

# Dumfries man speaks of hope brought by Trust

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FOR Dumfries man Stuart MacNeillie, Lochbank Trust and their treatment offers a new hope.

Stuart has been a drug user for ten years, and addicted to heroin for most of that time.

At the height of his addiction, he spent every penny he could on the demon drug, and robbed from his family to feed his habit, shattering bonds of trust.

His addiction ended a three-year electrician apprenticeship, and a 10-year long relationship with the mother of his two children.

His drug use first started when he was just 16 years old as experimentation in softer drugs at parties with friends.

But as he began trying and preferring harder drugs like Speed and Ecstasy, his friends were using the most addictive of them all – heroin.

And it was only a matter of time before Stuart followed suit.

Speaking to the Standard as he starts his NET treatment, Stuart said: "I didn't want to get onto the heroin, because I knew it was bad news.

"Some of my pals used it the morning after a big night, to help with the come down.

"My drug use was making me feel worse and worse the next day, and eventually I tried heroin, smoking it at first.

"It took the pain away and it felt good.

"And there was no withdrawal at first, which I liked about it. But once I started using it regularly, the pain of coming off it was terrible.

"I was addicted from then on. Whatever I had I would spend on heroin."

The drug turned Stuart into a different person – a man who didn't care about other people, and only thought about getting his next fix.

And he didn't see that everything that was going wrong in his life was because of his addiction.

He added: "Guys used to say 'watch that stuff, it'll leave you with nothing', but at the start I had a bit of money, and I thought I'd be fine, and I knew what I was doing.

"But look at me now."

Stuart has tried in the past to get away from heroin, managing to stay clean for up to months at a time, but he has always returned to the craved drug.

But he is convinced that this treatment will be different, after he himself got in touch with the Lochbank Trust.

He explained: "I was on a Drug Treatment and Testing Order (DTTO), and my support worker was on holiday.

"I felt like I had no support and was worried about turning back to the drug.

"So I contacted the Trust myself, and they took me on.

"I want to get back to being the father I should be.

"I've let this rule my life for too long.

"I've let a lot of people down, and I want to re-build bonds.

"They've stood by me through everything, and I owe them a lot.

"I couldn't imagine my daughter growing up and me thinking everything's fine and then finding out what my family have about me."

And for Stuart, this is a real chance to start again.

"I've been speaking to the other people here, and they think the place is great.

"It feels a bit strange having this thing strapped to my head, but so far it seems OK.

"It's a much better option than prescribing people with methadone and pushing them to one side – you just end up hooked on that too.

"This feels like a new start, and I feel like I deserve a second chance," he said.