

## **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.