

Improving Cycle-ology

Stephen was born and raised in South Kirby, a working-class ex-mining community in West Yorkshire.



He was a sporty child who loved football with a passion but doesn't look back on the academic aspect of his school years with fondness. His recollection of school is more centred on hazy summer days playing as much football as he could. He would pursue extra-curricular football through local youth teams and later in life the heralded local Sunday league.

Football, Rugby, and cricket are deep rooted in the fabric and culture of all Yorkshires tight knitted ex-mining communities and the former was Stephen's sporting love.

Unfortunately, Stephen succumbed to trying drugs at 16. He was never much of a drinker through inclination and a lack of tolerance to its effects but found that taking amphetamines enhanced its ability to consume large amounts of alcohol with his friends - something Stephen craved, to be part of something, to feel socially connected to his friends. Eventually this led to trying harder drugs Heroin became his obsession and life for years was a nightmare. He came to Reflections after a relapse on Cocaine prior to many years of abstinence.

"I've always had a strong belief in Jesus and faith as a whole. This kept me safe for many years".

As with any relapse Stephen had stopped doing the things that had kept him clean. He needed a new strategy.

He began the 12 steps and got a sponsor. For something to do during idle times he accepted the invitation of a bike ride with our Sports leader. He always wanted to be part of something, to be one of the lads. This wish was fulfilled during the many bicycle outings Reflections offer.

"I wanted to belong, I wanted something to do, I wanted to improve my mental health and keep my weight down. Bike riding helped achieve all four of those goals."

Stephen bonded with his friends and rediscovered his youthful sense of adventure. Discovering new bike trails in the local area were a welcome tonic to the sometimes-frustrating rigours of recovery. Like a child with a blank map let loose in the countryside Stephen would immerse himself amongst the greenery, the rivers, the ponds, the fields of wheat and feel a relative sense of freedom away from the overbearing stresses of the mundane.

Has Stephen's Bicycle adventures helped his recovery and gave him a sense of belonging amongst his new friends? Stephen resoundingly agrees and he also feels his mental health and weight have become immensely more manageable.

"My fitness has improved, my mental health and my overall wellbeing. I love it out on a nice day, it's fantastic."