



Recovery
Cymru

• Est. 2010 •



This Is What Recovery Looks Like:

Stories of Recovery and Support

Funded by Cardiff & Vale APB
Achieving better substance misuse outcomes

"I never used the word 'beautiful' before. But that's what it is now. And that's what I want others to see—recovery isn't just about survival. It's about living. And it's possible."

"It's not just about stopping alcohol and drugs—it's about building a better life."

"I tell people all the time —recovery isn't just recovery. It's discovery."

"The desire to prove myself, the support of Recovery Cymru, and the knowledge that I am no longer alone in this fight keep me moving forward."



"I used to think I'd wasted my life, but now I realise nothing was wasted. Everything I've been through has value if it can help someone else."

"You don't have to do this alone. There's always hope, even when you can't see it yet."

"My life now is the life I've always wanted. I feel secure and confident in my recovery."

"I've grown in ways I never expected. And I'm still learning. That's part of the process."



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Welcome



We are delighted to welcome you to This Is What Recovery Looks Like—a collection of stories from people across Cardiff and the Vale, including those in recovery from alcohol and other drug use, and loved ones impacted by someone else's use.

A massive thank you to everyone who has shared their story—you are amazing. Your words are powerful, brave, heartfelt, real, and truly inspirational.

We know that for many people—whether seeking or maintaining recovery, or supporting someone they care about—hearing real stories, learning from lived experiences, and feeling part of a connected community can be a powerful part of the journey.

We believe recovery is a journey—and finding your own path is important. Many people also speak about the power of 'CHIME' in recovery:

- Connection
- Hope
- Identity
- Meaning
- Empowerment

Sharing stories and being part of a wider, supportive community helps spread this message. It also raises awareness and challenges stigma—including self-stigma—which so many people face.

If you or someone you love is looking for support with alcohol or other drug use, please get in touch.

Recovery Cymru

A Journey to Something Beautiful

From Rock Bottom to Recovery

Three and a half years ago, Matt was at his lowest. Alcohol had taken over his life, and he was battling severe anxiety and depression. He describes it as not just hitting rock bottom—but digging. “Rock bottom was above me,” he says. “I didn’t want to be here anymore.”

His drinking had reached a point where he was regularly in ambulances and A&E, but the system wasn’t built to help him. “You’d get checked over, start withdrawing, and they’d just send you away. There was no real support.” The cycle kept repeating. His physical health deteriorated, and mentally, he felt stuck. “I’d lost everything—my sense of purpose, my confidence, my self-worth. I couldn’t work, and that terrified me. I’d always worked, provided for my family, and paid my way. But now, I couldn’t even get out the front door some days.”

Matt wasn’t just battling addiction—he was battling shame, hopelessness, and the fear that he was beyond help.

But something changed.

He decided to give himself a fighting chance. He signed up for detox, but he knew that wouldn’t be enough. “I needed something to fill my brain. My mind is always busy, and if I didn’t find something to focus on, I’d end up back where I started.”

The First Steps Into Recovery

So, in the weeks before detox, Matt made a bold move: he enrolled in a degree programme. “I left school with no qualifications, not even basic ones. But I signed up anyway.”

During his first week in detox, he wrote his first university assignment. It became a symbol of hope—proof that he was capable of something more. Years later, he graduated with a BSc in Psychology and Counselling. “A lot of life ambitions have been ticked off since I stopped drinking,” he reflects. But education was only part of his transformation. Connection was what truly changed everything.

Discovering Peer Support

Matt was introduced to peer support through Recovery Cymru, and something about it stuck with him. He remembers a small but life-changing moment—a phone call on Christmas Day from a Recovery Cymru recovery worker.

“It was my first Christmas sober. Someone just rang to check in. It wasn’t scripted, it wasn’t about ticking a box—it was just a human being reaching out. And that meant the world to me.”

It made him realise the power of peer support, and for the first time, he wondered if he could do the same for someone else.



But stepping into the role of a peer supporter wasn't easy. "I used to think volunteering was for people who didn't have bills to pay. I didn't get it." When Recovery Cymru invited him to volunteer training, he hesitated. "I didn't think I was the kind of person who could help others. But I gave it a go anyway."

He quickly realised that peer support wasn't about having all the answers—it was about showing up. Being there for someone the way others had been there for him.

"For most of my life, I was role-playing—dad, son, worker. But at 54, I've finally just become myself."

Overcoming Barriers

Even after training, Matt struggled to step into the role. Severe anxiety made walking into a room feel impossible. "For months, I sat outside the building, unable to go in."

That finally changed when he attended a Recovery Cymru coffee morning. "It was a quiz morning. Just me and five women, all around my age. That's what helped me push through." As he got more involved, he met Meirion, a mentor who became a guiding force. "Meirion was no-nonsense—black and white. No sugar-coating. I respected that, and I needed it."

Matt soon found himself stepping into leadership roles. "I started running groups, helping to get peer support set up in Barry, and working with other peers. The more I did, the more I realised—I had something to offer."

From Volunteer to Leader

Matt poured himself into peer support. He was volunteering four days a week when a paid role opened up at Cardiff and Vale Drug and Alcohol Service (CAVDAS). He went for it, not expecting to succeed. "I told myself, if I don't get it, that's fine—it's good interview experience. But I got it."

Now a team leader at CAVDAS, Matt is driving real change. One of his biggest achievements? Setting up an alcohol brief intervention and screening programme at University Hospital Wales. "Before, people like me would end up in A&E again and again, with no support. Now, we're identifying them early, screening them, and getting them the help they need."

He remembers a family who came in with their son—his fifth visit to A&E. "They were at their wits' end. Didn't know where to turn. I was able to reassure them, and signpost them to the right support. That was a fantastic moment because it proved why this work is needed."

A Peer's Journey

One of the most powerful moments in Matt's career was watching a peer he had mentored thrive.

"Three or four years ago, this person was in a wheelchair, with nerve damage, stuck. It felt like the end of the book, not just the end of a chapter."

With peer support, they turned things around. "Now they're training to be a counsellor. They've gone from barely surviving to looking forward to the future. Seeing that fills me with joy."

Personal Growth and Looking Ahead

Over the past year, Matt has changed in ways he never thought possible.

"The way I think has changed massively. I've learned so much about mental health and substance use. And work has had the opposite effect on me than it does for some people—it's improved my mental health massively."

The biggest shift? Emotional intelligence. "For most of my life, I was role-playing—dad, son, worker. But at 54, I've finally just become myself."

Matt believes the narrative around recovery needs to change. "For every 10 people who get sober, statistics say eight will relapse. That's the story people hear. But I focus on the two who make it. Then I try to make it three. We need to start amplifying those voices."

"My Recovery is Beautiful"

If there's one phrase that sums up Matt's journey, it's this: "My recovery is beautiful."

"I never used the word 'beautiful' before. But that's what it is now. And that's what I want others to see—recovery isn't just about survival. It's about living. And it's possible."



Discovery, Not Just Recovery



A Childhood of Change

Danielle's early years were anything but settled. She attended eight different primary schools before she was ten, as her mother moved frequently. The changes made it difficult to settle, and though home life had its challenges, it was all she knew.

School wasn't easy. She struggled to focus, something she later understood was due to ADHD and autism, but at the time, she was simply seen as disruptive. Football became her one escape, a space where she could channel her energy and feel like she belonged. As the only girl on the boys' team, she held her own and thrived—until she was told she could no longer play at 14.

"When they took football away from me, I had nothing left. I lost the one thing that kept me focused."

Without it, she started acting out. Bullied at school and experiencing violence at home, she became aggressive, leading to

her expulsion by Year 9. Around the same time, her mother remarried a controlling and manipulative man, creating more tension at home.

One Christmas Eve, he smashed up the house with a sledgehammer, causing a gas leak that nearly blew up the street.

The house was completely wrecked, and the fire service had to be called to make sure the gas leak didn't turn deadly. That night, her family had to leave the house, with nowhere to go for Christmas.

Life at home became even more volatile after that. With nowhere to feel safe, Danielle started spending more time out of the house, caught up in a world that felt freer but far riskier. She was drawn to people who, like her, didn't fit into the world around them. Before long, she was getting into trouble, and the choices she made set her on a path she hadn't expected.

Making the Hardest Choice

Eventually, Danielle had a relationship with a man who introduced her to heroin—what began as love quickly became unhealthy, marked by secrecy and spiralling use. At 18, Danielle had her son, but social services became involved in their lives. Knowing that they would take him if she didn't act first, she made the painful decision to give custody to her mother.

"Rather than let them take him into care, I chose to let my mum raise him."

After that, her life spiralled further. She became homeless, dealing drugs, and in and out of squats. Eventually, she got onto a methadone programme, got off heroin, and stayed clean for eight years. But even though she had stopped using, she hadn't dealt with the trauma and pain that had driven her addiction in the first place.

Relapsing and Rebuilding

When she moved back to Wales in her late 20s, she tried to rebuild. She worked in pubs, got into a relationship, and wanted a baby. But after suffering nine miscarriages in 18 months, her mental health collapsed. She turned to drugs again—this time, cocaine, which quickly led her to crack.

Then, Universal Credit sanctioned her for 282 days, leaving her with no money for rent, food, or electricity.

“I had nothing. I went back to what I knew—shoplifting.”

That quickly became a full-blown crack addiction, lasting two and a half years. She was in and out of prison, but the short sentences did nothing to help her recover.

“I’d go inside, get a break from the chaos, then come straight back out and pick up where I left off.”

One day, sitting on a bus on her way to steal, something changed. “I was sat there, and I just thought, ‘I can’t do this anymore. I’m done.’ I went back to my mum’s and just lay on the sofa for two weeks. I didn’t go anywhere. I didn’t do anything. I just slept.”

After years of chaos and constant motion, she finally stopped. She didn’t have a plan, but she knew she couldn’t go back to the life she had been living.

“They’d send me in to speak to the people no one else could reach. I just spoke to them how they spoke to me, and that made all the difference.”

Finding Purpose in Peer Support

Danielle stopped using substances, but she didn’t believe she’d ever have a career. With a criminal record and no formal qualifications, she struggled to see a way forward. That changed when her probation officer suggested peer support.

“She told me, ‘You’re a great communicator, you’ve been through so much—why don’t you think about peer mentoring?’” Sceptical but willing to try, she enrolled in St. Giles Trust’s Peer Advisor Programme. She thrived.



“I realised I wasn’t stupid. I knew the answers, I just needed the right environment to learn.”

That programme led her to a placement with The Wallich, where she worked with rough sleepers. Her ability to connect with people who didn’t trust services made her stand out.

“They’d send me in to speak to the people no one else could reach. I just spoke to them how they spoke to me, and that made all the difference.”

“I’ve come full circle. Now it’s about the people coming up behind me—mentoring them, helping them see they have value, giving them the same opportunities I had.”

From there, her career took off. She worked with people in probation, rough sleeping, and addiction. She supported HMPPS' work with the Women's Justice Blueprint as someone with lived experience to support the Women's residential centre opening in Swansea.

Building a Legacy

Today, Danielle is a Team Lead at Cyfle, running a project she rebuilt from the ground up. When she took on the role, the team was struggling. There were no activities, no volunteers, and no connections with other organisations.

“In nine months, we’ve built a full team, onboarded 14 volunteers, and now have activities running every day.”

She has developed a range of activities to support people in recovery, including women’s groups, creative writing, and nature-based activities. She has also helped set up boxing sessions to support both mental and physical wellbeing. These programmes offer people the chance to rebuild confidence, develop new skills, and find healthy ways to cope with life’s challenges.

Beyond her work, Danielle has discovered a passion for MMA, which has become an important part of her own recovery and wellbeing.

She takes the most pride in watching others grow.

“I’ve come full circle. Now it’s about the people coming up behind me—mentoring them, helping them see they have value, giving them the same opportunities I had.”

In the future, she hopes to set up her own organisation—a seven-day-a-week women’s empowerment hub. It’s something she’s planning carefully, knowing that the right time will come.

Danielle’s journey hasn’t just changed her life—it’s allowed her to change systems, influence policy, and ensure others get the opportunities she never had. She has spoken in the House of Commons, sharing her experiences to help shape real change for people in the justice system. Her work with young people involved in knife crime and gangs led to a report being written about her impact, and she has trained police officers, probation workers, and professionals across multiple sectors to better understand addiction, trauma, and recovery.

She has been invited into spaces she never imagined she’d step into—not just because of what she has overcome, but because of the expertise and insight she brings.

Through everything, she has remained in contact with her son, who now lives in Dublin.

“We’re in contact, and things are going well. It’s a journey, but I’m working on it.”

For Danielle, recovery isn’t just about stopping drugs—it’s about discovering who you are and what you’re capable of.

“I tell people all the time—recovery isn’t just recovery. It’s discovery. You have to find out who you are, what you love, and build a life you don’t want to escape from.”

Mimi and Me: A Road to Freedom



Lost Before She Even Knew It

For a long time, Jo didn't realise how much she had lost. Alcohol had slowly stripped away her confidence, her independence, and the trust of those around her. It wasn't a sudden crash—it was a slow, steady decline, the kind that creeps up on you until one day, you look around and realise how small your world has become.

"My daughter didn't trust me. I didn't trust myself. Even when I got sober, I still felt like I was trapped in the consequences of my past," she says. Every step felt uncertain, like she was walking on eggshells, waiting for something to go wrong. Even a simple accident—like tripping over a toy while holding her granddaughter Poppy — sent her into panic. "I was heartbroken. I thought, 'What if people think I can't be trusted?' But then I realised—this happens to everyone. I had to start believing in myself again."

At her lowest, she couldn't imagine ever having a normal life again. But then came a moment that changed everything—a peer worker entered her life.

"He gave me a kick up the arse," she says with a laugh. "He didn't judge me, didn't talk down to me. He just gave me that little push, that belief that I could do this."

That small spark of hope stayed with her. Even though she didn't know how, Jo knew she wanted to give something back.

Learning to Stand on Her Own

At first, Jo didn't know how to do that. She knew she wanted to, but she wasn't sure what she had to offer. "I didn't want to just sit people down and say, 'Let me tell you all about my addiction.' That's not what peer support is," she explains. Instead, she focused on the two things that mattered most: listening and understanding. She started as a member of Recovery Cymru, spending time with others in recovery, learning how peer support worked, and rediscovering who she was outside of addiction. For the first time in years, she felt part of something again.

"He didn't judge me, didn't talk down to me. He just gave me that little push, that belief that I could do this."

After about a year and a half, Jo took the next step—volunteer training. "That scared me," she admits. "I knew I could get a full-time job, but I was scared that if I turned this into 'work,' I'd lose the passion for it." She worried that the heart of volunteering—the part that came from genuinely wanting to help, not because she had to—would disappear if it became a job. "I didn't want to lose what made it special. But I took the leap anyway." And to her surprise? The passion didn't fade. It grew.

Becoming a Peer Support Worker

Volunteering became part of Jo's life, something she did alongside her paid role because she didn't want to lose that deep connection. "Volunteering comes from the heart. The job comes from the head. But for me, the two work together." Over time, she built confidence, not just in herself, but in her ability to help others find their way.

"Volunteering comes from the heart. The job comes from the head. But for me, the two work together."

She remembers working closely with one particular member—someone who had been through the ups and downs of relapse.

"She wanted to do the CRP (Community Rehab Programme), but she wasn't ready. I worked with her on harm reduction and met with her every week. The goal was to get her sober so she could take part." After weeks of hard work, Jo watched her walk into the programme two weeks sober.

"She finished it. She had a little blip after, but she got back on track. I've seen her grow so much. Watching her go from where she was to where she is now—it's amazing."

For Jo, that's what peer support is all about—being there through the ups and downs, offering a hand when someone is ready, and giving them space when they need it.

Taking Control of Her Life

The past year has been a turning point. Not only has Jo continued to support others, but she has stepped into new opportunities herself—ones she never thought possible. "I'm about to start a new chapter," she says. "I've taken over some groups, and in March, I'm running the Relapse Prevention group."

"Jude, the Volunteer and Training Coordinator at Recovery Cymru, invited me to support training for new peer workers."

Even now, after years of growth, she's still learning, evolving, and pushing herself further.



The Most Important Change: Mimi the Car

Of all the things Jo has achieved, the one she cherishes the most isn't a job title or a programme she's run. It's her car. Mimi.

"She keeps me sober. She gives me freedom," Jo says. "Mimi is my pride and joy. I worked for her. I saved for her. She's mine." Getting that car wasn't just about having transport—it was about proving to herself that she could set a goal and achieve it.

"Before, I couldn't imagine being independent again. Now? I've had my car for a year, bought and paid for, no finance. That's my biggest achievement."

Mimi isn't just a car. She's a symbol of everything Jo has rebuilt.



The Heart of Peer Support

Looking back, Jo sees just how far she's come. She's gone from being stuck in addiction to helping others through theirs. From having no trust in herself to training new peer workers. From feeling trapped to driving her own future forward—literally. And through it all, one truth has kept her going:

"People can change. I changed. If I can do it, so can they."

That's why she's more passionate about peer support now than ever before. Because every time she helps someone else, she's reminded:

Recovery isn't just about stopping. It's about living.

And Jo? She's living proof.

"People can change. I changed. If I can do it, so can they."



Who I Was, Who I Am, Who I Will Be

Finding Support in Difficult Times

Susie has lived with mental health challenges for much of her life, but things became especially difficult after the birth of her daughter in 1997. She was in an unhappy and abusive marriage, but at the time, she didn't fully realise how much it was affecting her. "I think being in that marriage came out in my depression through postnatal depression after I'd had my daughter."

When she sought help, she was diagnosed, which gave her a better understanding of what she was going through. But after the birth of her son, the postnatal depression returned, and soon after, her marriage ended. As a single mother of two, she tried to balance family life with a demanding career as a senior occupational therapist, but it became overwhelming.

"I started to use alcohol to self-medicate because I was so anxious."

For years, she struggled to hold everything together, but by 2011, things had reached a breaking point. Her anxiety had become unmanageable, and she was hospitalised. Even after being discharged, she found it impossible to return to normal life. Eventually, she had to make the difficult decision to leave her job in the NHS.

At the time, she felt like everything she had built was slipping away. But that was also when she found Recovery Cymru—and with it, a different way forward.



A New Perspective Through Peer Support

She started attending Recovery Cymru without many expectations—but little by little, she found her footing. As the weeks went on, she began to connect with others, build friendships, and realise she wasn't alone. For the first time in a long time, she felt seen and understood.

"The first time I attended, I suddenly felt like a huge weight had been lifted off me. I wasn't being judged. I was able to be honest."

For so long, she had carried shame and guilt, feelings that fed her anxiety and made her feel isolated. But in this space, she was heard. "The shame and guilt associated with alcohol and other drug use is massive, and just being able to share some of that was a really huge turning point for me in my recovery."

"It's a massively important model to be able to go from receiving peer support to becoming a volunteer and using our skills."

She started to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance, something that had been missing for a long time. She began volunteering, supporting others who were where she had once been. Helping others helped her.

Building a Future Through Lived Experience

Becoming a peer support worker opened up a new world for Susie. She saw firsthand the power of mutuality, connection, and shared experience—not just for the people she supported, but for herself.

She became a volunteer coordinator, helping to train others and give them the confidence to step into peer support roles. “It’s a massively important model to be able to go from receiving peer support to becoming a volunteer and using our skills—skills that we often doubt we have when we’re at a low point.”

For seven years, she worked within Recovery Cymru, before returning to occupational therapy. But something was missing. “I found I couldn’t really use my lived experience in that role.”



She wanted to work in a way that allowed her to use both her professional and personal experience, so when a role came up at the Cardiff and Vale Recovery and Wellbeing College, she took it.

Now, she works as a peer trainer, delivering courses that give people the tools to manage their mental health. “The power of the courses and what people gain is similar to working as a peer support worker in the community. There’s still a lot of stigma around mental health, and on our courses, we offer a safe, non-judgmental space. Every course I facilitate, I learn from the people in that space.”

“My life now is the life I’ve always wanted. I feel secure and confident in my recovery.”

Recovery in Action

Susie has seen real, tangible changes in the way mental health services are starting to embrace lived experience. In her role, she’s helped develop a planning for discharge course for inpatients, something she wishes had existed when she was hospitalised.

“When I was an inpatient, one of the things I really struggled with was actually being able to go home. A lot of my anxiety was around being at home and managing my children and my family.”

Now, through this course, peers with lived experience help inpatients prepare for discharge, offering guidance, practical strategies, and most importantly—understanding. “We’ve seen massive benefits. It’s been shown to reduce readmission rates massively.”

Her work has also expanded into nature-based recovery programmes, helping people reconnect with the world outside of clinical settings. She’s helped grow the curriculum at the college, increasing the number of courses from 9 or 10 to 30 different courses, based on what people actually need.

"We've recently introduced courses around eating disorders, vicarious trauma, and living with uncertainty. Next term, we're piloting a course for veterans, which I'm really excited about."

She's also played a role in strengthening peer support within mental health services, working with the Mental Health Clinical Board to increase peer support roles and ensure that those in peer positions are properly supported.

"There's a real change happening. Peer support is being valued in a way that it wasn't before. At conferences, in strategy meetings, it's being talked about as an essential part of mental health services."

"Recovery is an ongoing journey. But with the right support, it is absolutely possible."

A Life Rebuilt

For Susie, recovery is not just about stopping drinking or managing anxiety—it's about building a life that feels right. She's now eight years sober, and her relationship with her children has transformed.

"They trust me now. It's going to be a lifelong journey with them, but we have a fantastic relationship."

She's in a place she never imagined she could be—a career she loves, where she can make a difference, where she belongs.

"My life now is the life I've always wanted. I feel secure and confident in my recovery. That doesn't mean it's always easy, but it means I have the tools to keep going."

Alongside her work as Strategic Lead for the Lived Experience Team at the Cardiff and Vale Recovery and Wellbeing College, she is also a trustee for Recovery Cymru, helping to guide the organisation that once supported her through her own recovery.

The biggest lesson she's learned?

"Recovery is an ongoing journey. But with the right support, it is absolutely possible."



Chad's Story: I Died on the Floor of the Local One Stop

Beneath the Surface

"From as far back as I can remember, I've struggled to talk to people," Chad shares. "No matter how hard they tried to reach me, it just made me clam up more. This started from the age of one."

A lifetime of difficulties forming connections followed Chad into adulthood, shaping his experiences and leading him down a painful path. By the age of 16, overwhelmed by these struggles, he turned to glue and alcohol as a way to escape. "I used them to avoid life," he recalls, beginning a pattern of behaviour that would dominate his life for decades.

On the surface, things seemed to improve. Chad built what many would consider a successful life—a nice house, holidays to Italy, Egypt, and Austria, and a partner. But the reality was far different. "From an outsider looking in, it would have looked wonderful," Chad explains. "But the only thing that mattered to me was getting wasted to escape having to talk to people or engage with them. I never learned how to form relationships."

As Chad's use of alcohol and drugs escalated, his physical and emotional health spiralled. He experienced seizures, hospitalisations, and even a broken leg that left him needing to relearn how to walk and talk. "I couldn't string a sentence together," he says. "I was completely lost."



The Turning Point

Chad's turning point came in the most harrowing way. "I died on the floor of the local One Stop," he recalls. Even that wasn't enough to stop the cycle. After a week in the hospital, Chad returned to using street Valium and whisky out of fear. But this time, it was different. "The drugs didn't work anymore. No matter how much I took, it didn't make me feel any different. I was stuck in flight, fight, or freeze and terrified."

Determined to break free, Chad entered a hospital detox programme. "I decided I was going to get clean, even if it killed me. Living in constant fear was worse than death," he says. That decision marked the beginning of his recovery journey.

"It's not just about stopping alcohol and drugs—it's about building a better life."



Rebuilding Through Support and Community

Chad's recovery journey involved support from multiple places, but Recovery Cymru provided the consistent community he needed to rebuild his life. "Hearing what others said helped me a lot," he reflects, describing how the peer-led groups at Recovery Cymru gave him space to share his struggles and learn from others. This connection helped Chad overcome the social barriers he'd faced throughout his life.

Counselling at Newlands Alcohol and Drug Service also played a key role. "That was absolutely mind-blowing and life-changing," Chad says. "I'd always felt incapable of talking to or interacting with people, but I learned that wasn't true." Combined with activities like Zumba and Body Conditioning through the GP referral scheme, and participating in the Cardiff and Vale Drug and Alcohol Service (CAVDAS) Community Rehab Programme (CRP), Chad began to transform both physically and emotionally.

Recovery Cymru became the foundation that tied these efforts together. "It's not just about stopping alcohol and drugs—it's about building a better life," he explains. Through its groups, consistent support, and encouragement, Chad found a way forward and began creating a life he no longer needed to escape.

Giving Back to Recovery Cymru

Inspired by the support he received, Chad decided to give back. He became a volunteer at Recovery Cymru, working on reception and co-facilitating relapse prevention and peer support groups. "I've finally found my calling," he says. "To help people who have been where I was and show them there is a better way—it makes everything I've been through feel worthwhile."

For Chad, volunteering is about more than giving back—it's about continuing his own recovery journey. He often reflects on how far he's come. "Two years ago, I was on the brink of death. Today, the same people who used to avoid me stop me in the street to chat and like me. I don't even recognise myself!"

"When you're struggling, you're making progress. Trust the process, be patient, and put in the hard work."

Looking Ahead

Chad has big plans for the future. He hopes to work for Recovery Cymru full-time and is already taking steps to expand his role. "I'm looking forward to going to Pine Ward next week to tell people in detox about the amazing work Recovery Cymru does," he says. "Stopping alcohol and drugs is the easy part. Finding a fulfilling and prosperous life after that is the hard part."

Chad's message to others in recovery is clear: "When you're struggling, you're making progress. Trust the process, be patient, and put in the hard work."

It's Not My Job to Save Them—Here's What I Learned Instead



From Gardener to Peer Support Worker

Owen's experience as a peer support worker in Recovery Cymru's Family and Friends Programme has been full of surprises—both challenging and transformative. His connection to peer support is personal—his family had long struggled with issues related to alcohol and other drug use, which shaped his life in many ways. After spending over 30 years as a gardener, he found himself stepping into a completely different world. The work required reflection, emotional awareness, and skills he'd never had to use before. "I never went anywhere near a laptop," he says. "I never had to write reports or reflect on something. I'd always just be waiting to see if it bloomed next year."

What intrigued Owen most about delivering peer support was the culture of openness and emotion—a sharp contrast to what he was used to. "In my previous job, talking about feelings was almost taboo," he recalls. "One colleague told me, 'I don't do that.'" At first, it felt uncomfortable. But over time, Owen embraced the change and learned to reflect on his own experiences, which helped him grow both personally and professionally.

The role encouraged Owen to continue work he had already started around managing his anger and developing patience. Delivering peer support has helped him deepen that reflection.

"I did quite a lot of work on why I was angry," he explains. "It had been with me for so long that I didn't even recognise it. I thought, well, that's just what everyone feels. But it's not."

In group settings, Owen's instinct was often to rescue people. "If someone new came in with the weight of the world on their shoulders, I'd get this butterfly feeling in my stomach and think, 'I need to save them.'" But over time, he learned to sit with those feelings and let go of the need to fix things. "Now, I can remind myself: it's not your job to save them. You're here to provide an environment where they can express themselves."

A Real Eye Opener

Delivering peer support also opened Owen's eyes to unconscious biases he hadn't realised he was carrying. He recalls one moment vividly—a young man in a group mentioned that he loved reading Charles Dickens. He was surprised.

"That made me stop and think," Owen says. "I realised I'd carried a lot of unconscious bias about what people with experience of alcohol or drug use would be like."

One of the most powerful moments for Owen over the past year came during a family support group session at Recovery Cymru. The group watched Johann Hari's TED Talk *Everything You Think You Know About Addiction Is Wrong*, which ends with the powerful statement: "The opposite of addiction is connection."

"What I can do is create an arena, an environment where people can be vulnerable, where they can express themselves."

For one woman in the group, something clicked. “It was almost overnight,” Owen recalls. “Her empathy grew, and she started reflecting on herself. She just flew from that point.”

Facilitating moments like that gave Owen a new perspective on his role. Delivering peer support wasn’t about fixing people’s problems but about creating the conditions for growth. “I can’t change anyone,” he reflects. “But what I can do is create an arena, an environment where people can be vulnerable, where they can express themselves and be themselves.”

“I’ve grown in ways I never expected. And I’m still learning. That’s part of the process.”

New Opportunities, New Challenges

But it wasn’t all easy. Building the Family and Friends Programme from scratch meant Owen had to learn completely new skills like networking and outreach—things he’d never done before. “Networking—before, that would have been a dirty word,” he laughs. “No one ever did it in my old job.” While it felt uncomfortable at first, he gradually became more confident with each new experience.

Looking back, Owen says that the most significant change has been in how he relates to others—both at work and at home. “Reducing my judgements—that’s the most significant change for me,” he reflects. “It’s a butterfly effect. It feeds into everything else—how I respond to people at work, in my personal life, with family members. It’s all connected.”

Though the journey hasn’t been easy, Owen feels proud of how far he’s come. Delivering peer support has taught him to slow down, reflect, and approach life with more patience and empathy. “I still struggle sometimes,” he admits. “I want to run before I can walk. But I’ve grown in ways I never expected. And I’m still learning. That’s part of the process.”



Breaking the Cycle, Finding Purpose



Before Recovery: Stuck in the Cycle

For 20 years, Kat worked in charity retail, managing shops, warehouses, and teams of volunteers. “I loved it at first,” she admitted. “I loved working with volunteers.” But over time, the sector changed. Targets replaced purpose, pressure mounted, and the work she once loved became suffocating.

At home, alcohol became routine. Wake up, go to work, drink, pass out, repeat. “I was sick every morning for a year, but I just kept going,” Kat recalled. Drinking became part of her identity, though she didn’t see it as a problem—just a way to cope.

She hid it well. To the outside world, she was functioning. Inside, she was barely holding on.

The Moment Everything Changed

There wasn’t just one lightbulb moment—there were many. A lost prescription. A desperate call to the doctor.

A friend stepping in when she couldn’t fight for herself. The reality of her situation hit hard. She had to do something.

She made an appointment. But before she walked through that door, she had one last blowout—four days of drinking everything she thought she’d miss. “I drank Bailey’s, Lambrini, sherry—things I didn’t even like. I was trying to get it all in one go.”

By the time she finally stopped, the withdrawal hit like a freight train.

Recovery Starts Here

Kat went back to work, trying to push through. On day four, she collapsed outside a friend’s house. That friend, who had family experience of a loved one’s alcohol use, recognised the signs of needing support. She checked on Kat, making sure she was still breathing and that she wasn’t alone.

“I’d wake up under a quilt, and she’d be watching me, just checking.” That was it—the moment everything became real. She was done.

By the time she walked into her first appointment, she had already been sober for a week. That meant no detox, no medical intervention—just therapy, peer support, and the long road ahead.

“I had distanced myself from everyone I loved and who loved me, I’m ashamed to say I put alcohol first and hurt people in the process. I finally realised I had a problem and thought enough is enough”.

***“That’s when it hit me
—this is what peer
support is about.
Seeing someone come
back to life.”***

Finding a New Purpose

Kat didn't find peer support on her own—Vicky helped her see what was possible. She was non-judgemental and listened to Kat's past traumas and helped her deal with them.

Vicky was someone she met through counselling. Through Vicky, Kat learned about Recovery Cymru and what it meant to be part of a peer support community.

That changed everything. For the first time, recovery wasn't just about stopping drinking—it was about connection, purpose, and giving back.

Becoming a Peer: Giving Back

Kat stepped into peer support cautiously, unsure if she could make a difference. But as she started engaging, she realised she had something powerful—experience.

She remembers sitting beside someone at Recovery Cymru, someone nervous, barely making eye contact. She recognised that fear—it was the same one she had felt. She shared her story, not in a grand speech, but in quiet, honest conversation.

Over time, she saw the same transformation she had gone through—this person opening up, engaging, laughing, living.

"That's when it hit me—this is what peer support is about. Seeing someone come back to life."

Still Figuring It Out

Recovery isn't just about stopping something; it's about rediscovering yourself—and Kat is still on that journey.

"I don't really know who I am yet," she admitted. After years of drinking and working to survive, she's finally exploring what makes her happy.

"You don't have to do this alone. There's always hope, even when you can't see it yet."

She's crafting again, playing with wood-burning and jewellery-making, and experimenting with baking—especially oats, which have become her latest obsession.

"I go through phases," she laughed. "Right now, it's oats. Before that, it was smoothies."

For the first time, she's making space to figure out who she is beyond work, beyond addiction, beyond just getting through the day.

Her message to anyone starting their journey?

"You don't have to do this alone. There's always hope, even when you can't see it yet."



Ethan's Journey: From Shadows to Strength

Ethan's journey to recovery has been marked by significant challenges and pivotal moments that have shaped his identity and path. It's a story of resilience, trauma, and the incredible support that Recovery Cymru has provided along the way.



Early Struggles

At 12, Ethan was assaulted on his way home from school. "The physical pain was intense, but the emotional scars ran deeper." The school dismissed it as "boys being boys," leaving him isolated. By 14, he was diagnosed with TMJD, a chronic pain condition. The trauma and undiagnosed depression led him to self-harm and experiment with painkillers.

Identity and Change

University was a turning point—Ethan came out as transgender. "Coming out was both the most terrifying and liberating experience of my life." Navigating the healthcare system for hormone therapy was overwhelming, with long waiting lists and invasive questions. While friends were supportive, his family struggled to accept him.

Despite these challenges, he graduated as Graduate Speaker, a moment of triumph. But unresolved trauma and ongoing stress left him vulnerable.

Addiction and Rock Bottom

After university, Ethan's jaw pain worsened. Strong painkillers became a crutch—first for pain, then as an escape. "The shame and guilt were overwhelming, but the fear of withdrawal was stronger." His life revolved around securing more, lying to doctors and pharmacies.

He withdrew from loved ones, struggled at work, and avoided social situations out of shame. His lowest point came when he took an entire packet of painkillers in one night just to function. The next morning, he realised he wouldn't survive without help.

"One of the most powerful moments in my recovery was when I became a peer mentor myself. Being able to support others on their journeys was incredibly fulfilling."

The Turning Point

After moving to Cardiff, Ethan's addiction worsened. Desperate, he contacted the Cardiff Addictions Unit (CAU). Their acceptance was life-changing, marking the start of his recovery. The Budival treatment eased his cravings, while anti-psychotic medication quieted his racing thoughts.

Recovery Cymru became his anchor. "The desire to prove myself, the support of Recovery Cymru, and the knowledge that I am no longer alone in this fight keep me moving forward." Their peer mentors provided empathy and understanding, making a real difference in his recovery journey.



Giving Back and Moving Forward

As Ethan progressed in recovery, he became a peer mentor, supporting others facing similar struggles. "One of the most powerful moments in my recovery was when I became a peer mentor myself. Being able to support others on their journeys was incredibly fulfilling." Helping others not only gave him purpose but strengthened his own commitment to staying well.

"The desire to prove myself, the support of Recovery Cymru, and the knowledge that I am no longer alone in this fight keep me moving forward."

Now, Ethan has built a new life in Cardiff, working in a management role and continuing to advocate for recovery. Speaking at a national recovery conference was a defining moment, proving how far he had come.

Recovery Cymru gave Ethan the support he needed to reclaim his life. His journey is a testament to resilience, hope, and the power of community. If his story resonates, help is out there—no one has to face recovery alone.



The Biggest Change? Belief.



A Life in Services

Vinnie was adopted in Dublin and spent much of his life navigating family services, courts, addiction treatment, and housing support. He started using heroin at 13 and, from that point on, was caught in a system that became his normal.

"I've always been in some kind of service, one way or another," he said.

For years, his world was chaotic—a cycle of prison, detox, relapse, and unstable housing. There was no sense of stability, no future to plan for. He saw people around him dying from overdoses, and he assumed his fate was already set.

Recovery wasn't something he thought was possible for him.

"I'd always been one of those people who said, 'I'll never volunteer, why would you work for free?'"

A Turning Point

In 2017, he left prison after his last sentence. That same day, he overdosed.

"I hadn't been in services for 10 years before that," he admitted. "But I knew I was going to die."

Then something happened—he saw an old friend. Someone he'd last seen smoking drugs in prison was now doing well. That friend introduced him to peer support, a world he never knew existed.

But now, he was clean, doing well, actually happy. I looked at him and thought, I want that.

Finding a Safe Space

"I'd always been one of those people who said, 'I'll never volunteer, why would you work for free?'"

But something clicked. He already had 40 years of lived experience. He had helped others get clean in the past, but always avoided helping himself.

So, he started reaching out. He got involved with St Giles Trust, The Wallich, CAU, The Living Room, and Recovery Cymru.

"I was still in a hostel, still in an abusive relationship—life was still chaos. But for the first time, I had something different."

Peer work gave him space to drop the mask. "I used to wear this big suit of armour all the time. I had to. But here, I could just be Vinnie."

From Volunteering to a Career

Vinnie started by volunteering, but slowly, people started trusting him with more responsibility. At first, he thought he could never work. "I'd been on benefits forever. I didn't think people like me got jobs."

But then he started training—naloxone peer-to-peer, Hep C awareness, harm reduction—and before long, he was doing 40 hours a week at CAVDAS, peer mentoring, and outreach.

Then came a job opportunity.

Vinnie hesitated. "I thought, I can't do that. I'm not meant to have a job like that."

But his mentor pushed him to apply. "He told me, 'We all feel that way. It's not just you.'"

So, he went for it. And he got it.

"People were always up to hurt me or they always wanted something from me... but now that isn't the case."

A Whole New Life

Vinnie's life now is unrecognisable from the one he used to live. For the first time, he has stability—something he never thought possible. He isn't constantly looking over his shoulder, expecting the worst. He isn't stuck in a cycle of survival, chaos, and fear.

"I've never had a bank account. I've never had a loan, credit, or like grown-up stuff people do." After years of instability, he's finally learning how to manage money, pay bills, and handle responsibilities that once felt completely out of reach.

"I used to wear this big suit of armour all the time. I had to. But here, I could just be Vinnie."

But it's not just about finances. His world feels different in every way. His circle of friends has changed completely, and for the first time, he has people around him he truly trusts. "It's a small circle, but I trust them with my life. They know everything about me." Instead of relationships based on survival, he has connections built on honesty, respect, and real support.



Day-to-day life is quieter now, and that's something he's grown to appreciate. "People buy you presents when you leave a job. You meet up on weekends. You go to an allotment to plant stuff. It's boring stuff, but it's cool. Because we're not in that chaotic life anymore."

For the first time, he feels at peace with where he is. "I have never, ever been able to say I love my life, but I really do love my life."

It took years to trust people, to believe they weren't out to hurt him or take advantage of him. "People were always up to hurt me or they always wanted something from me... but now that isn't the case." Learning to let his guard down wasn't easy, but it has given him the freedom to focus on what really matters—growing, building, and giving back.

Leaving CAVDAS was a huge step, one he never thought he'd take. "It became my whole recovery, wrapped up in one." Moving on was strange, but he knew he was ready for something more.

The past 12 months have proved to him that he is capable, that he can build something real, and that he is more than his history. "I used to think I was just a one-trick pony. I know now that I'm not."



"I have never, ever been able to say I love my life, but I really do love my life."

Trust in Me



Searching for Belonging

Anthony's childhood was spent moving between family members after his parents divorced when he was three. He lived with his dad, aunts, grandparents—never truly feeling settled or anchored. He describes it simply: "I never really had a sense of home or belonging. To this day, I still don't."

He was quiet, imaginative, and happier escaping into books and games than socialising with others his age. His mother, a charismatic pub singer in South Wales, was outgoing and confident—everything he felt he wasn't.

"She was adored by her audience, but I was quiet, awkward, and chubby. I felt completely out of place."

The Comfort of Alcohol

Anthony discovered alcohol at fifteen. It started innocently with half a can of Carling, but it quickly became a way to cope.

Drinking made him feel relaxed, funny, and accepted—qualities he felt he lacked. "Alcohol became the shortcut to a personality," he reflects. But beneath that temporary confidence, it masked deeper issues: loneliness, sadness, and the feeling he didn't truly belong anywhere.

Over time, alcohol became more central in his life, quietly taking control. "By my twenties, I was angry all the time, angry and sad, and alcohol numbed that perfectly," he said. His drinking intensified dramatically during the 2020 COVID lockdowns, when distractions disappeared and Anthony found himself confronted by his own reflection.

"I realised quickly I'd become someone I didn't like—but I hadn't wanted to face it for a long while."

Feeling Lost

In November 2022, Anthony sought counselling and briefly found Recovery Cymru, where he began volunteer training. But when a relationship ended painfully, old habits resurfaced, and he returned to drinking.

"I fell off the wagon and was lost for another year."

"I realised quickly I'd become someone I didn't like—but I hadn't wanted to face it for a long while."

This relapse, though painful, wasn't the same. Alcohol no longer gave him the relief it once did. He says, "Something had changed in my brain. I could drink the same amounts physically, but I couldn't get into that same headspace. It wasn't fun anymore."

In June 2024, Anthony reached out again to Jude at Recovery Cymru. Although initially embarrassed to reconnect, Jude warmly encouraged him to return to volunteering.

"She knew what she was doing, because once I started again, I really enjoyed it," Anthony laughed. "I said, 'Damn you, Jude. And thank you also.'"

"I didn't work for six years because I thought I'd lose the job once I prioritised drinking again."

A New Perspective

Returning to Recovery Cymru became a turning point for Anthony. Initially volunteering on reception, he quickly saw the impact simple conversations could have. Soon after, he took on a more significant role, facilitating the Recovery Cymru Family and Friends Peer Support Programme. Here, he found a new, powerful perspective.

"I'd lived addiction for years—I knew exactly what that was like from the inside. However, I experienced it from the outside by participating in the Family and Friends programme. It was life-changing, often challenging and confronting, but incredibly rewarding."

Anthony also delivered Insight Sessions, helping family members better understand the realities of addiction.

"But genuinely, it's about helping people understand addiction better."

These experiences deeply impacted him, reshaping the way he viewed his own recovery and highlighting how valuable his perspective could be for others.

His confidence soared further when he began public speaking, sharing his lived experience with second-year medical students at Llandough Hospital. The feedback was extraordinary, confirming something he'd suspected: he loved speaking publicly and using his story to help others.

"I joke it's because I love being the centre of attention," he said with a smile, "but genuinely, it's about helping people understand addiction better."

Trusting Myself Again

The past year has brought Anthony a sense of maturity and peace he never imagined possible. For years, he avoided learning to drive or taking on responsibilities, convinced he couldn't trust himself to remain sober.

"I didn't work for six years because I thought I'd lose the job once I prioritised drinking again."

Now sober, Anthony has found trust and confidence in himself. "For the first time in my life, I feel reliable. I can trust myself, and that feels amazing."

His relationships have healed dramatically—particularly with his father.

"My relationship with my dad... well, I actually have one now. He's so proud he's planning to buy me a car."

Friends, and even strangers, treat him differently now. "People tell me they're proud of me, which is something I never thought I'd hear. It's incredibly humbling."

A Future Worth Trusting

Anthony acknowledges the road hasn't always been easy. There are parts of his past he grieves, parts he valued despite the chaos. Yet recovery has allowed him to rediscover parts of himself he'd forgotten or believed were lost entirely.

"I'm not empty anymore. Before I'd fill that emptiness with anything—alcohol, relationships, money—but it never worked. Now, that emptiness just isn't there."

He's building a future he trusts, one step at a time. Anthony knows his experiences weren't wasted: they've become his greatest strength, a tool to help others who are struggling.

"I used to think I'd wasted my life, but now I realise nothing was wasted. Everything I've been through has value if it can help someone else."

For Anthony, recovery has been about learning to trust not just the world around him—but himself.

"I'd lived addiction for years—I knew exactly what that was like from the inside. However, I experienced it from the outside by participating in the Family and Friends programme. It was life-changing, often challenging and confronting, but incredibly rewarding."



Growing into Confidence



Music, Socialising, and the Struggles That Came With It

Music has always been a part of Dai's life. From an early age, it brought people together, created memories, and made everything feel alive. He loved socialising, going out, being around people—but those things also came with drink and drugs, a connection that became impossible to separate.

"I've always loved music and socialising, and the two have always gone hand in hand. But they also always came with the added debauchery of drink and drugs. That was my life from my teenage years right up until the point I addressed it."

For years, it felt normal—something everyone was doing. It was fun, it was freeing, and it didn't seem like a problem. But slowly, the balance shifted. What once felt like a choice became a routine, then a need.

"I got to about day six and drank again. And I was really ashamed of myself."

He didn't realise at the time that substances weren't just enhancing his social life—they were shaping who he became.

"I didn't realise I was using substances to be who I became—to be confident, to talk to people. And the more I depended on it, the worse it got."

The turning point didn't come quickly. It took years of struggling, of trying to moderate, cut back, stop altogether, only to fall back into the same cycle.

By the time he reached his 40s, things had become unmanageable. The fun had long since faded, and what was left was exhaustion, guilt, and a deep sense of shame.

A Wake-Up Call That Wouldn't Go Away

Dai's father was an alcoholic—though he never admitted it himself. When he passed away in his early 60s, Dai decided to take part in Dry January in his honour. He announced it on social media, raised money for charity, and was determined to see it through.

But he couldn't do it.

"I got to about day six and drank again. And I was really ashamed of myself."

Something shifted that day. He could no longer pretend it wasn't a problem. He had always told himself he was in control, that if he really wanted to stop, he could. But now, he had proof that he couldn't.

That shame stayed with him, creeping into the background of every drink, every decision. He tried to ignore it, but once the seed was planted, it wouldn't go away.

"I could never drink freely again, no matter how much I tried. I knew I needed to address it, but instead, I drank more to forget about it."

He went through phases of trying to stop. Sometimes he'd manage a few days, even a week, but he always found himself falling back into the cycle.

"I'd wake up and think, 'Oh God, again.' Every day I told myself I wasn't going to drink, and every day, I did."

The cycle was relentless—drinking, guilt, stopping, guilt, drinking again. Every time he tried to stop, the shame of failing pushed him back into drinking more.

"I was still drinking. I was getting through work hungover, still convincing myself I had things under control."

Everything Falls Apart

By 2021, the pressure was unbearable. His work, family, and sense of self were all crumbling under the weight of his addiction.

At the time, Dai was working in a behaviour unit, supporting young people in education. His workplace had already noticed something was wrong and referred him to occupational health. During that meeting, he opened up about how much he was drinking and using cannabis.

"I was in the toilet at work, and there was a full-length mirror. I looked in it and said to myself, 'What are you doing?'"

"I disclosed to a colleague—who I thought was a friend—how much I was smoking and drinking during lockdown. When I told her, she just said, 'Jeez, what the hell?'"

For a brief moment, he felt relieved. He had been waiting for someone to react like that, to confirm that what he was doing wasn't normal. But that conversation changed everything.

"She actually reported me."

His wife was furious. His employer threatened to report him in a way that could have ended his teaching career permanently. Everything spiralled.

He lost his job. His drinking became more chaotic.

Eventually, he was given a second chance through supply teaching. It was an opportunity to hold onto his career, but he was barely holding onto himself. "I was still drinking. I was getting through work hungover, still convincing myself I had things under control."

Then, one morning, everything hit him at once.

"I was in the toilet at work, and there was a full-length mirror. I looked in it and said to myself, 'What are you doing?'"

For the first time, he couldn't ignore it. "This finishes now. This stops now."

But it didn't—not straight away.

"I went home and got steaming again. Then Saturday came, and I drank all day. Sunday, I went on an all-dayer watching Wales play Italy. I ended up in a pub, then a club. That was the last time I drank."

Finding the Strength to Stay

Dai had already dipped his toes into recovery before he stopped drinking completely. During lockdown, he had begun attending online groups, including Recovery Cymru, Footsteps to Recovery, and AA meetings. But at the time, he didn't believe recovery was possible for him.

"I used to look at people in recovery and think they were lying. When they said they were happy, I thought they were just making the best of a bad situation."

Deep down, he knew that support groups helped. When he went to them, he stayed sober. But he kept walking away, convinced he couldn't do it. This time, he stayed.

Dai threw himself into Recovery Cymru's volunteer training and found that helping others kept him going.

"There's a story in AA about Bill Wilson, the guy who wrote the Big Book. He used to invite drunks into his house to help them get sober. None of them stayed sober, and he told his wife, 'I'm wasting my time.' She turned around and said, 'But you have.'"

That story stuck with him.

"If I focus on helping others, I stop thinking about myself so much. And before I know it, my own recovery is just ticking along."

"If I focus on helping others, I stop thinking about myself so much. And before I know it, my own recovery is just ticking along."

He began facilitating peer support groups, using his teaching experience to guide discussions. At first, he felt like a fraud—what could he possibly offer?

But that changed over time.

"I always say this in groups—someone who's been sober for two days can still teach something to someone who's been sober for ten years. We learn from each other, no matter where we are in the journey."

A Different Life

Dai's life today is nothing like the one he left behind. His relationships with his wife and children have transformed.

"My drinking was leading me to make stupid decisions I'd never have made sober. We argued. I was short-tempered with my kids. Since I've stopped drinking, those things don't happen anymore."

He is still a teacher—but now, he teaches through peer support, helping others in recovery find their own way forward.

"I was learning to live again without my crutch. Early recovery isn't recovery—it's just survival. But if you keep going, you get to the good part."

For anyone starting out, he has one piece of advice:

"You don't have to do it alone. You don't have to believe in recovery straight away. Just keep showing up."

Thank You

A massive thank you to everyone who contributed their story to this booklet, sharing hope, inspiration and challenging stigma. You are brilliant!

We're also grateful to the organisations who helped connect us with storytellers and supported this project from start to finish.



Cardiff and Vale
Recovery &
Wellbeing College



This booklet was made possible with funding and support from the Cardiff and Vale Area Planning Board—thank you for helping us bring these voices to light.

We hope you've found these stories as powerful and moving as we have.

Would You Like to Share Your Story of Recovery?

At Recovery Cymru, we believe that your story matters.

This storybook is filled with the powerful voices of peers across Cardiff and the Vale – people just like you, who've experienced recovery, supported others, and made a difference through their lived experience.

If reading these stories has sparked something in you...

If you've got something to say...

If your experience could help someone else feel less alone...

We'd love to hear from you.

Whether you're in recovery, supporting someone, or working in peer support...

Your story could:

- Encourage someone who's struggling
- Help services understand lived experience better
- Show the value of peer support in action

You don't have to be a writer – we'll work with you, however you feel comfortable.

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**Because sharing stories changes lives.
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