**Transcript: Lucy’s Story**

For years, no one saw Lucy as Lucy. It was ‘Lucy the junkie’. She’s now an award-winning student embracing life as a scholar and a grandma!

“I think growing up, I always thought a criminal was someone who stole, or someone who even lied, you know, someone who’d done something that was obviously wrong, I think as a child that what I presumed, you know. I knew the difference from right and wrong.”

“I started taking drugs when I was thirteen, fourteen years old, magic mushrooms, things like that. I think by the age of sixteen, seventeen, I had this thing for methamphetamines, speed, I was taking speed quite a lot, yeah, drugs were a big part of my life early on. It was amphetamines for about ten years and speed from the same age, about seventeen to you know, twenty four, twenty five, like, non-stop.”

“I think initially, it was a recreational thing, then it came to the age where I was about eighteen years old, I was in a violent relationship, I had three children, I had my own daughter, who was three, I had my son, who was a baby, and I had a step-daughter, who was six, and in that relationship there was violence, so yeah, I think a lot of it was a coping thing, yeah.”

“ When I was standing in front of the Sheriff, I thought I was going to jail, I was standing with my bag ready to go, trying to fight back the tears, because the adrenaline, you know, was running through me, and the fear, you know, I hadn’t really done a jail term, you know, time in jail, and I was scared, and also because at the time I was standing in front of him, it had been a year and a bit that had passed since the crime, by the time I went to court.”

“In that year and a half, I had championed and turned my life around, and done loads of personal development, to stay clean and stable. I’d done peer mentor training, forty hours of peer mentor training to try and help people who’d been through the same sort of things that I’d been through. I knew I had to face the punishment for my crime, for my actions, you know, so I was petrified. It should have been a custodial sentence, he told me I was an exceptional circumstance, because of what I’d done to turn my life around, and what I was doing to help others, so he gave me three hundred hours community service.”

“I worked in a charity shop. You’re serving customers that don’t know you, they’re going about their everyday life. Just talking to people, and being part of something, part of the community, that was massive for me. That was the first time I’d felt like that in a long, long time, you know?”

“When you’re a drug user, you feel like you’re the scourge of society, and it felt great to be recognised as a person, rather than a drug user. OWL and TCA, Venture Trust, that’s the three companies that have helped me get where I am today. Yeah, I just felt so supported, the people that were around me, by all the staff, just everybody, and getting the recognition, just for turning my life around.”

“It doesn’t sound like much to other people, but really, it really helps. It might not sound like much when someone says ‘I stayed away from heroin for, like, a week.’ But trust me, that’s how you start, how you keep going.”

“And so officially, last year, I finished the Intro to Humanities class, which was my Standard Grade, so I’ve officially left school with Standard Grades now. I started off going to college to learn, because I hadn’t been in education, I mean, I was thirty seven, I left school with no qualifications, it was a big, scary concept, and I loved it so much, I went on to do last year’s course into this course. When I’ve finished this course, hopefully this time next year, I will be sitting, ready to start my degree at university. I’ve got my hand up, the first one with their hand up in class, this thirst for learning.”

“What makes me happy now, obviously college, my education, but more so my children, my grandchildren, but I am Lucy, you know, not a junkie, I’m not a drug dealer, I’m just Lucy. I’m a grandmother, I’m a mother, I’m a student, I’m a dog owner - I’m worth so much more. Although I’ve been clean and stable, off heroin and illicit drugs for several years now, I’m still a work in progress. It’s not easy, you know, it’s not easy, but it’s worth it”