

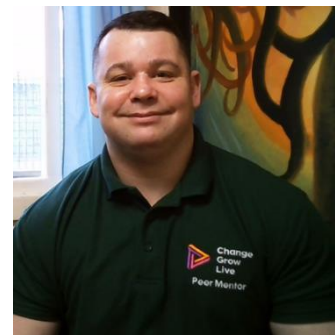
Ian Gibbons AKA - Billy

(currently a resident at HMP Buckley Hall)



1. Can you share a bit about your background and how you ended up struggling with addiction?

My background is growing up in a household with my two sisters and my Mum. Dad was in prison and Mum was working long hours doing cleaning jobs. Me and one of my sisters used to fight a lot, over anything really. It was a dysfunctional household, and we were left alone a lot. Also, Mum made bad choices for partners, and all of this made me uncomfortable. At ten years old, I was sent away to boarding school and Mum met a new partner who wasn't very nice to me or her. I shouldn't have had to be around all of this stuff, but I was. Taking drugs was easy because I was uncontrollable – I did what I wanted, when I wanted...until the point when the drugs started to control me. Crack cocaine and cannabis were my friends, until it was any drugs I could get my hands on. This has taken me to the point where I'm doing an extended determinate sentence of 12 years – all because of my addictive behaviour with drugs!



2. What motivated you to join the SMART Recovery programme while in prison?

I was a mess – using spice to block out my sentence. My main turning point was when I lost my Mum. Basically, I'd had enough and knew I needed help. Getting support from the DARS team and doing SMART Recovery was the start of my recovery journey. Also, I wanted to tell my story and listen to other people's experience of addictive behaviour.

3. Which tools or techniques from the programme have been most effective in helping you stay substance-free?

The CGL DARS team are a great support network to me, and they have helped me through SMART Recovery. The main tools I have learned are Hierarchy of Values and Cost/ Benefit Analysis. The HoV allowed me to see the most important things in my life – recovery, family, health, self-respect and relationships. The CBA shows me an honest picture of what I'm really getting from the addictive behaviour, and what damage it's doing.

4. How has your perspective on life changed since attending SMART Recovery meetings?

The SMART 4-Point Programme has changed my perspective in lots of situations. Motivation wasn't part of my life before...now I'm self-aware and interact in service groups. I used to give in to urges but now I surround myself with positive people, contact my family, talk to the DARS team and keep busy. I used to use drugs to kill my feelings. Now, I look at the costs and benefits and share that with the right person. I didn't used to look after myself and am now eating well and training in the gym. I show respect to others and am happy being of service. I've now started doing the things I enjoy. I feel positive and enjoy helping others in their recovery. I now have a great relationship with my son and feel very positive about my future.

5. What are your hopes and plans for the future once you're released?

I plan to live a substance-free lifestyle and spend time with my family; keep building a good relationship with my son. I want to do all of the things that I enjoy – things the addictive behaviour took from me. One day, I would like to come back in to prisons to do talks and tell my story in order to help others and give something back.