

Dan's Story

I joined Choir with No Name Liverpool in March 2015, over two years ago. It's crazy to think of that period in my life compared to my life now. It's like black and white, totally contrasting. I'd been kicked out of the house and had moved into a hostel, which was hell. That's the polite way of putting it. There I was referred to Crisis. One of the Crisis employees volunteered at Choir with No Name, and she said to me one evening that choir was on that night, and why didn't I go along. She said I could just come for a week and see if I liked it and I've been singing ever since!

If my life was a ladder, at the time I joined choir I was on the very bottom rung of that ladder. Coming to choir got me out of the hostel and brought me out of my shell. At that point I had retracted inside myself, wrapping myself in bubble wrap as a way of guarding against the world. If I'm honest, it could get quite comfortable in that bubble - just you and your thoughts - but on the flip side sometimes being alone all the time with just your brain for company can be harrowing. So coming to choir was the start of me climbing up that ladder and slowly but surely I got to where I am today - a confident, outgoing, silly person!

Music allows me to express myself and is a distraction from the negative stuff in my head. If I don't have those distractions those thoughts can take over and I withdraw. Wednesday [choir rehearsal day] is a day where I'll wake up and know that whatever happens, it's choir that night and that's all that matters. I can look forward to it, leave my troubles at the door, just go and sing and that's it. Simple. It doesn't need to be any more complicated than that. As a Member Representative, I've been to a trustee meeting which is the other side of the charity that members don't see. The trustees really listened to me so I felt like I had a voice, and that I was being heard. I loved that experience.

Personally, I have changed exponentially since joining choir. I am more confident talking to people now and more open about what happened to me - at the time I didn't want anyone to know what situation brought me to be living in the hostel, but now I am much more comfortable talking about it all, which is a real progression for me.

I was 20 when my dad kicked me out. It was a brutal awakening, especially since at that time I had totally isolated myself - spending 20 hours a day in my room, gaming and hiding from the world. It was a wake up call. I lived with my dad and two sisters. I was at a point in my life where I didn't want to do anything other than sleep all day and stay in my room. I was not taking care of myself, and was clearly depressed. This was really starting to grate with my family. My hygiene suffered, my attitude towards them suffered. We had been evicted from my childhood home, and had been moved into a really grotty house - it was always flooding and in a really bad state - which just fed into my need to stay in my room and hide away. We eventually got evicted from that house too, and my Dad decided to move him and my sisters into a place for single parents to live with kids under 20. I was told I couldn't go with them. I felt betrayed - there was no attempt to help me get better, get out of my head, out of my room before being booted out of my home with nothing. I needed support, which I never got. I was really angry for a long time about that, although we're starting to rebuild bridges now. My Dad comes to choir gigs, which is great and my connections with family are stronger now than they ever were.

Now I am living in a flat on my own. The amazing feeling of walking in my own front door didn't wear off for the first six months of being in there. In a hostel there is no personal space. I always had people knocking on my door begging for cigarettes, lighters or whatever, even though other residents knew I didn't smoke or do drugs. I would just lock myself away and play video games to escape the daily hell of living there. When I found choir, I would think 'if I can just make it through the next 6 days until next rehearsal' and it really helped me. I also joined a creative writing class, so between the two activities, it meant I could make it through and was guaranteed to be out of the hostel for two nights a week.

Choir is a really happy space - I've made a lot of life-long friends here. Being in choir feels like you are part of something a lot bigger than yourself, and means having a camaraderie between each other. We've performed across Liverpool, in Birmingham, London and are looking forward to

Brighton in December this year and it feels amazing to be part of something like Choir with No Name. The feeling of singing a solo on stage never dies. When we smash out a gig, the pride and euphoria swells in you. It's fantastic.