

I started taking drugs at the age of 11

Wayne speaks to Edges. He is in our Rehab Unit.



I started taking drugs when I was about 11 years old. I'd just lost my Grandad. I actually witnessed him die. It was the day before Christmas Eve when he died and I couldn't cope with what I'd seen. I couldn't cope with the feelings that I had. I went away with my Nana for a while to help me get over the death, and while I was away was the first time I'd ever had any kind of drug.

I was 11 at the time and I had been watching my cousins smoking cannabis, I tried it out of curiosity, I enjoyed the feeling it gave me. It was like it made me comfortable with myself. I wanted more. I had two older brothers who were also into drugs and that made it easier for me to get hold of them. Things progressed from there, I had this drug and I wanted it, I wanted it all the time. I used to go to work to get money. If I didn't go to work then I'd go out doing crime, burglaries, breaking into cars.

When I was young my dad was away a lot. I was always left to my own devices; my mum tried to make up for it by spoiling me rotten. Then when my dad did come back he tried to have authority over me, he tried to discipline me, smacking me and stuff. But I was already strong minded by then, I always wanted to do whatever I wanted not what any one else wanted so that's what I did.

I drank every other night, getting into trouble because we were drinking and fighting, committing crime. I was kicked out of school because I was doing drugs, but I hated it anyway. I couldn't stand being there and I couldn't do the work, so I thought it was a good thing when I got kicked out.

I started stealing cars and motorbikes and things like that. I got too much for my mum and dad, so I moved in with my Nana, I lived with her because she was the only one that could control me. I started working when I was about 15, I did alright for a few years. I was working then going out at weekends and that went on for about four years, then I started drinking heavily, taking tablets, taking LSD, ecstasy, taking anything I could get, even cocktailing them.

I got into serious trouble when I was 19 because of the drink. I got done for attempted murder on a copper, throwing him under a car. That was a big reality check for me. I stopped drinking, stopped taking drugs got myself a job and I was doing alright. Then my Nana died. Things just went seriously wrong then, the only person I loved in my life had gone. I had no support, if something went wrong she was always the one I'd turn to. I was looking for the love she gave me from everyone else, but there was no one. I started drinking again, started taking drugs.

I went to a friend's flat and there were people in there that were smoking heroin and it was curiosity again. I took it, and it was like that was the feeling I'd been chasing all my life. It took control of me from the first moment I had it. The next day I was in Manchester scoring. At first I had the money to pay for it, but once the drug had got hold of me, everything had gone. All I could do was pinch money and that wasn't enough money to pay for the habit I had.

I ended up selling the drugs because that gave me the ability to pay for the habit. It gave me my own kind of security; I built my world around drugs, taking drugs and selling them. The feelings I had just began to grow every time I didn't take the gear, so I took more and more just to suppress my emotions.

I did this for about five years. I had been in and out of the police station. My parents house was busted so was mine and my friends when the police were looking for the drugs I was selling. Somehow I managed to keep one step ahead of them all the time though. Things came to an abrupt end in 1996 when the lads I was selling for ended up going to prison. I was left with an enormous habit, a family to look after and the pain of the habit. That was when I ended up getting into burglaries in a big way. By the time I first got arrested in January '97 I had committed something like 450 burglaries. I actually got remanded for that but I got out about four weeks later because my girlfriend was diagnosed with cancer. They took pity on that and released me. I started selling drugs again straight away. Two months later I got caught, I was selling some gear to some people and got arrested for it. I found out undercover police had been surveilling me for months. From that moment on I knew that I wasn't getting released. I'd never been done

before, but I got four and a half years.

I was released in August '99. I did ok at first. I wasn't doing heroin though I was still drinking and doing cannabis. I got a job and worked for the first nine months after being out. My brother moved in a few doors away from me and he was selling gear. I had a girlfriend, I had a house a job and a car but I still felt there was something missing. The pressure of seeing the gear every day but going out working, I felt there was still something missing. I ended up using again and within four months of using I was caught doing burglaries again, I'd lost my job and everything. I was burgling to fund my habit. I got arrested for a burglary because someone identified me. I got four years.

I was using for fifteen months of the sentence. I woke up one morning in my cell in bits. I'd been threatening my family screaming and shouting at them, verbally abusing them just to get money off them to fund my habit while I was inside. My mum and dad were on the verge of disowning me, my girlfriend was on the verge of leaving me. That was a turning point. I volunteered to go to Lancaster into the twelve step program because I'd heard good things about it. I completed the program there and got clean, I thought I was going to be a success, but five minutes after getting off the train I was using again. I'd got a problem with coping with society and the pressures that it puts on you out there. I was feeling more secure inside than out and I couldn't cope.

I met up with Pam and she explained about the THOMAS program, that it's a place where I could go to get clean and learn about myself. The program lets you integrate slowly back into society without all the pressures out there. Learning to cope with myself first, without having to deal with budgeting and all that. That will all come in time. The THOMAS program is helping me a lot more than I thought it would. I thought I'd come here and just see it though. But I'm actually enjoying it. I've learned a lot about my feelings and about myself. The staff are warm and welcoming. They're here to support me and I feel like part of the family, which is great for me.