

STORIES OF RECOVERY

DARREN



Journeys into
darkness and light
shared by those
who have been
there.

**DARREN'S STORY:
FINDING THE LADDERS**



THE STORY PROJECT

DARREN'S STORY: FINDING THE LADDERS



The Story Project tells the true stories of people who have overcome challenges and turned their lives around.

If you feel that your story needs a home, or that you need help getting back into work, or staying in work, or are an employer needing help in supporting others in work, just contact **hello@workingforhealth.co.uk**.

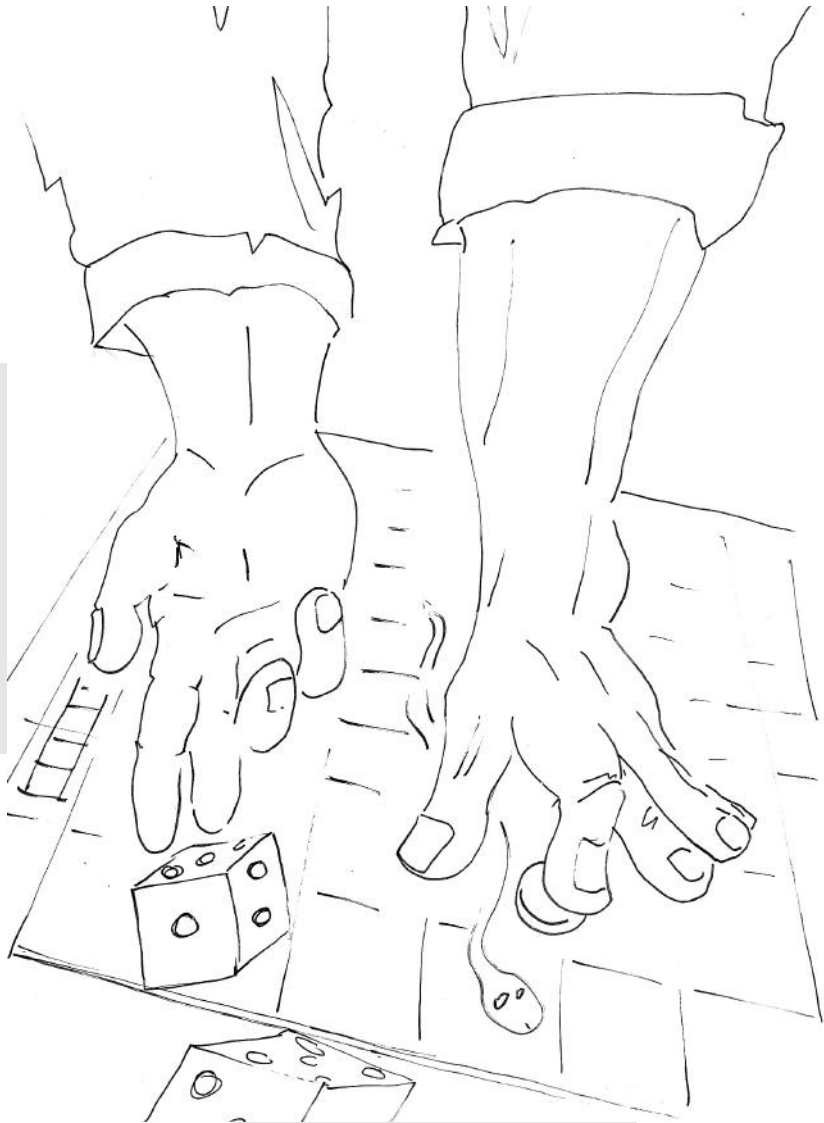
Working for Health CIC is a not-for-profit organisation funded by the kindness of others.

We are specialists in mental health and employment.

If you wish to donate, chat or find out more please contact us.

SOMETIMES LIFE'S LIKE SNAKES AND LADDERS

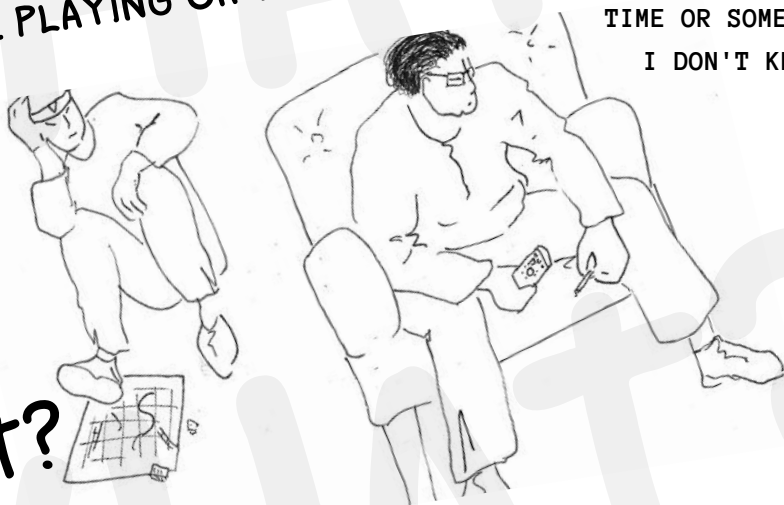
I KNOW WHAT YOU'RE THINKING.
YOU'RE THINKING MAYBE MINE MUST'VE BEEN ALL SNAKES.
MAYBE THAT'S BECAUSE *YOURS* HAS BEEN? I DUNNO.
BUT I PROMISE YOU THIS: THE LADDERS ARE THERE.
YOU JUST GOT TO FIND THEM. IT TOOK ME A WHILE...



DAD!

WE PLAYING OR WHAT?

WHEN I WAS LITTLE MY DAD
DIDN'T DO DAD THINGS.
I GUESS HE DIDN'T HAVE
TIME OR SOMETHING.
I DON'T KNOW.



MY MUM AND DAD SPLIT WHEN I WAS 7 OR SO.

AND I'D SEE HIM. STILL DO. WITH HIS
NEW FAMILY. LOOK, THERE HE IS DOING
STUFF HE DIDN'T DO WITH ME.
I DON'T GET WHY IT'S DIFFERENT.

SAD.
SAD REALLY.

WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?
WHAT?





I'M NOT BLAMING HIM. I'M JUST SAYING
THAT WHEN YOU'RE LITTLE YOU NEED SOMEONE
TO LOOK UP TO.

ALL YOU WANT IS A ROLE MODEL.
SO I SUPPOSE I DIDN'T HAVE ONE.
NOT AT FIRST.

BUT THERE WAS MY MUM.
SHE'S BRILLIANT. SHE DID EVERYTHING SHE
COULD AND SHE WAS ALWAYS THERE.

TIME FOR SCHOOL DARREN.
YOU DON'T WANT TO BE LATE AGAIN!



[School!...Really??]

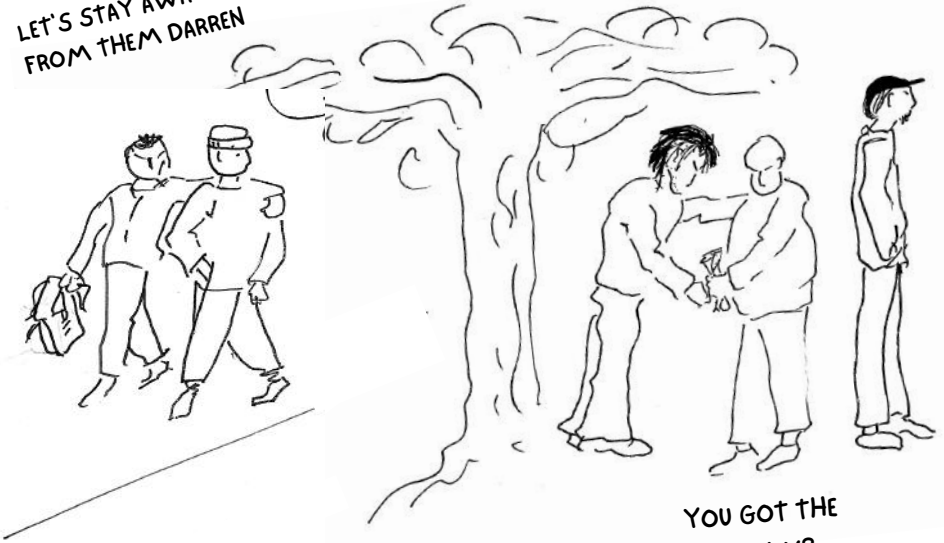


AFTER SCHOOL THOUGH, I COULD SEE A LOT WAS GOING ON.

IT'S NOT LIKE I DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS.
I HAD FRIENDS. GOOD ONES.
A GROUP WHO DIDN'T DO BAD STUFF.
THEY WERE ALL RIGHT.
BUT I WAS WATCHING THE OTHERS...

I LIKED THE IDEA OF A BIT OF
A DRINK AND ALL THAT AND THEY
WERE DOING IT. AND MORE.

LET'S STAY AWAY
FROM THEM DARREN



YOU GOT THE
MONEY?

THANKS DAN



BY THE TIME I WAS A TEENAGER I'D PRETTY MUCH STOPPED GOING TO SCHOOL.

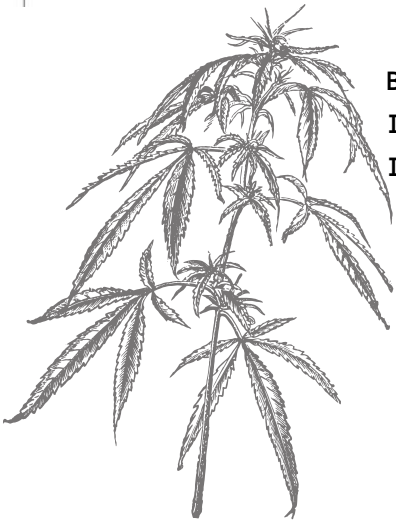
EVENTUALLY EVERYONE WAS TAKING EXAMS EXCEPT ME. I DIDN'T BECAUSE I WAS STUCK IN YOUNG OFFENDERS.

BEEN THERE SINCE I WAS 15.

AND I'D DONE SOME BAD THINGS TO GET IN THERE

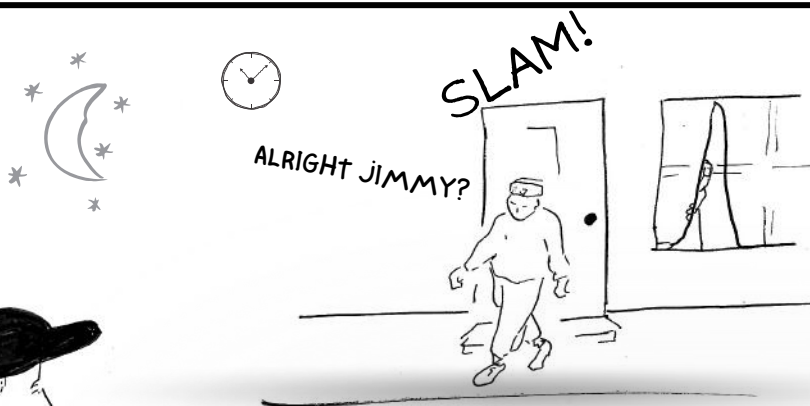
MY MUM WENT TO COURT TWICE BECAUSE I WANTED TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL.

BUT THE WEED DIDN'T HELP.
I'D STARTED THAT THE YEAR BEFORE.
I WAS JUST 14.



I'LL TELL YOU HOW IT BEGAN, AND WHERE IT ALL WENT WRONG.
THOUGH I'M NOT PROUD OF MYSELF.

THOSE OTHER KIDS AT SCHOOL,
THEY KNEW I WANTED IN ON THE FUN.
JIMMY WAS A BIT OF A MATE ALREADY.
THEN THERE WAS DAN AND STEVE. OLDER LADS.
THEY BECAME THAT ROLE MODEL I WANTED, I SUPPOSE.
THEY WERE A LAUGH.



HOW YOU DOING DARREN?

YOU LOOK FED UP MATE.

THAT YER MUM PEEKING OUT?

SHALL I GIVE HER A WAVE?

HERE, DO YOU WANNA COME AND MEET DAN?

I WAS A SHY, QUIET KID REALLY. BUT I SAW WHAT JIMMY AND THE OTHERS WERE UP TO AND IT LOOKED FUN Y'KNOW? THEY WERE LIKE STUPID AND UP FOR A LAUGH AND BEING THAT BIT OLDER ALL THE KIDS IN MY GROUP LOOKED UP TO THEM A BIT. BECAUSE YOU DO DON'T YOU?

I THINK HE'S BORED.
IF YOU WANT TO HANG
WITH US YOU GOT TO
MAKE US LAUGH DARREN.
YOU'RE JUST A KID.

I PROMISE YOU DAN, HE'S A BORN
ENTERTAINER. A REAL LAUGH
AND HE'S FEARLESS.
HE'LL DO ANYTHING.
ISN'T THAT RIGHT DARREN?



SO NEXT DAY WE CHECKED OUT SOME OF THE SHOPS AND STUFF. JUST
LOOKING. I LOVED IT. I WAS TRYING TO PROVE MYSELF I THINK.



ANYWAY, WE CHOSE ONE AND GOT READY FOR AN ALL-NIGHTER TO ROB THE LOCAL SUPERMARKET. THERE WAS STUFF LIKE DISTRACTING THE SECURITY GUARD. RUNNING OFF...Y'KNOW... I LIKED IT.



THAT WAS MY FIRST MAIN OFFENCE. IT JUST WENT ON FROM THERE. DRUGS, DODGY DEALS...



TWOK GOT ME 3 MONTHS IN
JUVENILE, AGED 15.
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME.



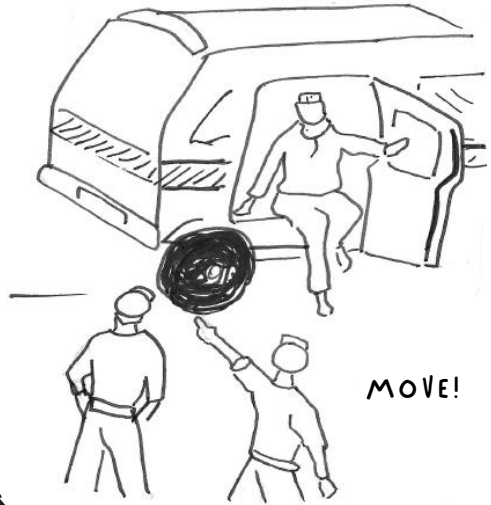
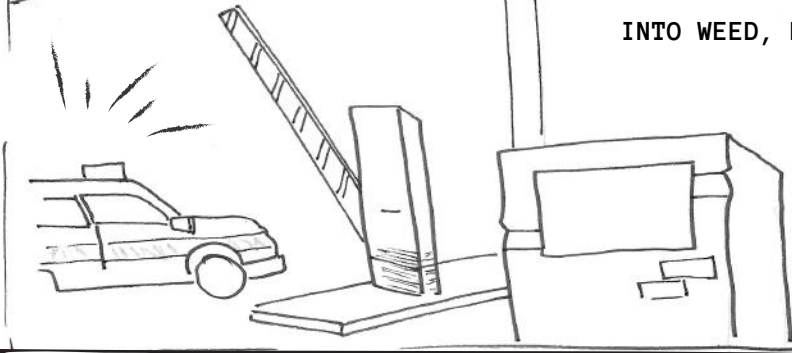
WHEN I CAME OUT ALL THE SECURITY OF PRISON WAS GONE.

I'D CHANGED BUT THE WORLD HADN'T.

SO I WAS ONLY OUT FOR 7 WEEKS BEFORE I WAS BACK IN.

THIS TIME INTO YOUNG OFFENDERS, FOR 21 MONTHS.

I'D GONE FROM BEING SHY
INTO WEED, DRUGS, STEALING..



MOVE!



I ENDED UP WORSE THAN ANY OF THEM.
I WAS FIRST OF US TO GO TO YOUNG
OFFENDERS.

WHEN I WAS LOCKED UP THEY ALL WENT
THEIR SEPARATE WAYS.

WAITING I SUPPOSE.



AFTER THAT I WAS IN AND OUT.
LOCKED UP A LOT.IT WAS A BAD WORLD:
PEOPLE KNOCKING ON PAY DAY.
DRUGS GET HARDER WHILE CRIMES GET
YOU WORK.

DRUGS MADE IT SEEM LIKE GOOD TIMES.
BUT IT'S NOT TRUE. NEVER WAS.



whatever



I ACTED LIKE I WAS ONE SORT OF PERSON,
BUT INSIDE ME I WAS NOT THAT PERSON.
I WAS STILL THE SHY KID FROM SCHOOL.

I STILL MISSED IT THOUGH. BEING WITH
THE OTHERS AND ALL THAT.



AT FIRST THEY'D SEEN ME AS A TAG ALONG,
THEN PRETTY SOON I'D BECOME THE ONE WHO MADE EVERYONE LAUGH.
I WASN'T A LEADER BUT I SEEMED TO BE THE GLUE THAT HELD THEM
ALL TOGETHER.

AND WHEN I CAME OUT WE'D DRIFT BACK TOGETHER.







Not interested.

PART OF ME KNEW WHAT WAS
WAITING IF I MESSED UP.

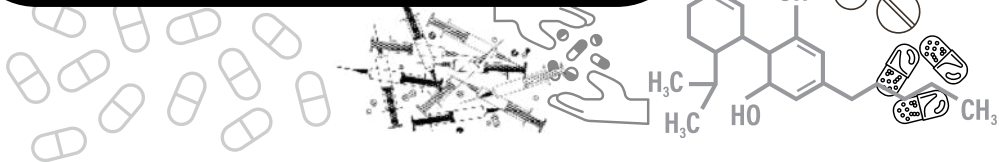
BUT I JUST DIDN'T CARE.
I THOUGHT THERE WERE GOOD
TIMES TO COME AND ALL THAT.
I WAS A KID WHO KEPT MAKING
THE SAME MISTAKES.



Wait Darren. if you carry on like
this you know you're heading back
inside, right?



I ALWAYS SAY I HAD AN UNHEALTHY INTEREST IN
TAKING DRUGS. I JUST WANTED TO TRY
EVERYTHING. DRINK AND ALL. I DIDN'T REALISE
THEN HOW EVERYTHING, MY MENTAL HEALTH AND
PHYSICAL HEALTH, WOULD ALL DETERIORATE.
MY FREEDOM WOULD ALL BE GONE.

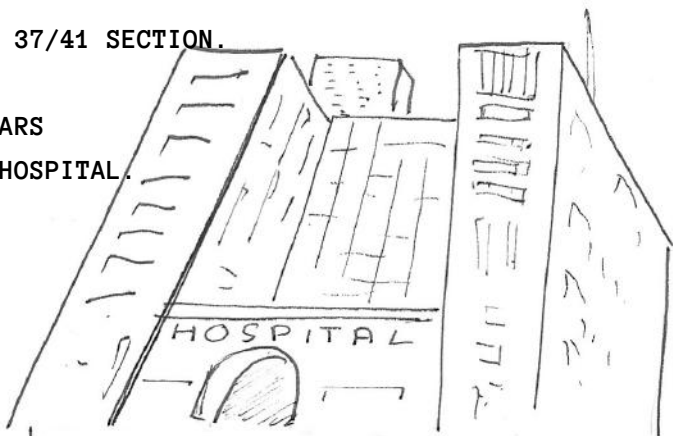


THEN IN 2009 I GOT A 37/41 SECTION.

I WAS JUST 21.

FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

I WAS IN AND OUT OF HOSPITAL.

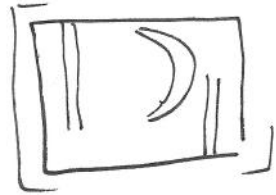


I THOUGHT I WAS OK BY 2014,
THEN IN 2016 I WAS RECALLED
DUE TO FEELING PARANOID.



THEY OFFERED ME LOADS OF HELP IN PRISON BUT
I JUST DIDN'T WANT IT AT FIRST.

STUPID REALLY.

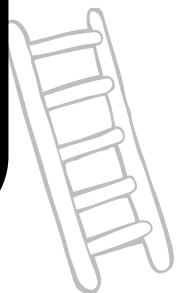


I COULD STILL BE IN THERE.
BUT THEY DIDN'T GIVE UP,
AND I SAW THAT YOU CAN'T CHANGE
THE PAST, YOU GOT TO MOVE ON.

I WAS IN HOSPITAL FOR 12 YEARS.

THE FORENSIC UNIT HAD SO MANY RESTRICTIONS
ABOUT WHERE I COULD GO, WHEN, WITH WHO, WHAT FOR.
IT WAS HARD.

BUT THE TOTAL DRINK AND DRUGS BAN REALLY HELPED.
AND THE RULES WERE THERE FOR GOOD REASON.
NOW I DON'T NEED THEM ANY MORE.
I JUST WANT TO LIVE THE GOOD LIFE WITHOUT THEM.



SO I DID EVERYTHING THEY ASKED ME TO.
IT TAKES STRENGTH OF CHARACTER TO KEEP THAT GOING.

BUT I DID IT.
NO DRINK.
NO DRUGS.
AND NO PAST PRETEND FRIENDS.

SO WE LOOKED AT GETTING OUT.

AT FIRST I WAS NERVOUS ABOUT COMING BACK TO HULL
BUT NOW?

NOW I HAVE FRIENDS FOR LIFE.
GENUINE PEOPLE FROM HOSPITAL
AND NEW FRIENDS FROM A NEW WORLD.



AND I MADE SOME DECISIONS MYSELF,
TAKING THAT FIRST STEP.

GOOD DECISIONS.





Excuse me



Hi. I'm Glen. How can we help?



Shall we start with tea or coffee?

tea?
help?



I'D FOUND THIS GREAT COMMUNITY.
GOOD PEOPLE WHO WELCOMED ME WITH OPEN ARMS

THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES, THINGS TO DO AND KEEP MYSELF BUSY.
BETTER THAN SITTING AT HOME BEING BORED AND THINKING 'OH
I'LL HAVE A FEW BEERS' OR...ANYTHING, YOU KNOW?

THERE'S ALWAYS GOING TO BE CRAVINGS BUT IF THERE'S A LOT
GOING ON YOU'RE LESS LIKELY TO REOFFEND, AND IT KEEPS YOUR
MENTAL HEALTH WELL.



Good to see you again Darren

IT TOOK OFF FROM THERE.

I WAS ANXIOUS ABOUT GROUPS OF PEOPLE I DIDN'T KNOW BUT I TOLD MYSELF I CAN DO THIS, YOU KNOW? I CAN.

I FOUND MYSELF CAUGHT UP WITH ACTIVITIES.

I JOINED IN WHATEVER I COULD AND STARTED LEARNING.

PLANNING A FUTURE.

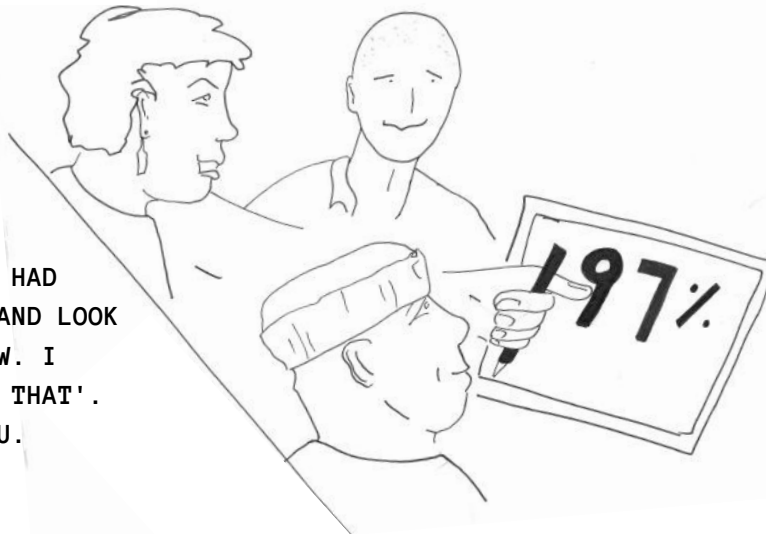
um...



BEFORE LONG I WAS TAKING
QUALIFICATIONS.
ONE OF MY FIRST WAS IN I.T.

TOP SCORE!

I SAW THAT PEOPLE HAD
BEEN WHERE I WAS AND LOOK
WHERE THEY ARE NOW. I
THOUGHT 'I CAN DO THAT'.
IT RUBS OFF ON YOU.



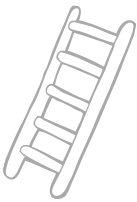
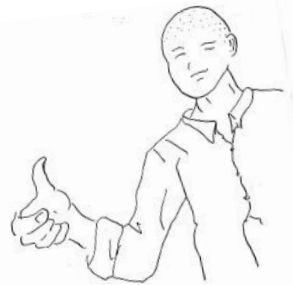
THE STUFF I'VE DONE! I JUST SAY YES AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS.
AND I'VE MOVED OUT OF THE FORENSIC UNIT NOW.
MY OWN PLACE HAS COME THROUGH!

your key, sir



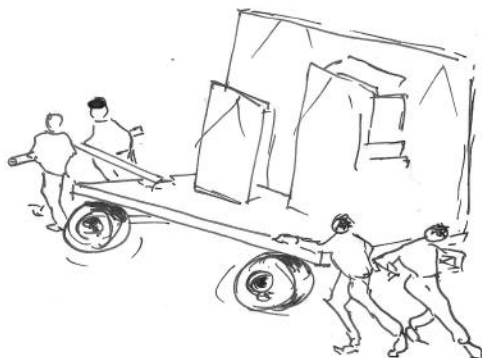
I JUST WANT A NICE QUIET LIFE, A JOB, THAT SORT OF THING.
AND I'VE STARTED VOLUNTEERING FOR WORKING FOR HEALTH.
IT'LL GIVE ME EXPERIENCE

nice work Darren



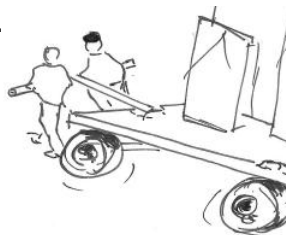
I EVEN JOINED A THEATRE GROUP AND PUSHED A
MIEVEAL WAGGON THROUGH THE STREETS OF YORK!

PUSH!

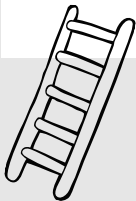


WHAT I'D SAY FINALLY IS, THERE'S PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO WANT
YOU TO SUCCEED. YOU GOT TO REMEMBER YOU'RE A NICE PERSON.
EVERYBODY'S GOT A NICE SIDE.

YOU CAN'T CHANGE YOUR PAST BUT KEEP TRYING,
JUST KEEP TRYING AND YOU'LL GET THERE EVENTUALLY.



MADE IT!



KEEP TRYING



STORIES OF RECOVERY

Collect the zines, check out more stories, films and posts online as they appear, find out how we can help you - or just say hi to us at hello@workingforhealth.co.uk www.workingforhealth.co.uk



Design



Words: Darren, Paint the Mouse. This is Darren's story.



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UnLtd Award Winner



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