



# Heroin & Prison – I've Had Enough

## Paul shares his story

I am a 29-year-old heroin addict nearing the end of a 4 years sentence for supplying heroin to undercover police in an operation – Tetley, to crack down on street level drug dealers in Preston. I'm released September 4th this year, help has been available for me in jail. I once went to do the 12 steps programme at Lancaster Castle but for reasons out of my control I wasn't able to complete the course and I was sent back to Risley, I have still been using drugs in jail on and off but I haven't used now for about 3 months.

I started using drugs when I was 11 years old. It started out with glue sniffing and drinking cider, and then I tried cannabis but never really liked it much. When I was about 14 I started taking LSD (acid trips) and speed. When I was about 17 I was released from Thomcross young offenders jail and I got heavily into alcohol and would spend many a night binge drinking in my bedroom on my own. At the same time I'd be tripping on acid, LSD and be high as a kite on glue.

Between the age of 11 and 16 I was taken into institutional care for my own safety. Eight times I was put in those prison like children's homes. I didn't like it but I knew my mother was doing it because she cared but I didn't change my ways.

When I was 19 my brother asked me to come upstairs into my bedroom. My brother knew I was on drugs but I was surprised to learn that day in my bedroom that he was taking heroin. I'd never seen heroin before but I was willing to try it when he offered me some. I was never the same again after that. It wasn't like the other drugs, although I used them a lot and drank far too much it didn't bother me to do without, I wasn't dependent on them. But within a few months of taking heroin I was held quite firmly in its grip and it wasn't letting go.

I mainly shoplifted to fund my habit and spent many a short sentence in jail for doing so. In 96 my brother was on remand at Preston jail and I was caught taking him a £10 bag of heroin and 7 DF's (painkillers) on a visit when I went to see him. At a later date I received 2 years 9 months at Preston Crown Court, I was given 2 years for the drugs and 9 months for theft. When I was released in 97 I was back on the heroin within minutes. Being released from Preston jail, my hometown, it was quick and easy to score drugs. In 97 along with my brother I started using crack cocaine. Although I enjoyed taking crack and couldn't get enough of the drug it was more a luxury than a must.

I was a slave to heroin, I sold everything I owned and when that ran out I stole from my parents, my sister, my sister's kids, my auntie and my friends. I couldn't be trusted by anyone I was too deep into heroin to care for myself or the people around me. I told myself that when things got too bad I'd inject a lethal dose of heroin and end it all. I was selfish, I didn't care about anyone or anything but my next fix. I'd try to make my family feel guilty by telling them "I wish I was dead, you brought me into this world and I'd be more than happy to make my own way out of it." They would be walking on eggshells because I was self-harming when I had no drugs.

Whilst going through cold turkey I went into the bathroom and slashed my left arm right through the muscle. One night my mum heard banging coming from my bedroom, it was my legs I presume hitting my bedroom door, I'd hung myself because I was rattling. (cold turkey) I remember coming round with an oxygen mask on, surrounded by police and 2 paramedics.

Then in 99 whilst on remand in Preston jail I slashed my arm needing 30 stitches and a week or so later I was found hanging on the hospital wing at Preston jail. The prison staff really did think I was dead, I believe it took them and the paramedics a long time to revive me. As daft as it may sound I've never had any intention to end my life. Playing Russian roulette was my way of saying "look I need help here, I'm not coping too well with my situation." I know the prison staff are there to help if I need them, all I have to do is ask and they'll help. The health care staff, the screw, the chaplain they're here to help. I've never found it easy to ask for help so I resort to madness, the last time I self harmed was about 6 weeks ago.

No matter how much I stole from my family they never loved me any less, no matter what prison I've been in or how far away it is they've been there to visit me and my brother when he's been in jail.

In 98 my brother was in remand at Preston and after a few weeks the courts sent him to a rehab. Three days later he came home, he couldn't cope with rehab. The courts can't decide to force help on a heroin addict. A heroin addict will stop using heroin when he/she is ready to stop, no sooner. My brother came home and he said to me "I've had enough of all this, heroin has really screwed me up and I can't take no more," I listened as he went on "You look after mum and get yourself off those needles, there's still hope for you kid but I'm too far gone, I'm going to do myself in with a lethal injection." Although it hurt to hear those words I didn't act upon what he told me because I know how heroin gives the user suicidal thoughts.

Four days later on the 27th May 98, me and my brother went into Preston town centre to do our shoplifting, then we got a taxi home. I got out before him and went to my mum's and he carried on to go to his girlfriend's. The last thing he said to me before I got out of the taxi was "be up early in the morning and we'll go in town on a graft." The next day, 28th May 98 he phoned from my auntie's. He spoke to my mum and said "tell our kid I'll be there shortly," he never turned up! On the evening of May 28th 1998 my brother was found dead due to an overdose of heroin. I was devastated, I couldn't believe it, I was in shock like the rest of my family. It didn't make me want to stop using heroin, if anything it made me worse. Heroin numbs emotion so the more I used, the less I hurt. Selfish of me I know, my mum had not yet buried one son and she had me to worry about. I couldn't get over the death of my brother. When he got buried on June 8th 98, just 8 days before his 31st birthday, it made it final.

Once a good lad, my brother gone, dead never to be seen or heard again, and why? Because heroin destroyed his life, wrecked his marriage and caused his family more misery and suffering than they could possibly handle, then it provided its final blow on May 28th 1998. I couldn't let go when my brother died and I even started to sleep at his graveside in the freezing cold, it just made me feel closer to him, being there at his grave. I don't think I've grieved properly since he died.

I know I'm in prison now for selling heroin but I'm glad I sold it to undercover police when I did. I wouldn't wish the misery and suffering on any family that heroin causes. When I was selling heroin to feed my own habit I was providing someone with a very powerful drug that could have easily ended their life and cause their family to suffer in the same way as mine has suffered. I'd never sell drugs again, I just wish I had the same confidence and say I'd never use again either.

Although I was introduced to heroin by my brother I don't for one minute blame him for my addiction. I was 19 at the time with a mind of my own. I've only got myself to blame for the way I've turned out. I would have discovered heroin anyway once I knew the drug was available on the streets of Preston. I just discovered it with my brother first. I am released in four and a half months, I hope I get it right this time, I owe it to my brother's memory to do so.