

THE JOURNEY

OCTOBER 2023

A MAGAZINE FROM
THE FORWARD
TRUST

FEATURED HUBS:
**RENEW AND
THE BRIDGES
- HULL**

YOUR
ORIGINAL
POETRY,
SHARES AND
STORIES

REUNIONS AND
UNITY DAYS

NATIONAL
REUNION
WRITE-UP

RECOVERY
SUPPORT
CASE STUDY

forward

The magazine for **Forward Connect Members**

We're looking for

Your shares

Your stories

Your poems

Your ideas

Your artwork

Your Forward Connect
experiences

Volunteers to be part of the
editorial team

Your entries are what make The Journey magazine so please send them into us. Ideally written contributions should be no longer than 500 words (one side of lined A4 paper) where possible. Work may be edited by The Journey team to make sure it is suitable for publishing.

Want to submit an entry?

If you would like to contribute in any way, contact us at:

The Journey Magazine

Freepost THE FORWARD TRUST

Alternatively call freephone 0300 373 0204 or email
forwardconnect@forwardtrust.org.uk

If you are submitting an article or artwork you will need to complete a "Permission to print form" available from a member of Forward Trust staff, or the tear off section in the back of The Journey magazine

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THE BRIDGES HULL

TREATMENT & RECOVERY

What attracted you to working for Forward?

I had never worked in drug and alcohol services before, but I had always worked with people helping them to make positive behavioural changes. At Forward, it was about giving people a second chance and I also liked the principles that the organisation embodied; the spiritual aspect of their approach and so on. I think Forward is a good employer to work for. They do really care about the employees, which is a difficult balance to keep alongside delivering services on budgets for often decreasing amounts of money.

What is your current role with Forward?

I'm currently a manager at The Bridges - Hull. I've been in post for nearly two years, and before this, I worked for a community project for The Forward Trust called ReNew. I was there for eight years, starting off as a family worker, then team leader before moving to manage some of the drug and alcohol services.

What is The Bridges - Hull?

The Bridges - Hull was established in Hull 17 years ago.

It is a 12-step residential treatment centre for people who have had substance misuse and often criminal behaviour affecting their lives. They choose to come to The Bridges - Hull to find a different way to live and move forward. People come once they have detoxed or have recently become abstinent.

We recognise that whilst stopping taking substances is very difficult, often the hardest part is not picking up again once clean. As with any habitual behaviour, you can stop for a period, using all your willpower to restrain from using, but often that isn't enough. We believe you need to re-train yourself with new behaviours and tools and a new approach to life to maintain abstinence long-term.

This is where we help clients gain an understanding that their drug and alcohol use can be a symptom of underlying issues, and how they can learn some healthier behaviours. We teach them safer coping techniques so that the next time they feel left out, unheard or marginalised, they know how to cope without returning to drugs, alcohol or criminal and/or violent behaviour.

We work to establish a lifelong framework with which they can rehabilitate and blossom to reach their fullest potential in life. This starts with nurturing self-care skills and the journey of self-discovery. Part of that is written work, where they develop a love for themselves and others in wider society.

Who can access care at The Bridges - Hull?

People come to us from various situations and backgrounds. Some come straight from prison, some have been homeless, while others have taken a break from their job and have their own home to go back to.

The most important thing we give clients is a safe, secure, welcoming environment. We have a really good staff team, who put a lot of effort into making sure the environment is as pleasant and supportive as possible.

The staff know how difficult and draining the work clients do during their stay can be, so we do everything in our power to ensure the environment is as calming and welcoming as possible.

One of the best things about The Bridges - Hull is the mutually supportive atmosphere. From being welcomed at the door to the day of their graduation, the change witnessed in the client is profound and is felt by all, residents, family, and staff, not least the graduate.

What kinds of programmes can clients engage with?

Stage one is a 12-week programme, working through the steps including group work, one-to-ones and various activities. The focus is on getting well. This is what most clients will typically experience when staying with us. Some residents are fortunate to get further funding to stay in our stage two secondary accommodation on site, where they take on the role of senior peers. This involves everything from helping the other clients to taking on education or volunteering roles in the community, and also includes the expectation of attending fellowship or mutual support meetings. All of this helps to develop their recovery capital, as well as grow their support network and connection. Connection is the antidote to addiction.

The Forward Trust also has a recovery house based in Hull that clients can apply for. This is part of the Recovery Support programme and acts as a great final stepping stone back to fully independent living.



What's next for you?

The Bridges Hull has just embarked on an exciting new chapter! Having outgrown its first building on Holderness Road, we have found a new home on Beverley Road. This new building used to be a hotel and is in a much more central location. After an extensive renovation, we moved into the new premises in May 2023. This new venue has more space to run groups, more space for clients, and ensuite bedrooms as well as a community space for Forward Connect and fellowship meetings.

The other exciting news is that after 17 years of being a single-sex service provider, The Bridges - Hull is becoming a mixed-gender rehab. This will be a great asset for Hull and the wider area where Forward operates, helping us to support more people to find recovery and transform their lives.

Find out more about The Bridges - Hull on the Forward Trust website

"I love my job and I am grateful every day that this is what I do"

STAFF TESTIMONIAL

I started as a trainee, and I am now fully in post as a recovery worker.

Before I became a recovery worker, I was a dental nurse. I was helping people, but something was missing. I didn't get much job satisfaction and I felt like I lacked purpose. I have that purpose now.

I work with a wide range of clients, supporting them with the transition into treatment and supporting them through their 12 or 24 weeks stay. This includes therapeutic one-to-one keywork sessions, workshops and group therapy sessions. We follow the 12-step recovery model and, as a keyworker, I support my client through steps one to five. On completion, I also get to celebrate this huge achievement with a



graduation that reflects the hard work they have put in and the growth that has been achieved.

We also encourage mutual aid meetings in the local Hull area that provide our clients the opportunity to build new and healthy relationships with likeminded people.

It is a real privilege to do the job I do. I see clients arrive broken and desperate for change and I can support them to rebuild their lives, mend fractured relationships with family and friends but also to watch them grow both spiritually and mentally.

**JADE, RECOVERY WORKER
AT THE BRIDGES HULL**



My experience:
volunteering at
The Bridges - Hull
pop-up soup
kitchen

It was our honour and privilege to be asked to help with serving refreshments and meals at the pop-up soup kitchen.

It really was a humbling experience for us in the therapy centre, especially because some of us have been on the receiving end of being served, and we are now able to help.

**SCOTT, CLIENT AT
THE BRIDGES HULL**

**LISTEN TO THE MORE
THAN MY PAST PODCAST**

<https://morethanmypast.org.uk/podcast/>

**MORE THAN
MY PAST__**



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"Origami is like mindfulness"

ALONE BECAUSE OF YOU

Here I am, standing alone, all because of you.

I had a choice, but you kept banging and banging on that I needed you. You said you were my friend, but you were my enemy.

You stole everything I had worked for, but I still trusted you. You think I can't get better but you're wrong.

I have a new friend now that said you were no good. They told me you'll be waiting for me and will never go away whether it's one year or 50 years, you'll still be there banging and banging in my head. That's not a friend!

Yes, we had some good times but mainly made me sad. So now it's time to say goodbye because I don't want friends like you. I'll get things back as soon as I can.

You see, there are lots of rooms I go to that give me a magical tool bag that is going to keep you away.

So goodbye my old friend, please stay away.

ROY, CLIENT AT THE BRIDGES - HULL

When I came to Hull, I was walking around the city, and I remembered that I had seen somewhere how to make a bird out of paper. So I tried it myself. I wasn't sure what size paper I needed or how to fold it, but I gave it a go.

After a few attempts, I got better at it and kept learning. I started to make vases for flowers, sweet bowls, and pencil cases. After a while, I got confident enough to teach my friends and they enjoyed it.

I have always found origami relaxing but when I was homeless it was quite difficult to do. When I arrived at The Bridges, I had the time and space to do origami again because I had time before, during and after my treatment day.

To me, doing origami is like mindfulness and I can switch off from everything around me.

It has enabled me to integrate into the group and share my passion with friends in the house. The Bridges - Hull also allowed me to facilitate a group to teach my peers origami.

**RAMUNAS,
CLIENT AT
THE BRIDGES - HULL**



My journey to abstinence

I'm a 54-year-old man that was cursed with the disease of addiction at a very early age. My dad left when I was nine and my life spiralled out of control. From there, I had a total disregard for authority of any kind, which landed me in court and then into care. I went from children's home to children's home until I was 16 and then I was allowed back home to live with my mum. But I carried on with all sorts of criminal behaviour. I have had every piece of punishment that exists.

My drinking was well out of control by the age of 21. One day, after nine prison sentences and all sorts of counselling, I woke up in a B&B to realise I had lost everything I'd ever had. I thought I was finished. I'm not sure exactly what happened but something clicked, and I turned on the drink with nothing but resentment towards it. I couldn't stand the look of it, the taste of it, and the smell.

I think at that point, I was at rock bottom

I was involved with The Forward Trust, but I remember not really taking it seriously until the day a woman called Sally came to the B&B and saw me. She saw what a wreck I was. Between her and my Forward counsellor, they got me to a place where I could be medically detoxed.



When I was well enough, I was transferred to a rehab in Hull called The Bridges. I was expecting it to be like the detox centre but wow, did I have a rude awakening! From the moment I landed, the hard work really started. I had to complete my life story and read it out to a group of people I didn't know which really removed me from my comfort zone. I didn't think I had many issues until going through step one (discussing my powerlessness over alcohol and the denial I was in) but with help from the treatment team, I got through that realisation. Then the steps kept coming, all the way up to five. Wow, going through my resentment, fears and harms in front of others was hard.

It was a very eye-opening experience

I'm now volunteering and helping other people with their step work, sharing my experience, strength and hope.

And here I am, writing this at 22 weeks in, 167 days clean. I realise that if I never had this opportunity, I wouldn't be writing this. So, all I will say is if I can do this, then there is hope for everyone that wants it.

STEVEN, CLIENT AT THE BRIDGES - HULL

THE BRILLIANT BRINK OF CHANGE

BY JAMIE

GOODBYE

Goodbye to the signals in my brain
 Goodbye repetition of my shame
 Goodbye to the isolated pain
 Goodbye, it's time to make a
 change
 Oh, please I implore you
 To wake up, face the day

It's time, this time
 To implement restrain
 I'm calling out
 The fear, the doubt
 No more lies
 It's time to say goodbye
 Goodbye, goodbye

Hello you, I thought I had departed
 When did the flow stop
 When did we stop laughing
 Lift up blind eyes
 The blanket of desire
 No compromise

This time, it's time
 Goodbye
 Goodbye
 Goodbye

**BY JAMES, CLIENT AT
CLOUDS HOUSE**

A vehicle of progress like it says in the name,
 The brilliant, brilliant Brink.
 Brings out our troubles till they're spilling in sync,
 If we put in the work, and don't over think.
 And ensure our worksheets are riddled with ink,
 It can guide our lives towards brilliant things.

Addiction's an evil bird flapping insidious wings,
 Flying its slaves into hideous things.
 It's cunning and humming invidious hymns,
 Writing on our walls in vermilion ink,
 Till we're just hanging on like a hideous hinge.

We fuffed around recovery's frivolous fringe,
 With our problems in life filling to brims.
 Our empties could have filled up a million bins,
 It can't be solved in a day, so give it a min.

The Brink helps us fight our addictions,
 Unearth our obstacles, strife, and afflictions.
 They say sliced bread is the best thing,
 But the best is the Brink,
 If we put in the work, we don't have to drink.

They do soft drinks and food that's much nicer,
 Than any poison like spirits, wine, beer or cider.
 We're filling up mugs, packing in drugs.
 The Brink provides us with backing and hugs.
 Ambitions abandoned to grow old with mold,
 Reawakened by learning to set some goals.

Countering our weak points with affirmations,
 These two self-images are like sanitation.
 We're grateful, amazing, and work saving,
 We say them until they are candid statements.
 Then we keep going,
 because it's good to maintain them

We came in with our perspectives myopic,
 Hating our substance but unable to stop it.
 The Brink gave us a vision of long-sightedness,
 We threw in towels of denial
 and stopped fighting it.

Cups of tea and coffee go clickety clink,
 As our resilience links.
 With innocent winks.
 Thank you, so much brilliant Brink,
 Life feels fresh like we're living in mint!

Passing it Forward

D, VISIBLE RECOVERY WORKSHOP FACILITATOR

I have been sharing in Visible Recovery workshops (VRW) since 2015. When I was in treatment at HMP Swaleside I had a magical moment. I thought to myself, "If I ever get out of prison, I will try to come back, as a visitor, to carry the message of hope". Now it's one of my favourite things to do. I love going to these places that some people may perceive to be places of darkness.

I really feel that lived experience is a vital part of the puzzle. However, I also feel that professionals are just as important as they go hand in hand. So many people in prison have suffered lots of trauma so trained staff are needed to support them. When people came in to share on the wings to people like myself, they just talked about what they did to get better. This really worked for me as I wanted what they had so I ended up copying what they did.

I have bumped into countless people in the community who are in recovery. Many have repeated back something that I have said that had resonated with them and helped to change their thinking. On one occasion I met someone who I first met in HMP Brixton. He was sat behind me and tapped me on the shoulder. His eyes lit up with a beaming smile and he introduced me to the three people that he was sponsoring. It's one of the most satisfying feelings in life, and all I did was point him in the right direction.



There is a very common misconception that if a person has never been to prison, then they cannot help people in there. One of the most significant people in my journey had never been to prison in his life nor did he use the same substances as me. But what he did know was how I had felt throughout my life. He had also suffered an abnormal reaction to substances and he was able to give me hope. He has been very active in this type of service for 11 years.

I have encouraged many people to do this type of service. They in turn have done the same. This is how it works.

I hope you sign up for this wonderful experience. What we say in 20 minutes could help alter the course of someone's life. It could mean that they have the opportunity to go on to help others.

Bill W. of Alcoholics Anonymous talked about the 'widening circle of peace'. Let's make sure it doesn't stop at the prison gate.

Concerned about a loved one?

Struggling with drugs, alcohol or mental health?

Contact our live chat service, Reach Out!

What is Reach Out?

Reach Out is The Forward Trust's online live chat service offering free, confidential support. We know how easy it is to feel isolated or overwhelmed by struggles with addiction, mental health and other challenges. We recognise sometimes the most important thing is just having somebody to talk to. If ever you want to reach out, we're here to listen. We may suggest other resources and organisations that can help.

Who is it for?

Anyone aged 16 and over can get support from Reach Out - whether it's for yourself or a loved one. We are not a crisis line but somewhere to come for a friendly conversation.

When is it available?

Visit the Forward Trust website Monday-Friday: 9am-3pm (excluding weekends and UK Bank Holidays) to start chatting: www.forwardtrust.org.uk

Southend Bowling Event

This was our first-ever Forward Connect event in Southend – hopefully with many more to come! We organised a bowling social for members of the Forward Connect community.

It was a very cold and grey day, but this did not deter people from having a wonderful time. Everyone found the bowling shoes especially funny!

I sat back and watched people connect with one another, and from the outside looking in it was like they had known each other forever. The conversations flowed and there was plenty of laughter.

It was lovely to see people so present.

People spoke briefly about their pasts; however, they were more focused on what they were doing today and their aspirations for the future. All were at various stages of recovery; however, they were all living the same way – One Day At A Time (ODAAT).

At Forward Connect we are going to put on more events like these.

"Clean for a year, out with people I don't know, and I'm feeling safe. Who would have thought it?"

KELLY, FORWARD CONNECT VOLUNTEER



HUMAN BEING

BY CHARLIE S

Hero taking speed to fuel him
through the day,
Pulls up in drive of 1.5 million
house

Sits down, watches the news
and drinks a bottle of vintage red,
1895,

Turns on his phone
and sees the stock prices
Rising and Falling

Sits and meditates,
feels his blood pressure drop
His heartbeat ebb and flow

Realises he isn't a super Hero,
Only a Human being

Villain, 18 years old
Jumps in a taxi on the way to
a death metal concert in Burbank
California

Opens up a little jar of pills
Stuffs his mouth full of them
Jumps out of the taxi
Runs into the concert, passes out
On the floor

Gets taken out of the concert hall
Breathalysed and arrested for
possession

Sits in the police station
Slumped against the wall
And pauses, meditates for a
second

And feels he is a human being,
not a villain



**“It was nice to
have this idea
for bowling and
then to see it in
action, it
bowled me
over!”**

SAM, PEER MENTOR

Do you want to join The Forward Trust's Health and Wellbeing Programme?

The Health and Wellbeing programme consists of six one-hour sessions on Zoom covering the following topics:

Mindfulness Awareness
Exercise and Healthy Eating
Stress and Anxiety
Stress Buster
Sleep and Grounding Techniques
Relapse Prevention

This online course runs for three weeks with two sessions weekly; Mondays from 2:00pm to 3:00pm and Thursdays from 10:00am to 11:00am. It is open to anyone who is engaging with The Forward Trust's Recovery Support Team.

If you would like to sign up, speak with your Recovery Support worker or contact recoverysupport@forwardtrust.org.uk for more information.

Contact Us
020 3981 5525
info@forwardtrust.org.uk

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forward
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CASE STUDY: WHAT IS RECOVERY SUPPORT? FROM A SUPPORT WORKER

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

It is a total honour to be able to share a little about the Recovery Support service that the Forward Trust offers. Around two years ago I shared my story in this publication as a volunteer and named Recovery Support as real-life superheroes. This is still true! The Recovery Support team nurtured and supported me to become employable and gain a skill set and gave me a purpose that changed my whole life.

Little did I know that I would be sitting here as part of the Recovery Support team, sharing with you about the work we carry out and what we offer to all Forward clients who have worked with us on any treatment pathway or programme and have achieved abstinence. Becoming abstinent is only the beginning of a journey, and often where the hard work starts.

But with Forward, we are never alone in our recovery.

Recovery Support knows that many people may still need suggestions, directions and guidance on life, home, health and finding purpose.

They offer a bespoke service for individuals to break down their barriers and help guide them to find solutions to better manage difficulties, maintain recovery and fulfil their potential.



Yes, it is as amazing as it sounds!

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

Everyone is unique. We recognise this, and our service support reflects this. We offer structured one-to-one sessions, or less frequent, more informal check-ins. We also have a peer mentoring programme if you would like to work with a like-minded peer who has experience that may help you along your path, and introduce members to our Forward Connect mutual aid group. Forward Connect has supported so many, including myself.

I learnt how to laugh and have fun as part of Forward Connect, as well as how to make friends. Again, all the work we do supports building healthy support networks, and guidance to build a solid foundation focusing on all areas of our life. You could also become a peer mentor and complete a qualification. Support includes:

- Workshops and e-learning on topics such as Relapse Prevention, step work, and a series of assignments and activities based on the 12-step model of recovery.
- We can signpost to local services and fellowships, and local drug and alcohol teams if needed.
- Recovery Support recently started running a Health and Wellbeing programme online. This is six sessions over three weeks and covers: mindfulness, exercise and healthy eating, stress and anxiety, stress busters, sleep hygiene and relapse prevention. It has been well attended and we have had some good feedback.

The sessions are another avenue to meet like-minded people and build friendships. We are also hoping to begin a fortnightly evening meet-up on Zoom to keep connections between the peers and check in with each other for support.

Being part of the Recovery Support team is a blessing, but not without its challenges. We support and work together and have real team spirit, throughout the organisation we have a wealth of experience and knowledge and enjoy what we do.

If you are a past or present client, or currently involved with Forward Trust, and in need of a little help and support, we are here for you.

Reach out to us using this email: recoverysupport@forwardtrust.org.uk Please check the Forward website for more information.



LISTEN TO THE MORE THAN MY PAST PODCAST

Available online and via Launchpad

MORE THAN MY PAST

Mental Stability, Freedom & Sanity

Freedom is when you can embrace,
the stress and the pain

Freedom is when you ain't afraid to
stand in the dark and get wet in the
rain.

Freedom is when you no longer live
in shame.

Freedom is when you ain't scared to
tell people your name.

Freedom is when the demons that
inhibit your mind, you can finally
tame.

Freedom is when you ain't afraid to
look somebody dead in their eyes
and state your claim.

Life's no longer mentally challenging,
Through spiritual healing, my
thoughts are finally balancing.

The devil keeps stressing me but
these demons I'm silencing,

Suicidal thoughts I'm vanishing.

No longer afraid to pick up the
phone, from whoever, when it rings.

My soul has been cleansed, now I'm
finally free, just like a bird I'm flying
with wings.

All praise to the Lord, words can't
express the joy,

The spiritual healing recovery brings.

BY NAZ

WHAT CAME FIRST?

It's hard to say what came first, the lifestyle,
the drugs, the bad choices or the crime.

One thing is for sure, I ended up in jail doing
a long time.

Sat alone on my prison bed, just one thought
in my head.

I couldn't see the problem I didn't think I had
and in a way I was right.

I didn't have just one, it was more like a
hundred and one.

The road to recovery hasn't been fast I've
had to confront and deal with my past.

There were times I thought I'd never make it,
would it be possible to fake it?

But through the many courses I have done,
none of which were any fun.

Drugs and crime one step at a time.

One time on a course, all I spoke about was
remorse.

That was really hard for me, but it's all a part
of my long road to recovery.

The end will always be in sight for me, I
won't allow it to escape from me.

For the first time in years, I've faced my fear.

I'm drug free, my crime was finally behind
me.

I'm going to rehab, wish me well.

This time it's different even I can tell.

I'm not just doing this for me, my family
mean the world to me.

This time I'll make it, just you wait and see.

ANONYMOUS



Recovery Support

Did you know you can refer any client who is interested in abstinence-based recovery for on-going, staff-led support in the community?

What we offer

- One-to-ones either in person, by phone or online - depending on client's needs
- Regular health and well-being workshops
- Support finding local volunteer opportunities
- Access to Forward Connect, our peer-led community of clients
- Meet & Greets - practical and emotional help for people travelling to and from rehab, detox and prison
- Mentoring support from trained mentors with lived experience
- Signposting to housing, employment, probation, financial, residential, rehab and fellowships

www.tinyurl.com/RSonlinereferral

Forward

If you have any questions about Recovery Support you can contact us at recoverysupport@forwardtrust.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1001701
Registered Company No: 2560474

A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE

BY LUKE C

A walk down memory lane.

A walk down memory lane could put a smile upon a face

A walk down memory lane could take the pain of life away

A walk down memory lane could give courage to a troubled soul

The memories come and go but life is for living and the past we dip in and out of while searching for the better days.

Life with purpose could free the pain and elevate a troubled soul.

A walk down memory lane.

A walk down memory lane could put a smile upon a face

A walk down memory lane could take the pain of life away

A walk down memory lane could give courage to a troubled soul

The memories come and go but life is for living and the past we dip in and out of while searching for the better days.

Life with purpose could be the medicine and elevate a troubled soul.

A walk down memory lane

A walk down memory lane could put a smile upon a face

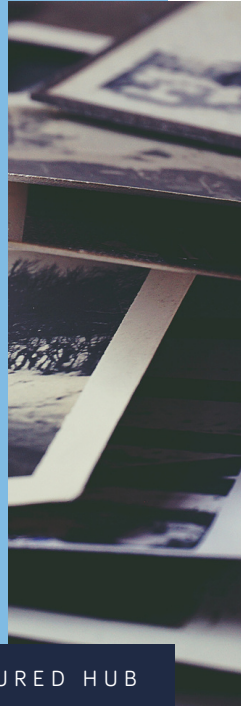
A walk down memory lane could take the pain of life away

A walk down memory lane could give courage to a troubled soul

The memories come and go but life is for living and the past we dip in and out of while searching for the better days.

Life with purpose could unite and elevate a dreaming troubled soul.

Because aspiration changes everything although it's up to us to look within.



FEATURED HUB

Matt's journey

My journey began in the small town of Banbury in Oxfordshire. My sister and I were brought up in a regular family by two hard-working and loving parents. My primary school years were uneventful, and whilst I didn't particularly enjoy school, I didn't hate it either.

When I reached secondary school however, I found that I was not an academic person, nor was I particularly fond of authority figures. I skipped school a lot, choosing to drink in the local park with friends, rather than study or go to class. I remember a sense of feeling bullet-proof when I drank, even in my early teenage years.

When I got to adulthood I bounced around various jobs, having no formal qualifications. From chef to bartender, to forklift driver, even working as a crown court usher, all the while drinking and using drugs to cope with my inability to cope.

My first detox from alcohol was in my early twenties. Over the years, I went through multiple rehab and detox processes, but nothing seemed to get through to me. At the age of 32, I asked the Forward Trust to help me gain some independence.

I moved into The Bridges - Hull rehab centre and began treatment with the day rehab team. I went daily to rehab meetings and spent almost 30 weeks working on myself relentlessly.

I am now two years and two months sober and I am a drug and alcohol practitioner for The Forward Trust. I facilitate groups and offer support to people who want to change their lives for the better.

Thank you Forward, for giving me my life back.

Another life is starting

In January 2022, one life ended and another one started for me. I hit rock bottom and couldn't carry on anymore and tried to take my own life. I was found and taken to hospital where I stayed for a couple of days. While there two wonderful ladies from mental health came to see me and listen to me.

They referred me to ReNew in Hull. I was scared.

Walking through the doors was terrifying, I still felt that I wanted to die but then again, I didn't. The thought of stopping drinking terrified me before, but here I was, defeated. I couldn't live my life like this anymore.

I had my first few appointments with a lovely man who made me feel calm. Over the next few weeks, I told him about my drinking. He asked me to write a diary of my drinking which I resisted as I didn't want to see in writing the amounts as this would make it real.



He arranged for me to see the nurse and I had a phone call to assess me. We discussed my drinking diary again, and she told me that if I didn't do it, they couldn't help me. Reality kicked in and I started my diaries and started the various programmes towards recovery.

I began to realise I was an alcoholic and I would need to go into detox.

I told my family, which was hard, but they gave me their support. On 18th October, I went to detox, where I spent 10 days. I really enjoyed being there as I was surrounded by "people like me". It wasn't easy but the freshly made soup helped! I left with tears at the end. I then started day rehab on the 31st of October. This lasted for 13 weeks and after that, I had 13 weeks of aftercare.

I didn't know what to expect but everyone made me feel so welcome - it was the first time I felt safe. We had to check in with our feelings every morning. I used to say, "I'm so happy, I feel like a puppy dog," as I didn't know what my feelings were. I said the same at checkout. I completed workshop group work; this really makes you think about your addiction. It teaches you about safe coping, triggers, being honest etc. (I will come to that later). I listened to people's step work, and when we had to give feedback, my memory was so bad that I couldn't remember what they had said. Thankfully my lovely facilitator allowed me to go first so I could at least remember some of it.

Throughout my journey, I heard lots of people's life stories - their step one and step two, but I never got the chance to hear a step three. My first assignment was read to my peers on the 30th November, and my last one was read on the 22nd February 2023. This is where the honesty came in. I dug deep, I was totally honest and told my peers things I have never said before. I cried reading them all, but this is where the foundations of my recovery were laid.

I was recommended to connect, connect, connect, and I've done that. I go to four groups a week, one of which is Forward Connect. I went to the first meeting at Trafalgar House which Andi started, and Luke facilitates. It started with around seven people and has grown so much that we've had to change rooms!

I went to the London reunion in January and met some fantastic people.

Forward Connect is not just about addicts but also families of addicts. We help one another to understand both sides of addiction. We meet up once a week and talk openly and honestly, without judgement. I get so much from the group. Sometimes I share, sometimes I listen to the wisdom of others. One thing I know is that without the help of Forward, I wouldn't be here now.

H, FORWARD CONNECT MEMBER

How to get a postal sponsor



A sponsor is another member of the fellowship, who has been through the steps and can share their experience to support you in your recovery.

If you would like a sponsor from Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous or Cocaine Anonymous please send your name, prison number and address to the relevant address below. You will be sent an information pack and details of how to write to your sponsor. It can take some time to match to a sponsor so please be patient. Please note that the 12- step fellowships are in no way affiliated with The Forward Trust.

To get an AA Sponsor write to:

AA Prison Postal Service, General Service Office, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York YO1 7NJ

To get an NA Sponsor write to:

NA Sponsor Request, Prison Sponsorship Committee, UKSO, 202 City Road, London, EC1V 2PH

To get a CA Sponsor write to:

CA UK, PO BOX 1337, Enfield, EN1 9AS

forward

Registered Charity No: 1001701
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East Kent Volunteers

Our incredible volunteers are always there to support our Forward Connect members, whether that's hosting our online and face-to-face meetings, supporting at large events or taking our members on day trips. Here's just a little insight into the amazing work they have done since the last edition of The Journey:

In September 2022, they headed to the seafront in Folkstone for crazy golf with our members, enjoying the last bit of good weather of the year. It was a great day full of fun and some gentle competitiveness!

In November, our face-to-face Forward Connect meeting took place at Sunflower House in Folkstone with Cliff. Everyone enjoyed their usual meeting with a slice or two of delicious pizza which went down very well!

They went the extra mile at Christmas and New Year by hosting online meetings, providing extra support for members who needed it during the festive period. Mary hosted the meeting on Christmas Day and John on New Year's Day. Along with the support, both meetings included a quiz for extra entertainment which proved a lot of fun!

Sue helped to banish any January blues at the Ashford face-to-face meeting by including a pizza lunch after the meeting.





which helped connect members in a delicious way!

At the start of January, John helped start an art group. This takes place at the Ashford Hub after the Forward Connect meeting every Friday from 11.30am to 1pm. The group enables members to enjoy the therapeutic benefits of creative work as well as have a good laugh connecting with fellow Forward Connect members.

Our amazing volunteers also provided some much-appreciated support at The Forward Trust National Reunion in January, helping with our Winter Fete. They ensured that the day ran smoothly and lots of fun was had by all who attended!

In February, Cliff took a group to the Pressure Point Escape Rooms in Ashford. Two teams of Forward Connect members battled it out by solving puzzles to collect sweets and escape from the rooms. It was a brain-busting event which provided a lot of laughs and a great bonding opportunity!

Not a volunteer yet? Why not sign up?

As well as connecting with other members, it's a great way of helping the community and doing something worthwhile. To find out more, email forwardconnect@forwardtrust.org.uk.

Thank you to all our volunteers for helping to make our Forward Community one that is full of support, connection and a lot of fun!

BYE!

I want say goodbye as there's nothing good about you. So, bye it is. Bye to the darkness, destruction, destitution, and depression. Yes, you had me on my knees on many an occasion. That big black hole in the dark cloud that followed me around, continuously you stripped me bare, broke me down. You did things that only an insane person would condone. You robbed me and anyone around me of any chance to be happy, to be safe, to be joyful, peaceful, or filled with serenity.

Bye to the addiction that I let cripple me, the stress and confusion, you use the negativity to add to the bad energy that you bring. On your way out the door please take my pain with you. Keep it as your own, it will keep you company, it's the last thing you can have from me. I don't need you anymore, I realise now I never did. The grip you had has loosened, the fear you imposed upon me has gone. The weakness you prayed on has been replaced. The man you seek doesn't live here anymore, there no forwarding address, someone else has moved in. You're not welcome and certainly are not invited. I'm on to you, I see you for exactly what you are, the way you move, the tricks you play – how sneaky and cunning you can be. Your ruthlessness, your destructive ways and poisonous nature made me a very sick and unwell human being - but now I'm just sick of you.

It causes me pain to think of all you took and how long you had me in your grasp. How you took everything and still wanted more. But this was also your biggest mistake; you got greedy, reckless even, as you drove me in to the open arms of recovery and fellowship, where my eyes were opened my mind was cleared, my faith restored, and my spirit made strong. Courage found, fears faced, and self-esteem re-bult.

I was given a toolbox and it was filled with all the tools needed to rebuild a life you expelled. Not only are we you on to you, but we also enjoy exposing you to everyone who we can find to help understand. We will keep on exposing you, helping others whilst helping ourselves. Keeping you firmly in the past – where you belong, you're not welcome here anymore. The chains have been broken; the hand cuffs are off. Every day I wake up, I remind myself of just how sneaky and cunning you are. I watch out, stay aware when it comes to you and your wicked, nasty, destructive nature. My eyes are open.

Bye.

**BY JH, FORWARD
CONNECT MEMBER**



ANGELS

BY ROY, FORWARD
MEMBER AT THE BRINK

I didn't say - feel this way
 I didn't say I wanted to be this way
 I'm suffering through an illness That's eating me away
 I didn't see it coming it was slow and very cunning
 Eroding away at my life in every way
 It was destructive and harmful
 And isolated me day by day

No friends to talk to as they wouldn't understand
 And I was ashamed and embarrassed of this illness that was
 inflicting its pain - all around
 Maybe I can fix it
 Sort it out once and for all
 Chase this disease from our family
 Make us all strong and walk tall
 We could then talk to neighbours
 And not run and hide
 Just in case they ask "how's it going" I don't want to continue
 this lie It's our family illness that we must keep a secret
 Protecting our loved one from harm
 And ourselves from shame
 As this illness will hurt us all again and again
 Broken relationships lies and deceit
 Fighting and family feuds In the house and in the street
 It was all my fault It was me that started this problem
 How could I do this I have now hit rock bottom I need to get
 help I need to be free of this illness that's controlling and
 slowly killing me

I wandered through town in a total daze
 Smiling at strangers while hiding the rage that had me in
 turmoil and turned my life upside down I now knew I couldn't
 function I was spiralling out of control
 Spiralling out of control in self-pity
 Spiralling out of control in total misery
 Spiralling out of control in self-destruction mode I fell
 through these doors and was caught by angels who gave me
 strength and showed me understanding
 Angels who knew what it was like to be broken
 Angels who have been there and back through life's
 addiction junction
 Angels who know the damage caused by drugs and drink
 I was rescued and saved by Angels
 Who work in The Brink

JOURNEY COMPETITION WINNER

Send us your
 entries for a
 chance to win
 and see your
 piece in our
 next issue!



My Journey as a Trainee Recovery Support Worker:

Overcoming Challenges and Making a Difference

STAFF
TESTIMONIAL

Although my journey has been far from easy, it has led me to where I am today, making a difference in the lives of others. After spending several years in prison, I knew that I wanted to turn my life around and help others who were going through similar challenges. I was determined to break the cycle and create a better future for myself and those around me. This is what brought me to Forward Trust.

As a Trainee Recovery Support Worker, I am responsible for providing support to clients who are dealing with addiction and related issues. This includes conducting assessments, developing care plans and delivering psychosocial interventions. Every day, I work with individuals who are facing some of the toughest challenges of their lives. Through my work, I have seen first-hand the impact that addiction can have on individuals, families and communities.

It is a complex issue that requires a multifaceted approach. That's why I am grateful to be part of an organisation that provides a wide range of services to address the complex needs of our clients.

Being a Trainee Recovery Support Worker is not always easy. It requires a lot of resilience, adaptability and quick thinking. But it is also incredibly rewarding. Every time I see a client make progress, no matter how small, it reminds me why I do what I do. It is a privilege to be able to help others overcome their challenges and achieve their goals.

One of the most important things I have learned on my journey is the value of teamwork. At Forward Trust, we work together to deliver the best possible care to our clients. We support each other, share knowledge and expertise, and collaborate to find solutions to complex problems.

My journey as a Recovery Support Worker has been challenging, but it has also been incredibly fulfilling. It has taught me the importance of resilience, empathy and compassion. It has shown me that with determination and hard work, it is possible to overcome even the toughest challenges. And it has given me the opportunity to make a positive difference in the lives of others.



There is no greater feeling than seeing a client succeed in their recovery journey and knowing that I played a small part in helping them get there.

In conclusion, I'm proud to be able to use my experience to help others who are struggling with addiction and to be a part of their journey to recovery.

If you're considering a career in recovery support work, I encourage you to pursue it with all your heart – it's a challenging but incredibly rewarding profession that can make a real difference in the lives of others.

NANGS GOHAR, TRAINEE RECOVERY SUPPORT WORKER

YOUR CREATIVE WORK

THIS IS WE BY NEIL T

We come into this life pure and clean,
 We rely on others, so early in our years,
 To prepare us for challenges that are yet
 unseen.
 Nature or Nurture We do not know,
 We can only but learn as we grow.
 We meet our "Friend!" who we think is kind and
 warm!
 Our protector or so we think!
 Poor me, poor me, pour me another drink!
 We wrap ourselves in its comfort blanket,
 Not knowing (then) the dangers that lurk
 beneath.
 We become gripped by its false power and
 lies,
 An easy solace, we think we are wise.
 The guilt, the shame, the bitterness inside.
 Why me, why me, pour me another drink!
 But stop, we know we shouldn't.
 Do we stop? No, we couldn't.
 We reach the bottom, we can go no more,
 Our bodies and minds with exhaustion show,
 Poor me, poor me, pour me another drink!
 But wait there is hope, a chance to Renew,
 Change, grow and live.
 A second chance, a chance to survive.
 The small steps we are taking each and every
 day,

Brings clarity and positivity in each and every
 way.

No looking back, the past we cannot change,
 But be here now, living in this moment,
 To build for the future, for us to cherish!
 I am eternally grateful to those around me
 now,

Knowing the gratitude inside, I can never
 repay.

So, it's time for me to take a bow
 And thank you all from within my heart
 And quote "each time I go to bed and lay my
 head on the pillow sober..."

I know that the next day I will wake up sober"
 And have half a chance on the challenges
 ahead.

So, keep your heads up high
 God gives his toughest battles
 To his strongest warriors

This is we
 Thank you



Forward Trust National Reunion 2023

The Forward Trust National Reunion was hosted at Conway Hall in London this year on the 14th January. It was originally scheduled to run in September 2022 but was postponed due to the passing of Queen Elizabeth II and subsequent period of national mourning. Forward Trust clients (past and present), including all our Forward Connect members, were invited along with friends and family, Forward staff members and other professionals.

People came from as far as Wiltshire, Liverpool and Hull to attend the event – with free travel provided from the main community hubs for anyone who wished to attend.

Staff arrived at 9am to start setting up the registration desks and preparing the audio-visual and catering teams for the large turnout of people that were expected to attend the event. By 10am, the doors were ready to be opened, just in time for the coaches from East Kent and Hull.

As people started to enter the venue, it became clear that the day was going to be a good one – how could it not be with so many people and unlimited tea and coffee!?



Forward Trust CEO Mike Trace took the stage to welcome everyone and invite people to their seats. Mike spoke about the reunion being a celebration of people's ability to change, which was perfectly highlighted by the day's five main speakers: Melissa, Leon, Carol, Mike and Alistair.

Melissa and Leon spoke about their own experiences of recovery and Carol spoke about her family's experience of her son's addiction and how they learned to heal. Mike and Alistair spoke about their time with The Forward Trust's Enterprise support team, part of Forward's employment directorate.

The event was hosted by the Forward's very own Joshua Thetford (Forward Connect Coordinator) and Lyndsay W (Clouds Graduate 2022). The dynamic duo effortlessly introduced speakers to and from the stage with panache. Both felt it was a particular privilege to be able to oversee the clean-time countdown, which saw audience members in recovery stand up to celebrate their recovery and that of others around them. Seeing people who had been sober for over 20 years stand side-by-side with people who were in their first weeks of recovery, celebrating and supporting one another's achievements, bravery and hope was an utterly amazing experience.

As the morning progressed, there was time for a break. The atmosphere was electric, and the space filled up with hundreds of people chatting and sharing memories.

When everyone came back to their seats, Hannah K took to the stage and sang, letting everyone know that she was celebrating her six-month sobriety milestone on the same day. She sang beautiful covers of Something in the Orange, She Will Be Loved and Hometown Glory – breathtaking!



Seeing people who had been sober for over 20 years stand side-by-side with people in their first weeks of recovery was an utterly amazing experience

For the first time at a Forward Trust Reunion, the microphone was passed over to clients of the Enterprise service, a part of the organisation that supports people starting and building their own businesses. The speakers that took to the stage spoke about their own journeys through hardship and their drive for success in the face of adversity. The open mic section followed and was particularly special, with many tributes read out for Ade Onilude, Forward's Mentoring Programme Coordinator who sadly passed away in September 2022. The room was filled with passion as people spoke about their own experiences in recovery - some even called it the highlight of the event.

After lunch, it was over to Forward's Recovery Support team to put on an afternoon of entertainment and games as part of the event's winter fete. There were games to play and sweet treats on offer from the ice cream, candy floss and popcorn carts.

Forward Connect volunteers and staff helped to make sure people were well fed and entertained at the various stalls: from guess the teddy bear's name and count the jellybeans, to find the buried treasure, hook a duck and tin can alley. Dotted throughout were stalls set up to promote the diverse services that Forward offers, with a special guest appearance from the Hep-C Trust, who came to do some onsite testing.

Once the ice cream had been eaten and all the prizes had been won, it was time to start slowing the event down as people got ready to board their coaches back home. A big shoutout to the crowd from Liverpool who stayed until the very end - waiting for their coach to arrive!

Over 320 people came to celebrate the many forms recovery takes within the services offered by The Forward Trust. Seeing people who had been sober for over 20 years stand side-by-side with people who were in their first weeks of recovery, celebrating and supporting one another's achievements, bravery and hope was an utterly amazing experience. It was an incredibly special day.

If you were unable to attend this year, don't worry – our next national reunion will be taking place in January 2024, and we would love for you to join us.





Forward Connect

Join Forward Connect's National Zoom Meeting.

Every Sunday
4.00pm - 5.00pm

Meeting ID: 871 0511 1452
Passcode: 100635

Forward Connect is our nationwide community for people who are making good progress in achieving their goals. Forward Connect links up those who want to connect, share information, celebrate their successes and support one another, both face-to-face and online.

Contact

forwardconnect@forwardtrust.org.uk or
07485329507 for more info

forward
www.forwardtrust.org.uk

FEEDBACK

We would love to hear from you. Please write your comments below, cut out this page and send it to our freepost address:

Freepost - THE FORWARD TRUST.

What was your favourite part of the magazine?

What did you find most useful or informative?

What would you like to see more of?

Any other comments?

You could win a prize for your submission!

PERMISSION TO PRINT

Please send this form alongside your Journey submission and/or your feedback form to:

The Journey Magazine
Freepost THE FORWARD TRUST

Title of work (submission)

Please circle the most appropriate description:

- Personal Story
- Poetry
- Article
- Artwork
- Other:

Please circle how you would like to be accredited for your submission:

- Full name
- First name
- No name (anonymous)

I grant The Forward Trust the right to use my submission, titled above, for the purpose of raising awareness and continuing support for people struggling with addiction or offending behaviour, and helping them to lead positive and fulfilling lives. I authorise The Forward Trust to use the submission for lawful purposes such as publicity, illustration, advertising and web content. I authorise The Forward Trust to copyright, use and publish the same submission in print and/or electronically.

Please note if there is anywhere you do not want your submission displayed:

I have read and understood the above.

Name: -----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

If appropriate

HMP: -----

Prison Number: -----

**If you need
advice about
alcohol or
drug worries,**

**our Reach Out
online chat service
can help.**



CHAT TO US ONLINE

**Our online chat service is
available between 9am and 3pm
Monday-Friday** (excluding Bank Holidays)



Scan the QR code to start a conversation with one of our volunteers, or use the link below:
<https://www.forwardtrust.org.uk/find-support/reach-out-online-chat/>

FORWARD CONNECT MEETING DIRECTORY

Our Forward Connect meetings are peer-led, and are a place for us to meet new people and celebrate our successes together!

Day	Area	Online/face-to-face
Monday	Folkestone	Face-to-face
Monday	Hull	Face-to-face
Tuesday	East Kent	Online
Tuesday	London	Online
Wednesday	East Kent	Online
Wednesday	Canterbury	Face-to-face
Wednesday women's meeting (1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month)	National	Online
Thursday	East Kent	Online
Thursday	Southend	Face-to-face
Thursday	Sittingbourne	Face-to-face
Thursday	Margate	Face-to-face
Friday	Hull & Liverpool	Online
Sunday	National	Online

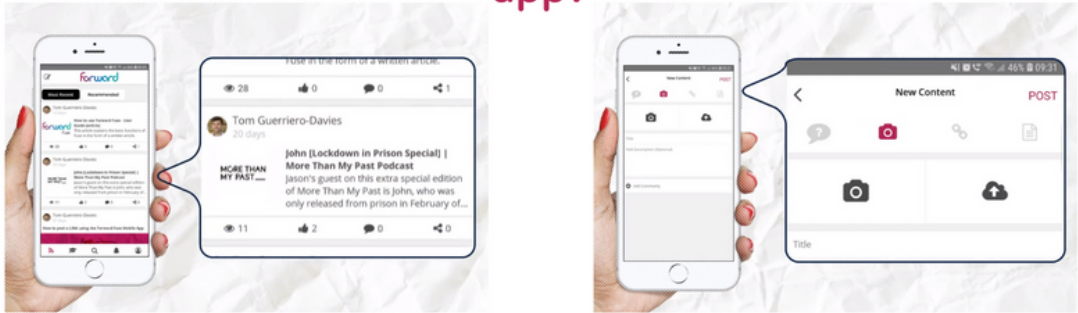
How to access Forward Connect Peer-Support Meetings

When you sign up for Forward Connect you will be sent all of our meeting locations & times, (including log-in details for our Zoom meetings. If you join our Discord chat server, you'll receive reminders of meetings the morning that they are taking place too. If you would like this information resent to you email us at forwardconnect@forwardtrust.org.uk

forward

Fuse

Want access to Forward Connect support, news, resources and services - all on a convenient mobile app?



Sign up to Forward Fuse today!



Scan the code above or go to tinyurl.com/forwardconnectfuse and fill in our form

USEFUL RECOVERY CONTACTS

Alcoholics Anonymous 0800 9177 650 help@aamail.org	Cocaine Anonymous 0800 612 0225 helpline@cauk.org.uk	Cocaine Anonymous 0800 612 0225 helpline@cauk.org.uk
Fam-Anon 0207 4984 680 office@famanon.org.uk	Gamblers Anonymous 0330 094 0322 info@gamblersanonymous.org.uk	Narcotics Anonymous 0300 999 1212 meetings@ukna.org
Samaritans 116 123	Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous 07984 977 884 contact@slaauk.org	SMART Recovery 0330 053 6022

LISTEN TO THE MORE THAN MY PAST PODCAST

Available online and via Launchpad

MORE THAN
MY PAST__

“After years of addiction together,
my friend went clean and he had
the spark back in his eyes”

MORE THAN MY PAST PODCAST

- Speedo Mick

ROLE MODELS, 'ROAD MODELS' AND SUPPORTERS