

Phil's Full Story

10 minute read

Background

I've lived in York all me life, currently residing at a hostel. After a stint in prison, I'm on a long journey now in recovery which started with me drinking to self-medicate really. I had one bad year and tried getting medical help, couldn't get medical help, so I kept getting passed from pillar to post.

So, ended self-medicating on the drinking drugs, got into trouble um, ended up going to prison. Came out of prison last year and I was homeless for two weeks so I started drinking and things again and then ended up getting recalled a bit later on last year and since then, I've done 15 months in recovery.

Started that off in jail on the recovery wing – did 12 months come out, realised that I still needed help so I've gone to probation and asked them to get me help and they've passed me on to a day rehabilitation centre which is a brilliant place. I think because they are really, really helping me they've stopped me going back to drink and drugs – they've helped me get into the day rehabilitation centre because I'm homeless and don't know where to go basically.

Recovery Wing?

It's specific for drink people that's been on drinking and drugs out in the community. If you want the help in prison, they'll recommend that you go on the recovery wing to help you. It's a drug and alcohol team that run it and they do groups like NA¹ groups, AA² groups SMART³, the 12 Steps and set you off on that recovery route.

Was the Recovery Wing good?

It was good but I was there when it was in COVID and was only doing two groups a week which helped but could have done with more but out of COVID it's meant to be really, really good where you're doing groups all the time and that's all about concentrating on is groups.

But the community on there is brilliant because it's all people in the same situation wanting to come off drink or drugs – but when you come out into the community nothing like day rehabilitation centre gets mentioned – it's go to the drug and alcohol service, that's all that you get told – but I asked my probation officer for help and she rang the day rehabilitation centre up. Got me into it within a week of me being out so probations really, really helped me but the housing situation, I got out on the Friday evening, out of prison, came to York –

¹ Narcotics Anonymous

² Alcoholics Anonymous

³ Self-Management and Recovery Training

oh, we can't help you, no where's open – so I had to go all weekend sleeping on the streets until the Tuesday. I got to Salvation Army and they say's well, we'll put you in a hostel and I've been in there ten weeks now.

Hostel Experience?

The hostel, I'm using that as a coping tool – because people in there are on drink and drugs and I'm looking at them and thinking well do I want to be there?

No, I don't so I'm using that as a coping mechanism but it's not nice being around that environment when you're trying to do the recovery. The staff are helpful but I don't know it's...

Does the hostel support your recovery?

They're all for me because of me being in recovery, I don't know, they seem to be helping me quite a lot because I'm trying to help myself.

I'll get a bit more help and such off them than some of the others that don't want to help. So, I think they're trying to point people to like drug and alcohol services and things but the people don't want to know. So, they can't exactly force 'em, I've got a couple of people, signing up to the day rehabilitation centre myself, um, from the hostel because they want, they've seen me, how I am, and thinking, well, it can work.

So, I've given them the phone number for the day rehabilitation centre and they said that they've never ever been told about day rehabilitation centre. Which is a bit of a shock really because it's part of the umbrella provider – which the day rehabilitation centre is part of the umbrella provider. So, I can't understand why they don't promote it more.

Probation?

They actually phoned the day rehabilitation centre, did my probation officer and the manager down at the centre turned around and says, well, come in, come in tomorrow, Tuesday and do the pre-treatment. Went and did pre-treatment – she says, right, you can have a place on Monday and I was ecstatic because that's what I really, really wanted!

That's my journey now. But, the only journey that a bit rickety with is the housing.

What's next with housing?

Yeah, because I took me name of the council house that I had with an ex-partner – and when I took me name off the council house – the council turned around and said then – we haven't got a duty of care for you, you've made yourself homeless, we can't help you for ten years.

So, it was like, well, what am I meant to do?

They says, well, there's nothing we can do.

So, I was sofa-surfing and living on the streets and then my son got killed in a car accident and that's when I went off the rails.

And if it wasn't going, for going to prison, I wouldn't be on this journey that I am now, through the provider, trying to get somewhere where to live.

Is there good communication about your housing options?

Me keyworker keep saying – Oh, yeah, by the time you finish the day rehabilitation centre – which is 22nd of this month, December – you should be looking at going in shared housing and then that was at the beginning and now he's saying – oh well, it could be after Christmas because of the council shutting down and everything for Christmas.

There's no movements or anything. So, I just feel as though I'm in limbo at the moment, so I don't know what's going to happen.

But people are telling me that they've been told the same and they're still in there, in the hostel, months and months after they've been told they'll go into shared housing.

Are you in conversation with the council about accommodation?

But I think with going to prison that's helped me go – going on to the council.

To me, I shouldn't have had to gone down that road of being homeless and everything.

I was helping my daughter, that's why I took my name off the council property so that they could stay there and her mum could get benefits and everything – because if my name was still on the property – she couldn't get housing benefit or anything because I was the main provider.

So, I just thought of protecting my daughter and I got punished which is awful.

What has worked, and what hasn't worked for you?

It's all felt difficult and there's only really the day rehabilitation centre that's been brilliant and probation service – probation have got – they sorted for me – they've got me mental health workers and everything set up.

So probation has been brilliant, the day rehabilitation centre have been brilliant, it's just the housing.

I originally went to the council when I came out of prison that first night and they says – well, nothing we can do, it's a weekend – and I says well where am I meant to

live? – Oh, you'll have to stay on the streets for the weekend, you'll have to go down Salvation Army – so it was dreadful – sleeping out on the streets in January.

September I came out – sleeping on the streets – I was a recovering alcoholic, so dreadful.

I did want to drink but I was so strong that I didn't.

Yeah, I kept to my morals and thought no, you don't need drink.

Over four nights, I had about four hours sleep. So, it's really, really awful being kicked out of somewhere and nowhere to go.

Did prison help with the transition into housing?

The same thing happened last year, Shelter was meant to help me in prison and Shelter never did the thing, I came out homeless then. They were saying, well, York City Council said that when you get out, you've got to go down there, so I didn't that, council was saying, well, we phoned Shelter and wanted to do a phone conference with you, you wouldn't come out of your cell which I never heard anything about that phone conference off Shelter. So, Shelter isn't very good if you ask me. So, it's just getting passed from pillar to post and your life's on hold and it isn't very good. I don't think.

Do you access any other support?

At the moment I'm still in the day rehabilitation centre, which is keeping me going, going to meetings. There's a Menfulness meeting last night up at Rydale Stadium, that was good. I've been passed on to mental health services but I'm waiting for an appointment, 18 weeks so they reckon to get that going. So, it's just a waiting game basically now.

How are you today?

I'm fine, I'm feeling really good, recovered after COVID and everything but, but that took me back to my prison days being locked in my room all the time, it's not nice, but I was protecting other people. So, the staff said that I did really well on that so. Thank you very much (interviewer). Yeah, I'll do anything to try and help.