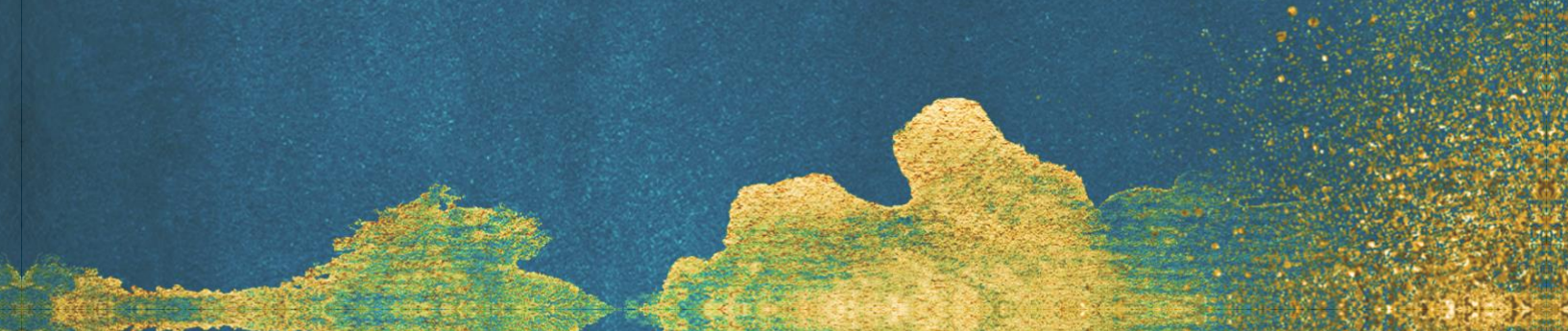




First

*Celebrating Ten Years
of the Residential
Rehabilitation Service
2014 - 2024*



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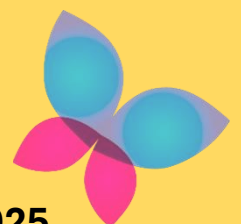
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How it all Started

In early 2014 Fife Council decided to invest £250,000 in residential rehabilitation services, giving Fifiers the opportunity to access this type of intervention when all other avenues had proved fruitless. Following discussions with Fife Alcohol and Drug Partnership Co-ordinator, Mark Steven and others, FIRST submitted a proposal for consideration, outlining what they could provide with the funding. A Residential Rehabilitation Co-ordinator position would be created, with Liz Nardone, a qualified Social Worker with years of addictions experience, seconded over to the role, for what we believed at that stage, would be for one year. Support from Business Manager, Jeanie Nowland and Service Manager, April Adam would be provided to this new service and would be at no cost, meaning FIRST could make maximum use of the funding for purchasing beds. A tendering process then commenced, with residential rehabilitation providers invited to apply. Abbeycare (Glasgow), Phoenix Futures (Glasgow), Jericho House (Dundee/Greenock) and Alexander Clinic (Aberdeenshire) were selected and in May 2014 we were ready to take referrals.

Our First Cohort

From June until August, we had eight clients access who then went on to complete their residential placement – six for drug use and two for alcohol use. Gender split was male 75% with female 25%. Another three clients went to rehab during this timescale but did not complete their programme, however many clients, even if they fail to complete still gain a lot from this intervention and it should be noted that clients can access rehab more than once if they relapse and believe that this will help them.

What has made this Service so Successful

A simplistic but nevertheless effective model of service delivery which was highlighted as an example of good practice by Dundee Alcohol and Drug Partnership in 2019. For our part, robust assessment, thorough preparatory work, ongoing support (pre, during and post rehab) to the clients and their families has been crucial. Continuity of staffing has been a key feature meaning no break in relationships that have already been established, as well as equity of assessment and preparation. In terms of the clients, they need to agree to fully participate in the programme and be prepared to be away from their families and friends for up to six months. The Family Support Group has also played an integral part with clients and their families, pre, during and post rehab being able to come together to share experiences and support each other on a monthly basis here in Fife. Concerns about family members back at home can be a huge distraction for the clients when they should be focusing on their own recovery and by having staff who are in touch with both parties, these concerns can be alleviated and allow for participation in the programme without any anxieties.

Developments over the Decade

Back at the very start of this journey we were only guaranteed funding for one year but were convinced we could make this a success and secure a second year. We promoted the service and spoke to elected members from Fife Council in this regard, outlining how successful the service was, even taking along a client who had completed his rehab programme with us.

Success did come – we managed year on year to support clients to become ready for their residential rehabilitation stays. These individuals worked hard, succeeded and sustained their recovery. The funding continued as a result of this and we were given further investment in 2021. Our referrals increased and we realized in 2023 that this service needed two staff to operate effectively, resulting in Lauren Murphy being appointed to support Liz Nardone with this ever expanding service. Due to additional funding being available across Scotland for rehab facilities more became available which gave us a larger pool of providers to choose from.

We now have clients who have been enjoying recovery for up to a decade. All their hard work and determination has enabled this, as has the efforts and commitment of the FIRST staff team. The personal recovery stories included in this publication will evidence this.

Personal Recovery Stories over the Years

Tommy (completed rehab in Jan 2015)

In 2018 Tommy wrote:

Is it what you expected? No – better!

What part of the programme did you find most enjoyable? I liked it all, even going through my detox. But learning to live clean and sober was best.

What part of the programme did you find the most difficult? Getting your behaviours pointed out. The Encounter Group.

How did Liz's support help you during the full rehab process? It was very intensive work to prepare me for Phoenix. Regular reviews and meetings during the residential stay. She helped me start the Peer Recovery Group (now Fife Recovery Group) after I left.

And most important of all, how has your life changed since leaving rehab? I am now thirty-three months completely abstinent, which I never thought was possible. I have a great relationship with my family and wee mancub. I was employed for nine months as a trainee Addiction Worker.

2025 and today I am ten years clean and sober and working as a Recovery Co-ordinator at Change Grow Live (CGL), West Lothian. I am just back from Tenerife after a week with my son Riley, these are the gifts of my recovery.

Lee (completed rehab in Jan 2017)

In 2018 Lee wrote:

Is it what you expected? No, I thought it would be more laid back.

What part of the programme did you find most enjoyable? Groupwork, finding out that I wasn't alone and other people felt the same way I did.

What part of the programme did you find the most difficult? Building relationships with people because I had isolated myself for so long.

And most important of all, how has your life changed since leaving rehab? It has done a complete 360. I have gained a qualification in education. I am currently doing my SVQ Level 3 and a counselling course. I am back in my kids and family's lives building back relationships with them. I have friends who support me and I do the same for them

Without FIRST and Phoenix, I don't think I would even be here. It has enabled me to stay in recovery. Giving my family peace of mind and giving my kids their dad back. **For the first time in twenty-five years, I see a life for myself and a future I am excited about.**

It's now 2025 – I've been around recovery since leaving treatment and am now over seven years absinent. After going back to construction initially, I've now been working in the care field for around four years. I've worked for Phoenix Futures Fife as a trainee Addictions Worker before moving into work in the Scottish Recovery Consortium, a national organisation. In my current role I work as a hospital A&E Navigator in Victoria Hospital. I'm in the process of doing my COSCA Counselling 1 to 4 and start my HNC in Counselling at Kirkcaldy College in August. My relationships with my family and friends have gone from strength to strength. I will be volunteering in Romania again this June with an international aid agency, working closely with people who experience real struggles and poverty. This will be my third trip to Romania. As well as this I have volunteered in Belarus working with people less able, and orphans to help provide a short holiday for them away from their normal daily living. As always I look to the future with gratitude, thanks in a massive way to FIRST.

Viki (completed rehab in Feb 2020)

What FIRST did for this Fifer

I had a FIRST worker for a few years, but I didn't really know how to use her properly. I didn't realise the true nature of where my using had taken me. Everyone could see that I was at the end of the line and was heading for an early death. Everyone but me that is. Denial is a big part of active addiction. It is one of the things that protects us from the truth.

The truth was that I couldn't stop - that I had never been clean one single day in my entire adult life. I began drinking and smoking weed at 14 and by the time I was 46 I was knee deep in IV heroin addiction and had been for decades. I had burned all my bridges, amassed a long criminal record, survived many fatal overdoses, car crashes and even an attempt on my life. I was mixing with dangerous people. I had traumatised my only child, who had spent periods with her dad and with foster carers. Everyone who loved me had been my hostage and they were all hurting. The worst thing was the way I felt about me: self-hatred is a very painful and dark place to live. Loss of all hope can be deadly.

I did not know how to express my emotions and often didn't really know what I was feeling anyway. Somehow, I had missed these types of life lessons. And I did not have the ability to be honest with anyone deeply, because I could not be honest with myself. I knew how to put a front on and pretend I was alright "brand new" in fact.

I am so very lucky that Christine my worker and then Liz, who was to become my care manager, knew enough to see through that! I am so lucky that FIRST never gave up on me despite my sporadic attendance and a year-long wait for an operation. I wanted to go in to rehab while I was on the waiting list, because I didn't even understand that the pain medication pre and post op was feeding my addiction!! That is how little I knew. Patiently, over that year Liz came and visited me at home, supporting not only me but my daughter who was by then in her late teens and finishing high school. As she tried to concentrate on Highers and college applications, I could not fully comprehend the trauma that she was living in - the trauma I was inflicting! Liz understood all of this, though she never judged me. Always she told me the truth, framed with kindness.

And I went through my large neurosurgery and slowly healed enough to go into rehab 13 weeks later. Liz said to me once “You do understand that they are going to break you down to build you back up?”. I laughed, and said “Plenty of people have tried to break me” to which she replied, “It’s ok saying that sitting here”! No-one did break me down, yet I had to allow myself to break in order to build myself back up from scratch.

The guilt and shame, I was carrying a heavy weight of guilt and shame (especially around my parenting) - it was really crippling and very painful. I had to start to get real about what kind of mother I had been and the harms that I had caused my family. I also found that my mental health was all over the place, with extremely intrusive thinking (and at times suicidal ideation). I could not trust anyone easily. I also found myself to be living in a very heightened state of anxiety constantly, this was a trauma response, but I hadn’t understood any of this then. On top of this, I found that physically I was very badly damaged and had been ignoring my health conditions for years or just plain denial about them.

There is no way that I could have begun to deal with all these aspects of myself, without going into residential rehabilitation. Although it was hard to be challenged and lose control over my life and my choices, it really was what I needed - space and time to heal and recover and people who knew better than me to show me the way. I was a danger to myself, and the truth was that I had lost any choice many years before anyway. I was using against my will!

So, in August 2019 I went into Phoenix House. I ripped up my life in Inverkeithing and took a huge leap of faith, but I was desperate by then. That made me very determined! I have never used nor drank since. I am over five and a half years completely clean and abstinent now and I can hardly believe the way my life looks! I work part time in Community Development for a mental health and wellbeing organisation. And I work a lot in early recovery settings. My experience has become my biggest asset! I have found out who I am, what I like and what I am good at.

For the moment I am truly content - I can hold my head up and I am very proud of me. Although I have stayed in Glasgow, my daughter is still in our family home which I signed over to her. Our relationship is slowly mending, and I am back and forwards from West to East. My heart lies in Fife but my recovery and my life, for now, are in Glasgow. Who knows what the future holds? I dream of coming home to Fife at times, and perhaps I will in the future.

Society had written me off and I had written myself off too. I believed I would die using drugs. The saddest thing is that I had accepted this! I will never truly be able to express my thanks to FIRST for funding the rehab bed for me, for taking a chance on me and investing in me - for saving my life! Liz Nardone specifically, for her time and her patience - for seeing something in me which I had lost sight of.

If you cannot stop using or if you cannot handle life without using or drinking, and you are one of the few, lucky enough to be offered a place. TAKE IT! Don't look back, just go. The rest will fall into place.

Steven McG (completed rehab in March 2016)

In 2018 Steven wrote:

I have just finished my COSCA Counselling Course and I am in the final stages of completing my SVQ Level 3 Health and Social Care. I am currently a trainee Addiction Worker and have been employed for the past year with Phoenix Peer Mentoring Service. I also recently won the Commendable Employee of the Year Award at the Scottish Mentoring Awards. I travelled to Prague last year and spent three weeks volunteering for the Kindergarden Service and ended up working with Army Salvation helping the homeless, needle exchange and street teams. It also gave me the unique opportunity to learn and share knowledge and experiences of rehab. I have been in my own flat for two years and am getting on great and, best of all, building relationships with my family. A lot of this has happened in the past year and shows what can be accomplished with hard work and that anyone has the ability to achieve their goals.

I think that covers all the big achievements I have had in the last year but most importantly, its maintaining my recovery that I'm really proud about. This being done through sharing honestly with my small group of friends that I have built up and trust over the past three years and with the help of my colleagues, family and the fellowship.

2025 – I have continued to work within the third sector supporting others in addiction and recovery. I presently work with an organisation that supports people with current lived/living experience and by amplifying their voices - the group help shape and influence the development of services both at local and national levels across Scotland.

I recently moved back home to Fife after spending seven years in Glasgow - this was to be closer to my family and also my partner who I will marry later on in the year.

Joanne (completed rehab in Feb 2017)

In 2017 Joanne wrote:

I was a heroin addict from the age of twenty-one until the age of thirty-four. I was a complete drain on my community. I didn't work, I didn't pay my taxes and I was a thief along with other things.

*In 2016 I was given the chance to go to rehab, Phoenix Futures after losing custody of my daughter. I jumped at the chance. I went into Phoenix on 4th August 2016. I stayed clean and completed the programme and **I have been clean and sober ever since**. I left rehab on 11th February 2017 and moved into my own flat and was given custody of my daughter; I am now engaged to a wonderful man who is also in recovery and I start working on the 10th June as a trainee worker with SDF and I can't wait.*

*I no longer have to beg, borrow and steal to get by. I am now a responsible member of society. I can take care of my own family and life is good. I look forward to family holidays instead of children's panels, shopping with my daughter instead of shoplifting to feed my habit and coffee at friend's houses instead of injecting heroin into my groin around my dealer's house. **I would have none of this if it weren't for FIRST funding rehab for me**, as there was no way I could have afforded it myself. I'd tried for many years to get clean in the community and for me, personally, it just wasn't working. I needed to be taken out of my environment. **Rehab does work, I know many people who are living proof of this, including me.***

2025 – I am nine years clean and working within the homeless communities in Glasgow. I have been employed for many years and I have studied and worked my way up to a senior position. I have a growing family, I'm getting married in September and my daughter is due to give birth any day. I'm excited for this next chapter. My life and recovery is amazing.

Neil (completed rehab in Sept 2016)

My name is Neil and I've been in recovery for almost ten years now. This journey simply wouldn't have been possible without the help and support I received initially in Fife, primarily DAPL and FIRST. Before I reached out for help, I was rock bottom. My lifestyle was chaotic fuelled by drug addiction and riddled with homelessness and crime resulting in long periods in prison.

My life took a 360 turn when my care manager (Liz) went out of her way to find me funding for rehab as there wasn't any available at the time. I always thought to myself this wonderful woman has gone out of her way and believed in me when no one else did and I was determined to show her that I would make it through the other end and put the hard work in and change my life for the better, I owed her that.

I was enrolled into a six-month therapeutic residential programme at a rehab in Glasow called Phoenix Futures and from day one, I grabbed my opportunity with both hands as I wanted this life changing opportunity more than anything.

This was an experience that opened my eyes not just to addiction but also the underlying issues surrounding addiction and I finally knew that I was in the right place for the help and support I required so I grabbed it with both hands and never looked back.

So where am I now? Upon completing Phoenix I relocated to Glasgow where I volunteered with The Celtic Foundation and was then offered a contract, Celtic were another organisation who helped save my life along with FIRST, Phoenix and DAPL and for that I will be forever grateful.

I now work as a football reporter and this weekend I'll be covering both Semi Finals at Hampden Park. I was working at the European Championships in Germany last summer covering Scotland's fixtures and I travel all over the country reporting at football matches.

I don't hang around chemists or police stations these days, I spend my time hanging around football stadiums and press boxes all over the country and beyond and have all my friends and family back in my life. Simply put, FIRST saved my life and now I AM LIVING THE DREAM.

Steven B (completed rehab in Sept 2019)

In 2020 Steven wrote:

My name is Steven Bett. I am thirty years old. I had been using cocaine for thirteen years before I got the chance to go to Phoenix Futures for residential rehab. When I first started taking cocaine, I never had a problem with it and actually enjoyed it. However, that didn't last long. I think around the age of twenty-one is when it started to become a problem. At this time, I met and married a girl but due to my addiction, this never lasted long. I tried a few things to get myself off of it, but nothing worked. I even moved to Malta but the drinking and drug culture there was just as bad as back home. For about four months prior to entering rehab, I worked closely with Liz Nardone from FIRST. She prepped me and told me what I was going to do. My life was very unmanageable the year leading up to Phoenix. Constantly coked out of my face, missing work, wishing I was no longer here. I went into Phoenix on 27th March 2019 and right away, bought into the programme. It's all about behavioural change and challenging people's behaviours. The programme showed me a new way of life and gave me the tools to deal with situations that life throws at you and to do it without taking drugs.

I am now approaching fourteen months clean and sober and I've built up a great relationship with my family and peers in Glasgow. I'm no longer that shy, shutdown little boy. I have goals for the future. They are:

- *to stay drug free*
- *to keep strengthening the bond with my family*
- *to get back to work after lockdown*
- *to meeting someone and raise a family*

2025 - Reading what I wrote back when I left rehab makes me so proud. I've achieved every one of the goals I set myself and I couldn't have done it without FIRST helping me get into treatment. I am now a married man with three children and my relationship with my family has never been better. Liz and the team do a fantastic job. .

David (completed rehab in March 2021)

In 2018 David wrote:

Is it what you expected? I never knew what to expect. I just wanted to get better. It was harder than I thought.

What part of the programme did you find most enjoyable? Being part of the community, feeling included. **Not being alone anymore.**

What part of the programme did you find the most difficult? I found having my negative behaviour pointed out and having to change these the hardest but the best part of my time in rehab.

How did Liz's support help you during the full rehab process? Liz was a massive influence on my time in rehab. Before, during and after – she was always there for me to call on her for support.

And most important of all, how has your life changed since leaving rehab? My life has changed beyond recognition. I have done things I had only dreamed of. New lifestyle, holidays, family, girlfriend. We recently bought a house together. **All the dreams I had when in rehab have come true!**

Going to rehab was the best thing I have ever done in my life, although it was the hardest thing I have ever done. I am now reaping the rewards of all the hard work that I put in.

If anyone is struggling with addiction issues and feels there is no way out, I would recommend rehab to them. I am living proof that dreams can come true and that rehab works!!

2025 and David is doing well and is still in recovery.

Cas (completed rehab in Oct 2021)

Before I went to residential rehab my life was chaotic. I was using drugs every day and I was pretty much homeless. I was living couch to couch at anyone's home. I was in a dark place mentally, physically and emotionally. I felt I wasn't part of my family, I couldn't see my daughter because of my drug use. I used to text my mum every day just to let her know I was still alive, that's all she needed from me and I had nothing else to give. My relationship with my stepfather became non-existent and my family were always waiting on the dreaded phone call to say I was dead.

A friend of mine spoke to me about residential rehab. He had been in rehab and he was now two years clean and I had seen such a change in him and thought 'I want that'. I self-referred to FIRST during COVID and had phone appointments every week with Liz who then took me into Phoenix Futures for six months. Phoenix Futures saved my life. It took me out of my environment, it got me clean and the staff done so much for me, they went over and above. I built good friendships in there and I will be forever grateful for that place.

Today, I'm living the life I always wanted. The life I seen others living and always wished I could have, 'just a normal life'. I've gained employment, my own home but most importantly, I've got my freedom, peace and contentment. I have a wonderful family and today I feel part of that family. I spend quality time with my wee lassie and she looks at me like I'm a superhero. Life can't get better than that.

Ali (completed rehab in August 2024)

I used drugs for twenty-three years. During that time, I had tried various ways to stop. Sometimes I would manage to stop for short periods and have another run at life. Then I would use for 'one more time' but that would always end in failure. Losing everything, ending up homeless and back to using all mind and mood altering substances, just so I didn't have to face up to my reality.

During my last run in 2023, Addicition Services referred me into FIRST and the workers there gave me a glimmer of hope. I was done with using but I needed to find another way. I didn't want another 'one more time'. I was forty-three years old and it had to be 'this time'. The decision was made to go into treatment in May 2024. Initally I was supported by Cara at FIRST and then Liz. I spoke with Liz on a weekly basis on the lead up to rehab. Their empathy and understanding kept my hope alive as at that point, I could barely function and I was riddled with fear and anxiety when I stepped out the front door.

I went into Abbeycare treatment centre on 13th May 2024. I learned about the 12-Step Recovery programme. I worked with therapists, attended groupwork and CBT therapy. I made up my mind to join a certain fellowship as soon as I left. After rehab I was also put on a waiting list for Psychology through Lauren at FIRST. Lauren supported me when I came out of treatment along with my sponsor in fellowship. I made new drug free friends and it's been a reality shift. The whole experience saved my life and now I show up in life for myself, other people and my family. My family don't need to worry about that the next phone call they get about me will be a devastating one. I believe hope kept me going and alive. Faith keeps me clean. Thank you.

Laura (completed rehab in April 2025)

From the initial day Gemma from FIRST contact me after my referral I felt supported and most importantly, didn't feel alone. When I was drinking it was a very lonely and isolated place. Gemma helped me organise help from various different people and other organisations. We had scheduled weekly calls and regularly met in person but I knew if I needed help or support with anything that I could call or message Gemma and that she would be there for me. I started to attend the FIRST peer support regularly on a Tuesday and Thursday. I would never have attended something like this without the support from Gemma. It helped me see that there was much more to life than the horrible lonely situation I had become stuck in as a result of my alcohol addiction. I attended various groups run by Paul at FIRST; community peer support, mindfulness classes, outdoor activity programs and FIRST also introduced me to and educated me on the different fellowships available in my area.

I was then introduced to Lauren and started to make the steps to prepare myself for rehab and life back home after rehab. The things I learnt at rehab have taught me all about the disease of addiction and how to live a full and happy life whilst continuing to overcome my addiction. They offered me support to secure suitable housing when I left rehab and Liz was a brilliant support and help whilst I was in rehab. We had regular reviews with the rehab facility and my workers within rehab but I knew anytime I needed to speak to Liz or help with anything whilst I was in rehab I could just pick up the phone. I did this on a few occasions whilst in rehab and Liz was always there to help resolve any issues. I will be forever grateful to everyone at FIRST who has helped me in my recovery journey so far and I will continue to attend the community groups. I have no doubt that the help and support from everyone at FIRST has helped save my life and given me a positive way out of the depths of despair my addiction had taken me.

Jo (completed rehab in March 2024)

My name is Jo and I first went into recovery in 2010. At that point my addiction consumption was one bottle of wine. Fast forward to 2023 and I was consuming 70cl of gin and a bottle of wine a day.

In the beginning alcohol gave me a warm glow, confidence, helped me sleep, improved my mood, helped me concentrate, helped me chat up guys, helped me dance, made me feel free, funny and lighter **In the end** alcohol gave me suicidal attempts, panic attacks, the shakes, nausea and sickness, fear, self-loathing, hospital admissions, detoxes, regret and remorse. It changed my whole life, personality. Affected everyone around me in a negative way. It took everything from me and nearly took my life. I tried everything – counselling, changing jobs, tried control drinking, - nothing worked until I **ACCEPTED** I was an alcoholic and could not drink.

I went into Nova Recovery Centre in Blackpool for three months with **FIRST**. I felt safe, connected, enjoyed the classes, meetings and therapy. I worked on my trauma. Unfortunately, due to illness I had to leave treatment early and return to Scotland. I was angry about this as it was outwith my control. Not in my plan. I ended up in hospital in Fife. That was March 2024. I went to local AA and CA meetings. Found a sponsor but I couldn't accept that I could not drink. Relapse after relapse. Finally after wanting to die in September 2024 I reached my rock bottom and surrendered. I reduced my drinking which was hideous and I was terrified I'd have a seizure, I didn't thank god. I had my last drink on 16th September 2024. Since then I attended AA and CA. I haven't taken drugs but love CA as it's all inclusive and talks about the solution which is outlined in the big book of Alcoholics Anonymous the 12-Step programme. I started working on acceptance, looking at what drink has done to me, opened up about my emotions and trauma and looked at the 12 steps.

I'm over six months sober and miracles happen as I no longer see alcohol as my solution. I hardly think about drink. If I'm upset or angry I speak to someone in recovery. By stopping one single thing, my life has completely changed for the better.

I'm so grateful to have working with my keyworker Bill and Liz from FIRST prior to rehab and the aftercare. For the first time in years I'm content and looking forward to things rather than constantly beating myself up.

For someone like me who drank 24/7 or thought about it obsessively to lift that first drink would be deathly. It would set off an incredible compulsion and a craving so strong I'd wish I was dead.

The glossy adverts you see with the 'nice' wine for me is death. It's poison. I never want to return to the hell of active addiction. Alone in a room, unwashed, mentally unstable thinking of suicide.

Life is hard. I have a chronic health condition that causes me pain but having a drink won't help that. Going to a meeting, talking about how I feel helps. I have gratitude in my life now every single day good, bad or indifferent, I'm grateful the obsession of alcohol has been removed.

How does addiction affect the family?

Lauren's Story

I was in heroin addiction for several years and couldn't get clean. I had tried drug replacement treatment and working with many Counsellors, but nothing had helped. */ felt utterly hopeless.*

My drug use had got so bad it was having serious issues on my physical and mental health. I had been admitted to hospital three times in the last few years and almost died, and thought death was going to be my fate.

I had a beautiful son and a loving family who always tried to support and help me and yet I still couldn't change for the people I loved. I knew my drug use was causing my family so much pain and I could barely look after myself, let alone my son in the way that I wanted to. I was so fortunate to have my mum who helped look after my son. I desperately wanted to stop for my loved ones and myself but I just couldn't. */ was in hell.*

After failed attempt after failed attempt and one more trip to hospital, I met Liz from FIRST who offered me a real solution, a chance to go to rehab (Phoenix Futures) and get clean in a safe and secure environment away from my community and all the risks around me that had always prevented me staying clean.

I was scared and anxious about the prospect of going to Phoenix. I didn't want to leave my son and go to a strange place with new people, but I knew it was a great opportunity and the only thing I had never tried *and I knew I had to give it my all.*

An opportunity to hear both perspectives

I can't remember too much of what happened and what was said at my visit to rehab, but I do remember how I felt. I remember feeling overwhelmed at the noise and the business and lots of people talking. I hadn't spent much time in groups of people for a long time and I felt anxious to be around so many people. However, I did feel a sense of 'I can do this'. It felt alien but a feeling of determination kicked in. If all the other people here in rehab could do it, perhaps I could too.

Rehab was nothing like I had ever experienced before. You had to be up early every morning and on the floor to be put to work. I was kept really busy with the structure and routine of the house. I always looked forward to my weekly visits from my son and my mum. I looked at a lot of my issues in rehab as well as getting clean for the first time.

Since leaving rehab I returned to education and have just finished my HNC in Social Sciences. I also completed my student placement at FIRST, which is where I began my journey into recovery, so that has been pretty amazing.

My life, family and recovery are amazing today.

I am so grateful to FIRST and Phoenix Futures who have made this possible for me. I wouldn't have the life today, my mum wouldn't have her daughter back and my son wouldn't have the mum he deserves.

Her Mum's Story

I thought my daughter was suffering from depression. *When I found out she was addicted to heroin my world fell apart.*

She changed from a kind loving person into a lying scheming wreck. I couldn't trust her, everything she said was lies. No matter how I tried to help her nothing worked.

I couldn't eat or sleep. There was a big knot in my stomach all of the time.

Some days, I would feel numb and sad. Then comes the worry. She has become my obsession and I start to shut off from everyone else around me. Heroin has took over both our lives and I can't see no way out. *Sadness like I've never felt before. Worry that never stops.*

When I knew Lauren was going to rehab, I cried because nothing had worked before. This was a lifeline. I was so happy she was going to get help.

My first visit to Phoenix, I didn't know what to expect. I found everyone friendly, they all seemed to be helping each other.

I came away knowing Lauren was safe and trying to get better. *This gave me HOPE for the first time in years.*

When Lauren was in rehab, I went to Al-anon meetings and the FIRST/Phoenix Family Support Meetings which both helped me understand what addiction can do and how it can take over someone's life. I know now that it is a sickness.

My daughter is happy and healthy. Now my life is good, now I can smile with her and enjoy our lives together. Gone is the dread and not wanting to be here.

I thank FIRST and Phoenix with all my heart. *Because of them, my daughter is a Survivor.*

FIRST/ Phoenix Family Support Meetings

The montly Family Support Meeting plays a vital part in offering a safe open forum for families to come together and talk about issues that affect them and their family members. This group has enabled those in recovery and those planning to go to rehab to see addiction from the perspective of the family, and allows the family members to develop a better understanding of addiction.

Since my sister has been in Phoenix, my sister-in-law and I have been attending these monthly groups. I have found them to be so helpful. I have a greater understanding of addictions and what my sister has been going through. These meetings have been invaluable, and we will continue to attend after my sister leaves rehab.

Family Support is an amazing group that helps families heal and get an understanding of addiction and recovery.

It really helps with my relationship with my mum. My mum and I get good support from attending. It helps when we meet other families with same issues and give hope that rehab really can work. It lets me hear how my addiction has affected my mother and family ... you see the power of example.

Great place to come to get identification of stories so you can share hard subjects that caused us to use or drink. Lovely meeting with like-minded people.

It is good for me to hear about how addiction has affected our families throughout the years. I never looked at the damage my actions had on my family and loved ones. This group has helped me to build bonds back up with family that I thought I'd never get back. It also gives families an understanding surrounding our behaviours from the past. It's massive to let loved ones know that they are not alone and there is support for them. It's a great place to start, a healing process and build up the bonds and relationships that have been broken.

Attending this group is a great experience. By attending this group, it lifts my spirit. I thoroughly enjoy attending this group and look forward to attending it every four weeks.

This group helps me and my family loads, as we can talk openly and honestly in a safe, controlled environment about my addiction and how it has affected each of us. This group especially helps my family as there's nowhere else really in our area from them to turn to, and they've also lived with the secrecy and shame of my addiction for many years, but at this group they can speak to other parents/family members who are going through the same issues and who understand them.

I found the group very helpful. Encouraging each other. Conversations are a great therapy for family and users.

This group means I have hope and a lot more peace of mind when I see those who have been in recovery for years, doing well and realise it is possible for my daughter to live a happy, drug free life.

What Comes Next?

Recovery Groups

Following the completion of their Programme, some clients choose to remain in the area where this took place, however for those who do choose to return to Fife it is crucial that clients engage in recovery services, with the benefits of doing so highlighted throughout their time in rehab. We now have Lauren Murphy, who contacts the clients immediately on their return to Fife to support them in this. Prior to Lauren's arrival it was staff for our community rehabilitation part of the service who provided this support. Weekly appointments were offered, and clients supported to attend recovery groups and meetings. FIRST offer a range of group programmes for all their clients and these are listed below.

Walk and Talk

A simple but effective activity where people can exercise, take in fresh air and the scenery whilst chatting with peers. Walks take place in country parks, at coastal paths, in forests and other local areas that are safe and away from any congestion.

Conservation

Held at the Stables on the Falkland Estate with support provided from Sam the Ranger, the group have undertaken various projects including clearing the Maspie Burn and cutting back shrubs. They have also built shelters, benches and tables and a FIRST plaque sits proudly on one of their creations. They also uncovered the foundations of the Old Tea House at Scroggie Park and this 'find' was publicized on the Falkland Estate facebook page.

Mindfulness and Meditation

Sessions are held at the Music Institute in Dunfermline and led by Christine Dewart from the Mindful Partnership. These sessions are very relaxing and a great way to relieve tension and anxiety for our participants.

Djembe Drumming

Originally from West Africa, a djembe is a rope-tuned skin-covered goblet drum played with bare hands. This is one of our smaller groups but nevertheless all attendees gain a great deal from attending and enjoy learning something new. Our Drumming Group has previously led the Recovery Walk at various towns and cities including Glasgow and Perth.

Decider Skills (outdoors)

More commonly delivered as an indoor group, this was held outdoors at Falkland Estate in 2024 and involved various activities including Emotional Emergency, Distress Tolerance Skills, Mindfulness Skills, Emotional Regulation and Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills.

Summer Activities

Held on a weekly basis at Lochore Meadows Country Park, this six-session programme has activities including Mountain Biking, Paddleboarding, Canoeing, Abseiling, Orienteering and Coasteering with the Park Ranger supporting us with the sessions.

Summer Activities (female only)

Following on from our client consultation sessions, it was identified that a female only group would be a welcome addition to our Programme. This was duly organised and was spread over six sessions, held weekly. Activities include Botanical Art, Breathe Work and Ice Baths, Rangers Walks and Bushcraft.

Cooking Group (online)

This group was arranged so we could continue to provide a service during the pandemic. Paul Watson, our Groupwork Co-ordinator purchased, portioned and delivered ingredients via doorstep delivery to clients the length and breadth of Fife the afternoon before the group was due to take place. Clients then logged on at the arranged time and Paul taught the group members how to prepare and cook some simple but nevertheless nutritional dishes such as Shepherd's Pie, Toad in the Hole, Pizza and other tasty bites.

Not content with that, the group then decided to compile their own cookery book entitled 'Let's Cook' and this can be viewed online at www.firstforfife.co.uk

Viking Retreat Experience

Clients can experience an ice-cold bath followed by a sauna. This has proved to be extremely popular and up to ten clients can be accommodated at these sessions held at Balmalcolm. There is a real feel-good factor for participants following completion and this can also help with mental health.

Auricular Acupuncture

This involves placing pins in the ears of the participants and sitting quietly for a period. Positive feedback we have received has included reduced cravings, improved sleep, a reduction in anxiety levels and a reduction in withdrawals. We have three trained staff who can deliver these sessions throughout Fife.

Peer Support Meetings

These meetings have been in operation now for ten years and operate fifty-two weeks a year. Recognising the festive period can be a difficult time, there are meetings held over these two weeks which are appreciated by all members. Our Glenrothes meeting which is held at St Luke's Church has a steady attendance ranging from fifteen to twenty-five participants. Auricular Acupuncture sessions are held for those clients who wish to have this, prior to the start of the meeting and during the winter months from October to March, a hot meal is cooked and served to any client who requests this.



Shelter built by the Conservation Group



Viking Heat Retreat



Walk and Talk Group



Djembe Drumming Group



Cooking Group



Peer Support Group

**PHOENIX
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Calderglen House
RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION

**THE
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