

Hannah's story

A heroin mother

'Mummy, mummy, why are you always asleep?'

'Mummy, mummy, why don't you take me out?'

'Mummy, mummy, why are the police here?'

'Mummy, mummy, why did the lady take me away?'

'Mummy, mummy, when can I come home?'

'Wake up Mummy, pleeeaaase'

'Mummy's just tired sweetie, go and play while mummy smokes just one more cigarette'.

It was February 3rd when I knew I'd face losing her. The police raided me. I was just bagging up stuff for some people I knew. Nothing heavy. But I still lost custody of her.

A drugs ring? Well yes, I guess that's what I was involved in. They paid me in drugs. Seemed fair enough. How else was I going to pay for my gear? At least I never had to steal from my family like most others do.

I was going to plead not guilty – but my solicitor advised me not to. I was done for intent to supply class A drugs – on two counts – one for heroin and another for crack cocaine.

What heroin gave me

- I got to weigh six stone without going on the Atkins Diet
- I got to weigh six stone by lying on the sofa all day long
- I got big dark rimmed eyes without having to buy any make-up
- I got hollow cheekbones – without having to suck them in
- I got to look dead pale –without being at all interesting

But it didn't get me a bloke. Not a decent one anyway. That side of things slips away when you smoke crack, heroin and skunk all day long.

And who'd want someone who was slowly rotting herself away?

I'm changing the bait now though.

I managed to keep my teeth okay though, 'cos I didn't do foil.

But I did get my dad back in my life after years of not seeing him. After the raid he took my daughter in for five months so she didn't have to go into care – until I got custody of her back again. Mum has a job and so couldn't look after her.

My mum and dad split up when I was four. Mum was always fighting him for custody. I'd stay with her at weekends. Just me, not my brother. I'd lived with Dad and stepbrothers until I was 15, then I went to live with my mum.

I was 19 when I left mum's. I got pregnant & moved in with my daughter's father. We broke up in 1998 when she was six.

Why did I start on drugs?

I don't know why I started on drugs.

- Her dad was into drugs
- The crowd we knew were into them too
- I'd smoked cannabis since I was 15 – but I don't count that.

I still don't know why I started on drugs.

It was 1998 when I started on hard drugs. I used on and off at first. It was around the time when I became a single parent on benefits. A £15 bag would last me for two or three days. I got £91 a week. I don't smoke or run a car or go out much. I managed.

I wanted to be at home for my daughter, not out working. I've been on my own with her for seven years now.

I never did well at school. I think my best GCSE result was an 'F' in English. I left at 16 and worked in catering, in McDonalds and

places like that.

There's no one reason why I started on drugs.

- Well, yes, I suppose after a while I got a habit I couldn't afford and started working for the ring. But I don't want to talk about that just now.

She never missed school, I made sure of that. Always fed her a dinner and got her clothes ready.

What made me change?

It was the day of the police raid. My last smoke of heroin was two days after that.

- losing custody of my daughter
- the thought of dying and leaving her behind and not seeing her
- the way people looked at me like I was lowlife scum not worth keeping alive
- the way I couldn't go out of the house because I felt so paranoid about other people looking at me.

I wouldn't go and see my mum because I didn't want the earache she'd give me. I just used to drop off my daughter to stay with her and leave.

I didn't mix. I lost contact with friends and family. All I'd got was drugs. I mixed with other addicts but I didn't like them much.

I got agoraphobia – crack makes you so paranoid.

Coming off drugs

- I just came off it cold. I got myself back onto the straight and narrow.
- I went to the doctor who did blood & urine tests to prove I was staying clean.

My dad and my step mum fed me dinners and sat up with me. They really helped, my step mum especially. I'm really grateful to them. I was vulnerable and needed help. I stayed with them for three weeks while I got through it. We see each other regularly now.

I couldn't face methadone. From what I've seen the rattle people do coming off that is worse than on the gear.

Getting back into society

- get qualifications
- get a job
- eat properly
- do proper mothering, go to parks, walks, ice skating.

I'm getting back on track with all this now.

I got sentenced to a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO). A probation officer assessed me and said they thought I'd do okay on it. I was spared prison- because I could show the court I was getting clean.

I get tested for drugs twice a week. I'm the only one in our group on the DTTO that's completely clean – the others are on methadone.

The groups are a bit like AA groups. You sit in a circle and talk. They are quite good.

I've been on it for three months now.

The big thing for me has been doing basic skills with probation. I'm not too bad with my English, reading and writing. But maths I struggle with.

I still feel funny walking into place where I don't know anybody. My confidence has had a huge knock so it'll take a while to build it up.

*How to think yourself out of drugs:
I hope this helps other people:*

Sort your head out first and then you'll be okay.
Start thinking properly – you don't need it.
Get through a few weeks of feeling bad, just a bit of pain. Maybe six weeks max.

Don't blame no-one. Repeat don't blame.

Then that's it. It's up to me from here on. And it gets better. Get back into society.

I look at my daughter and she's here with me.
I'm 30. I'm not going to die. I weigh nine stone again and feel good. I'm okay.

So I'm going to go for it.

I hope you get there too.

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