

## **Episode 5: 'Recovery Month'**

*Podcast Transcript*

*Life with Alcohol and Drugs*

Host: Rebecca Bradley (Scottish Families)

Guest Speaker: Tich Watson (Scottish Families)

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### **Introduction:**

In this episode we're joined with Richard Watson from Scottish Families who shares his recovery journey for recovery month.

*Interview Begins*

### **Rebecca:**

Hi, we're here for September being Recovery Month and I'm joined with Tich who just recently joined Scottish Families Affected by Alcohol and Drugs. Do you want to introduce yourself and what your role is with us?

### **Tich:**

Sure, my name is Richard Watson but many people in recovery know me as Tich and a lot of friends as well and I hope people out with recovery here this, so yes, hello!

Yeah, I joined Scottish Families just over three months ago and my job title is Connecting Families Development Officer. Yeah, it's great to be here, thank you very much, Rebecca.

### **Rebecca:**

Connecting Families Development Officer comes with a lot of things, a lot of exciting things! It's very good to have you here. So, with it being recovery month, we felt it was proper that we did a podcast where we would talk about recovery and to highlight recovery journeys and you very kindly agreed to be here and to share your own journey, and to really just talk us through your own experiences and your experiences with sort of for example, your family and the people were able to support you and things like that along the way.

We can just really start by sort of just asking about your journey and you can totally take it from there because journey is a very good word to use because I can imagine it's full of a lot of detail.

### **Tich:**

Sure. Thanks. Yes, so...I mean, my whole journey's probably too...fortunately I'm 5 years in recovery, so during those 5 years I've been to a lot of recovery meetings and I've shared my story a lot of times which has been...made me quite comfortable with discussing it.

I'm very comfortable with some of the behaviours and the things that I did in the past that I no longer do so therefore...do you know, there's very little that holds much weight over me that I'm ashamed to talk about anymore. There was shame...shame is definitely one of the things that was a barrier to getting well again.

So I think a part of my own recovery is to make sure that I share that with people, that I share that actually I had to forgive myself and that I shouldn't carry shame, carrying all that doesn't help me, doesn't help my loved ones, doesn't help my kids. So, I just... I'm really lucky that 5 years down the line I'm really getting close to being the person that I always knew I was.

I think that was one of my main things, I was brought up in Edinburgh and I knew that...I had a lovely, I had a lovely mum – relationship with my mum – in particular and the rest of my wider family. It was a good upbringing and I guess I was kinda a good wee boy, you know? And then as I got into teenage years, I did what normal teenagers do and started experimenting a little bit with drink and drugs and that was not really problematic too badly at the time.

Then we found out my mum was diagnosed with cancer and around about that time it kinda came at that crucial time in my teens – whilst everyone was experimenting and having fun, I quite quickly realised I could use Cannabis and alcohol to make me feel better. And the school recognised that and I got a bit of support. But actually what happened was at that age, I remember going and getting some therapy and the therapist sort of talking about things that were really adult. At that age, young teenage years, talking and going away and reading about the ego at 15. It was quite a lot to take in and of course at that age I was taking loads of information in anyway. I was really seeking out life as you do at that age.

I got a bit of support around that age. It didn't make much of a difference. All that really happened was I just continued to turn to alcohol and drugs, as my mum's illness progressed. My reliance on that as a support as a crutch, and quite young - I was 18 when I sort of identified myself as an alcoholic.

Now, my dad had...was a chronic alcoholic, but I would call it chronic alcoholic in the sense that there's big parts of my childhood that his heavy drinking dominated everything. Broke up the family home when I was 5. And actually just recently and being a part of Scottish Families, that so much of my work, well all of my work, is all focused on supporting families that I started to really maybe explore a little more about that relationship and the impact it had on me.

I mean, I always knew being the child of an alcoholic had its part in my journey. But I also recognised that just the misfortune of life and losing a parent to cancer... because my mum died when I was 18... and it's funny actually, sometimes I stop and think was it 18 or 19 because so many periods of my life around then are just a big muddle, they're not clear, I couldn't tell you months from months. It's literally years because I used to get up in the morning and smoke bongs, like...Cannabis pipes, hash pipes, and I'd smoke all day and or I would drink all day. Smoking, it I would be smoking if I had to get on and do things and if I was or had a free reign where I'd be able to drink, there wasn't any adults. And I guess that was one of the problems, that actually after my mum died, there wasn't a lot of adults around my life that had enough power over me to really interject and help me sort of manage my behaviour.

And quite quickly I kinda went from drinking and I got into Ecstasy and Speed and Acid around the same time, and again what started off as fun quickly became...I would literally take Ecstasy like Prozac so if I was feeling a bit down I'd take half an Ecstasy pill because it would make me feel better. It was that simple. It made me feel better. I felt crap, take this, I felt better. Even though I knew that I'd come down and I'd feel worse. To be honest, I stopped taking Speed quite quickly because the depression that came with the comedowns around that were so brutal that I realised I couldn't do that.

I took my mum's...I used to steal my mum's Oramorph and her other morphine/opiate based tablets as well when I was really quite young. And again, I realised at that time I thought people got addicted to specific substances. I thought Heroin was a really addictive substance, I know that, I've heard that in

school, and I got my mum's stuff and poured that down the toilet. Lots of Diazepam as well. And again, I remember looking back on that exercise of pouring all my mum's drugs down the toilet and laughing with my friends going god, I wish I'd never done that, I'd of never done that now. I'd probably of sold them or gubbed them all.

So that was a big thing, my mum dying and the impact of that had a real...was probably the start...my journey started off from a kind of difficult place. And I think that's so common with people in recovery. Quite often, people not exclusively, but quite often people had a painful experience that they'd taken drugs or alcohol to make them feel better.

So yeah, that was my start. I went through the rest of my life just doing my best. I always worked and I guess that was a real saving grace for me that I had a bit of structure around me. But I would go straight to the pub every day after work, but at least I was still going to work. I lost loads of work because I stank of booze in the morning or I lost loads of jobs because I was unreliable or I lost loads of jobs...not for stealing, because I was brought up and had a good moral compass, as most people do. I love the start of Anne Frank's diary that all people are inherently good, and I really believe that. I think we are all good people and I don't necessarily...I think it's a lot to do with the media, that I actually took on some of that 'oh I must be doing something wrong, there must be something bad' I think I honestly learned a lot of guilt.

So, anyway, I was lucky that I had work to keep me structured and I got through most of my life just about surviving but I lost a lot of relationships and I caused a lot of damage and I upset a lot of people because every night being drunk was an opportunity for me to of said something stupid or...I know I had a very wicked tongue at times when I was drunk, so. And that's all really regrettable, but you know again, I just didn't see it at the time. And then you'd wake up feeling terrible and this was a pattern...I'd do something that didn't sit well with me and I'd wake up the next morning feeling terrible about it and I'd hate living with that feeling in myself.

It was easier to drink and take drugs again. So yeah, that was the big part of my journey was this cycle of damaging people, damaging relationships, damaging myself. And I occasionally would go and seek help. I would go to the doctors and sometimes I would get tablets or I would go and get some counselling. When I could, it wasn't easy.

I had another sort of traumatic experience through my teenage years as well that ended up in a court case. At the end of that court case... that was terrible and there was a lot to say and years later when I started to get into recovery and I was chatting to someone about the journey of abuse I'd been through that ended up in a court case, they said I'd been let down every step of the way and it's true, when you go to all the opportunities for professionals to have stepped in and say how are you doing and just stop and ask are you coping okay, are you doing well, and then to divert you to some support like meaningful support. Too often people go through horrible traumatic experiences and people will say how are you doing but there's just nothing there to actually back that up.

Anyway I went through all that stuff and I recognised that...although that difficult court case landed me moving to Glasgow and it gave me a bit of a fresh start and that was in 2000, so I kinda felt like my life had began again. Unfortunately, at this point I still considered myself an alcoholic. I knew I had a problem. I didn't really know how to stop it. I always thought maybe if I get a better job, if I can start, by this time as well my debts were sort of chasing me around the place as well. If I can clear my debts...I think a big thing about me was always seeking a loving relationship. And...I'm sure I'm not unique there either. I kept on searching the fact that if this happens then I'll get well, I'll stop drinking and I'll stop all that.

Now I keep talking about drinking and that's because I genuinely... all these years...till I was 39, I kept on seeking help for my alcoholism. I'd go to the community addiction team and I'd keep getting told to keep a drinks diary and if you take a drinks diary for long enough and you show us the commitment and you can show us that you're reducing and you're trying to help yourself, then we'll look at getting you some counselling. And I was like I know I need counselling so if you get me the support I need to deal with my emotions and my thoughts and my feelings then I think I...I thought I would stop. But anyway that was what was offered to me at the time and it never worked. This pattern of seeking help and it not suiting my needs, that went on for several years.

Again, one of the big things of my journey was that I remember I met the mother of my kids and she's a lovely woman and we got on really well and I thought...and we talked about having children fairly early in our relationship. And I thought if I have kids I'll become responsible. Once I become responsible and I thought I'm not going to end up like my dad. If I do that then that'll sort my drinking out.

Unfortunately...so I do and I've got two wonderful kids now, but unfortunately I think for their mum, it was really hard. I treated her first pregnancy as my last chance to drink before life got serious. And then when they were born, every celebration was another excuse to drink. So I was one of these parents who at the kids party had the bottle of beer open, you know? And I'm not criticising anyone for doing that, people do what they want, but looking back on it now I just used any celebration as I always had done, any celebration was an excuse to drink. Whether it was going to exhibition openings or going to somebody's....any event, just became around. And I think that's a lot to do with our culture in Scotland as well, and work as well, bars at work, bars in parliament, bars at...there's just, alcohol we're always associating with celebration and that's because it's an industry, like the cards industry it's a way of making a card for every occasion - it's a drink for every occasion.

Again, this is probably a part of forgiving myself, I understand there's a lot of pressure out there on people. So my journey carried on, you know, having two children, I ended up having two kids back to back pretty much and it was a stressful time and unfortunately my only way of coping with stressful situations was to drink or to take drugs. And I probably had a good period around then where I found a way of coping, of just drinking just enough to maintain work, to be responsible with the kids, to support them, their mum. It felt to me like I was doing the best I could and it was sufficient, but actually, I don't...I think she was particularly unhappy and quite quickly the relationship broke down in a shorter timescale than my mum and dad split up, so it was one of these really frustrating things for me that I always...I guess I always compared myself to my dad. And I didn't want to be like him, I wanted to do a better job than him and so that was a real...that actually gave me a lot of fight. I ended up going and getting a detox not that long after.

I'll take you back actually. I actually got my first detox, well my only detox actually, with the NHS before I met the kid's mum. So I'd really had been trying prior to that to get well. And the big thing about the detox in the NHS was they spent...they did a great job and I got sober. They gave me tablets to keep me sober. But there was very little aftercare. And very little ongoing support, so I just went out back to the same house, back to the same relationships, back to the exact same situation. So my world hadn't changed, all that happened was I'd been given a safe detox from alcohol.

After I split up with their mum, I kept on trying and I went and got lots of sessions of CBT back with the community addictions team, and I just kept on trying. And I'd get periods of sobriety but again into another relationship and when that one broke down, it felt like it was breaking down because of my behaviour under the influence. That was my final straw and I picked up a helpline and someone recommended a rehab. At the time, we'd just been doing the kitchen up and I had some money put aside for that, and there was....and actually just all of a sudden made sense, and I applied for rehab. And it was expensive, you know? I did at the same time, I obviously phoned my doctor and they said come and see me I'll give you an appointment for next week. I can't remember what the community

addictions team said, I think they offered a drop in to be fair, but I'd had a bad experience and I couldn't imagine why it would be different this time from my previous experiences.

So when I spoke to the person on the helpline and it was somebody in recovery. It was somebody that had recovered and I'd never had that before. Any time I'd engaged with services I'd never actually met anyone who'd recovered. So that made a big difference. I really felt that the person on the end of that helpline understood and they shared a lot back about their journey and it actually gave me that little bit of hope for the first time and I thought I need to do this. It just felt right and off I went to the rehab. And it cost money, and it was a shame, but it was an investment in myself I saw at the time.

So, when I got to the rehab I didn't know what I was walking into but once I got there and had paid the money, it was a 12 step programme and I could only afford two weeks and that was by scrambling and asking friends and family to help, money going on credit cards and then once I actually got in there straight away I realised that two weeks was no where near enough. And it was a 12 step rehab, they...well it wasn't strictly a 12 step rehab but that's kinda the model that they...and I didn't really understand what that was. I'd been to an AA meeting before and I'd seen the word God on a scroll and I thought awkward, this isn't for me. Cause I'd had such an issue historically with that. I just probably wouldn't of gone if I'd known that. But once I was there and someone actually explained it a bit better and I'll be honest, I was there and I was so desperate and sometimes people call it the gift of desperation.

At this point I've got my kids to think about. So although I didn't manage at that point that having kids alone hadn't got me sober, it became another factor that it really did help me with my personal motivation to give this thing another go. And in that rehab was great, the staff were all lived experience, everyone you met, I think the exception of one person in that rehab who was a great guy and had family experience and had loads of experience, I don't think he had personal but you know, that's a really high ratio! So to be surrounded by people who had all recovered was really inspirational and you were able to ask them any question and trust that their answer was going to be a solid one from a place of honesty and a place of experience rather than from textbook, you know?

I was there for 28 days in the end. In there I got my first opportunity to actually cry about my mum. And that was...and I think grief is such a big part of my story and such a big part of so many people's story. And I pushed all the emotions so deeply down I just didn't like looking at it so it was great to have that opportunity to get that release and I still don't think I do it very well, I still think I push down the emotions but I'm much better at it. It just gave me that safe space to start going actually, you need help, proper help. And that's my big thing with people who are trying to overcome addictions in that you need to talk things through. You need to go get help and you need other people to help you, you can't do it alone. And I got that, and unfortunately it cost me a lot of money but it was worth it.

When I was there as well, my key worker sort of...I remember at that time thinking aw I smoke dope every day, I'll never be able to stop smoking dope. I can probably kick the drink and the hard drugs but...and also at that point I went in thinking I had an alcohol problem and it was only in there that I realised I used a substance every single day in my life. I'd been on tv for legalising Cannabis, I never saw that as a problem. Although my behaviour around always making sure I had a joint available, like...like cancelling holidays in case I couldn't get a smoke when I was there, like really extreme stuff. Going and knocking on people's doors in the middle of the night for a joint before bed because I thought I couldn't sleep if I didn't have a joint. So I never really...I think I really convinced myself that Cannabis wasn't a problem and actually it was.

So in that rehab I got to identifying myself as an addict at the time and the stigma around that word but it was the first time I realised it wasn't just drink or drugs and even then it wasn't either the drink or the drugs that were the problem but it was all the painful things that were the problem. They were the

things that were causing my harm.

So I had a really great experience from then on. I was really lucky. Unfortunately my relationship didn't work out and I ended up staying on a friend's sofa for a long time, I was unemployed, and that gave me the opportunity to go to lots and lots of meetings and it was great. I ended up doing a lot of fellowship meetings and I was really lucky because I was in Glasgow I was spoiled for choice. I tried them all and locally and further away. I tried SMART, I tried a little bit of everything to see what suited me and I actually it was really great, even though I still had some issues around some of the stuff around 12 steps I just did what I was told for the first time.

And it really, it took me a wee while but...yeah, straight away I felt like I was welcome and it was great every day being able to hear other people on the same journey as me and hearing from people every day who had great lives now and great hope. And it's a shame that so many of those people are hidden from society because there's so many great stories of recovery out there that are in these fellowships and I guess from then on by doing that and putting my recovery first I was lucky, I just focused on that.

I did this thing...they talk about this aftercare plan that you often get. And I actually did it. And when I speak to people that I try and support now, so few people do it and if they don't do it, they don't write down what they're doing every day and fill up their time because at the start of my recovery journey for me, time was against me. If I had time on my own I got stuck in my head again and I started to worry and I hadn't started to really master some of those tools, especially meditation. It took me a long time to understand the power of meditation and slow myself down and slow my thinking down.

Yeah, it was good and I did really just throw myself into my recovery and I always had other things at this time and then I started picking off little bits and pieces of debt, my housing problem, and in my relationships, I started going around trying to make up for some of the harms that I'd done. It was great, because by focusing on my recovery first and foremost and really doing that thing...one of the best things you get from the 12 step fellowships is this idea of keeping it in the day. Just a day at a time.

And by doing that, before I knew it, I was getting great voluntary opportunities. I got some training with North West Recovery Community, they put me on a COSCA course, then I started volunteering with the job centre, that then led me onto a job. And before I got to that point, I also got around about that time I also engaged with Elevate again in Glasgow and they started giving me some employability support. So, you know, for my CV to interview training. So all of a sudden, I was finding then that my life was getting pretty busy between volunteering and the good thing was the job centre supported all that volunteering as well, as long as I was dead honest. And that was the thing, I started trying to be as honest as I could be with everybody and that was really a major shift because my life had had a lot of little white lies. Nothing really bad or brutal but it was a kind of culture shift that needed to happen in me.

So yeah getting all that employability support and getting all that stuff led to me getting a job and I got a job with the Department of Work and Pensions. It was actually...the title was Drug and Alcohol Community Partner and it was quite a unique role and it was only for a year and effectively my job was to go in and train staff on what addiction and recovery was. And that was a lovely job and I really loved it because all I had to do was go in and tell them my story like what I've done here and talk about different recovery models and the options that might be around their nearest job centres for the local staff. And it was really great and I got to do some work trying to help set up a group which is still running to this day, I'm really proud of the work that we all did together in that.

Yeah, so, yeah...my journey kind of sped up quite quickly and before I knew it I was getting to a little less meetings because my kids were back in my life. I'd always looked after my kids 50/50 with their

mum so as soon as I got myself a house again the kids were back fully with me and all of a sudden my life was really busy and I guess this is the thing that you hear about recovery capital or social capital where all these things that actually my self-esteem was coming back, my self-belief was coming back, I was getting new educations so my life was becoming full. It was great and before I knew it I was applying for other jobs and one of the...right at the end of that first year with community partners I applied for Scottish Families and I always admired Scottish Families and I realised as well that my own children...I also went to Love and Light for a while with the kids and it was really good to sort of see that whilst I was...it gave me a place to go on a weekend where my kids were entertained and I was still getting to do some recovery which is really great for me. And the kids were having a laugh and making new friends.

My kids have been a really important part of my journey and I remember really clearly the way they would jump in the early recovery that if I opened a can of Coke they'd run through to check it wasn't a beer and I realised that I had...at a very young age, they were only 3 or 4 at the time and they were young but they'd obviously been impacted...or we'd walk past one of the local pubs where I lived in Glasgow and they would just say 'Dad you don't go there anymore!' It was just little things that you just realised that...because I used to pick them up from school and take them to the park and I'd be sitting there in the park going God, let's get out of here quick as possible and hoping it was like 10 minutes and they wanted to be there for an hour and I was like 10 minutes and then we'd been in the pub for an hour. I kept drawings and pens and pencils for the kids to be entertained behind the bar.

So my addictions definitely impacted on my children, so it was really lovely to start seeing them recognising that and they've been with me...so I was aware of Scottish Families, I knew that my children probably may need some support but actually do you know, I think we've got a really healthy relationship now and yeah, it's really good.

And of course my career's now landed me with Scottish Families and I'm so grateful so be working with this organisation and my job is just...it's started off really well and it's actually letting me really explore some of my stuff again as well. I feel really supported and because a lot of what we talk about in the Connecting Families team and across the organisation is that families have to look after themselves first. And that's something that I'm starting to learn about myself as well and I am getting really well supported for doing that. I want to be there to support families and for them to support their loved ones, so it's a really lovely culture. And it's been a really great journey, do you know. And I'm still passionate about recovery, I still get involved wherever I can.

### **Rebecca:**

Thank you for being so honest because I think all the way through that obviously I've stayed quiet this whole time but that's because I felt I had to stay quiet! A lot of the things you said made me sad or made me smile or made me laugh at times as well. It's a very honest, very raw experience.

I think one thing that really sort of I felt with you was that came from it was you sort of learned to love yourself. And that was a big change wasn't it? Because we spend a lot of time as humans trying to please other people and trying to look after the people around us and we forget about ourselves and I think that happens a lot as well with people who are trying to get into recovery. They're really not putting themselves first, they're still saying I need to get recovered for 'insert someone else's name' they never say it's for me, they say they want to do it for their mum or for this. I think that's so important that you put yourself first but it is just hard to do that. It can be quite difficult, you might feel selfish about it.

And when you started you said you felt all this shame and you kinda think where did that come from?

What made you think of that in your head and you mentioned the media but it is stigma isn't it? Because everything concerning alcohol, drugs, addiction, all of those things there's always a very dark stigma around it, separation I guess of people. If people have got an alcohol or drug problem they're very much separate from what society sees and that in itself goes onto you as a person and it makes you think completely different, so.

**Tich:**

On that, you made me think, I think a good way to sum it up about the problem we have in society around stigma is that my local pub was great but the landlady was really against drugs. So there were some pubs in my local area that drugs were part and parcel with the drug culture there but this one particular pub I'd go to I wouldn't go and do coke in the toilets there because I kinda respected the landlady but I did it every now and again probably more than I should admit because she might listen to this – hello Elaine!

But yeah, that was something that was interesting to me. I kinda identified it that I could go to the pub and it was no problem to drink until they said you've had too much – if they said that. I used to have to go and walk around the corner, quite far away from some of the pubs because I was smoking grass and it stunk and even really wary of walking back to the pub that other people would smell me and smell the weed off my breath. So, yeah it's interesting isn't it.

**Rebecca:**

It is, it's very interesting.

So just before we started this podcast we were speaking about paths to recovery and you rightly pointed out that path is a weird word and I've been thinking about it and you're absolutely right because when you say path it's as if it has a starting point and an end point but when it comes to recovery itself there's a lot of sort of skipping off other paths, joining others, taking a few steps forward, taking a few steps back, falling down, somebody coming along and pulling you up, you know it's all over the place.

I think what I would say is as it's recovery month, you spoke about how you tried a lot of times to get help and I think that story will resonate with so many people because you do always try. Sometimes you read 'all you need to do is reach out' and sometimes you do that but the help isn't what you need and it can be really actually quite tough to get the help you personally need.

For it being recovery month and if somebody was to listen to this who maybe feels that their alcohol or drug use is really quite bad and they have sort of said I need help now – where would they begin, where would you sort of suggest for somebody to go to? Just because you spoke a lot about it was really peer support with you that helped put you on the right path and getting to hear people's stories because I think there's that trust isn't there that if the person that's helping you has been through it all as well you can trust them. So, sort of just where, where could somebody begin?

**Tich:**

So like you say, I picked up a helpline, I just googled. That was my starting point. Prior to that I went my doctor, and I would always recommend people go to their doctor, if you haven't done that yet, if you haven't engaged with the NHS because there's a lot of guys I do support through fellowships now and through other means and perhaps have relapsed and they're back on the phone to me and I'm going have you spoke to your doctor and they're like no. So I would always...maybe the NHS and your local

doctor doesn't quite get it right or your local addiction service hasn't sorted you out in the past, but you need to be engaging with them. Because if you want to get to a point for example, if you do need rehab you're going to have to have a decent relationship with your drug worker for that to be any kind of an opportunity for you unless you're in the situation where I found myself, where I had to try and find the money privately to fund that.

But I think there's such a big discussion in Scotland about recognising that...everybody I know, not everybody, but the vast majority of people I know that are in recovery and work in recovery all went to rehab. Recovery in the community is very possible as well, but I'm a big believer that rehabs work and sometimes they don't work the first time, some people need them again and again and again. Just in the same way that other illnesses...they come back and they need to get treatment again and again and again.

I would start by finding out what is available to your local area, now I'm lucky in Glasgow and anywhere in the Central Belt, Edinburgh, any major city. You're going to have recovery options out there, it does get harder in rural areas and I recognise that, but not at all...it doesn't mean they don't exist. I think one of the blessings we've had from Covid is that there is so many...people are online, people have got much better access, there's lots of funds to help people get access to digital equipment so people can join meetings. So yeah, I would start by seeing what your local recovery communities are offering, if there is one. We know that recovery communities are not in every part of Scotland, but they're building them in every part of Scotland if they're not already existing. So your doctor should be able to recommend that to you. You definitely need to get in touch with your addiction services.

But I would also look at 12 step fellowship helplines. That worked for me, it doesn't work for everybody, but it's there. SMART is there as well, that's nation-wide as well. You know, and that's the thing about this, we've kinda got into this worldwide way of recovering as well now. There's actually lots of meetings...I've loved doing meetings online where there's been people from all over the world coming and sharing and that's been really helpful and also I've liked as well that some of the stuff that happens...there's always been a thing for me about borders, parts of Scotland that you might live in one area and work in another, or you're really close to a border area behind two local councils and I think what I recognise as well is that a lot of recovery communities are just really good at helping out anybody that needed help because of Covid all rules were down, we'll just do whatever we can to help you. And I hope that that ethos stays. I hope people go it doesn't matter where you're from, we all live in Scotland, we all have the same NHS.

So yeah, start with your local doctor, local addiction service, try and see what your recovery communities offer, look at 12 step, give it a try, I tried everything and until I found what worked for me. And I had to keep trying, it's not going to feel right first time necessarily and it takes a wee while to get comfortable.

**Rebecca:**

Okay, well thank you so so much and what we'll end on is you obviously work with the exciting Connecting Families team in Scottish Families. Is there anything coming up that you want to share with anybody?

**Tich:**

Yeah, thanks. Well we've just started...we're going into week 3 of our Family Recovery College and it's great, I think you know...for anyone that's out there hearing this for the first time, it's already just after two weeks, the people that are participating are great. I'm learning so much from everybody that's

coming along and sharing their stuff, there's just some lovely things that are being said and actually, we know that from previous Family Recovery Colleges that the bonds that are made and the support networks that come through that are really helpful to families.

Just hearing that you're not alone and you've got support out there, sharing information, sharing techniques, and then through that Recovery College we're trying to educate people, we're trying to give people some of the tools they need to try and support loved ones. We focus a lot on communication, I'm very lucky that I've done my CRAFT training recently and that's been great. Just to understand a bit more about how to communicate better and put ourselves first like you mentioned as well, for families to look after themselves.

So the Family Recovery College has got a lot of that stuff and it's worth looking up on our website for more information and we'll be running them again the next year. So we'll keep running these colleges because they're such a success and they really are a wonderful place for families to get support and actually what we really hope from that is that we try and empower people so that you've got the tools to go right, what do I need in my local area? And that's where the sort of community development aspect of my job comes in and we want to try and help you identify what's great in your area and what you can share with other people to help them because I think that's a good thing about my personal recovery journey is that I found that by helping other people, it kept me well. And I think the same goes for families, you know. By then sharing that this is what works for me, getting busy, organising a local group in your local area, that's the kinda thing you might just need because for me, I know I needed to keep busy and helping others was really useful way of using my time.

So the Family Recovery College has got all that stuff packed into it, so I recommend you check that out. I've also recently been involved with my colleague Debra and Susie in developing a Tackling Stigma and the Power of Kindness workshops, we did that with Highland ADP and that's been really great, and actually I think we're looking at rolling them out a bit wider.

I've been involved in a lot of work about stigma with the Drug Death Taskforce and Scottish Government and its really...and South Ayrshire ADP as well, been involved with them. It's all great work and actually what we recognise is that we need to really put some workshops in to back all this up because it's great acknowledging that we need to tackle stigma, it's great at helping people look at the language they use, but actually what we've discovered is we need to fill that void and that's why the workshops are also about the power of kindness. It's lovely, it's a lovely workshop so I'm really enjoying that. Our next one is on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October and...it's almost at capacity now, so that's why we're having to run extra ones. So that's really good.

I'm just starting to get a bit more involved with some of the work around the Family Recovery Initiative Fund. My colleagues have already been beavering away in that stuff and that's just a fund to help families try and tap into support or create opportunities for other families in their local area. So that's great and that's exciting and again...there's so much to do! Sometimes it's overwhelming and I'm like I want to do this and I want to do that and I'm full of enthusiasm and it's great, you know, I'll get there.

I guess for me, I've just got to be a bit careful and just pace myself because it's so exciting all of the stuff that's happening right now.

**Rebecca:**

So much amazing stuff happening! So yeah, I just want to say thank, a really big thank you for this. I really appreciate this. Thank you!

29/09/2021



**Tich:**

Thank you, thank you very much!

**Exit:**

Thank you for listening, if you're worried about somebody else's alcohol or drug use you can contact Scottish Families on 08080 10 10 11 or by email at [helpline@sfad.org.uk](mailto:helpline@sfad.org.uk). We also have webchat and further information on our website [www.sfad.org.uk](http://www.sfad.org.uk).