an inspiration to others due to his determination to succeed and his willingness to talk about difficult personal experiences to encourage young people not to exclude themselves from learning."

Ian's efforts were recognised by Tomorrow's People in its annual awards for achievement. Last year, at the age of 27, Ian won the charity's 'Award for Achievement against Adversity,' which is presented to individuals who have overcome serious adversity to achieve their personal and/or professional objectives.

Ian was honoured with a certificate, trophy and cash prize at the awards ceremony held at The Gibson Hall, London, on Thursday 17 November 2005, by Tomorrow's People Patron, HRH The Countess of Wessex.

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Notes to editors:

Tomorrow's People is a national charity, with a 22-year track record of success in helping people out of long-term unemployment, homelessness, welfare dependence including incapacity benefits, and into jobs and self-sufficiency.

The charity has helped change the lives of more than 400,000 people across the UK who had been resigned to long-term, even life-long, unemployment, since it was established in 1984.

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