

What happened was I, I had a beautiful house up in Dolmen Court and me partner, me partner was on drugs and I got evicted over him so, em, I was just staying everywhere with me six kids, you know with friends and everywhere until I got a hostel off charity, they put me into Lindor Buildings beside the Bridewell, and, em they were horrible, really horrible, they moved travellers in and, em, I got raped.

Em, me two kids were asleep in the bedroom and I brought the Telly out to the other room while they were sleeping and me door got kicked in and about eight travellers came in as well, everything, it was just horrible, just the most horrible experience I ever had. I had only two of me kids with me and I got up, put me two kids, when it was over. Em, I did report it to the Police, and everything, but, em, that night I put me two kids into a Taxi, I took the Taximan's name, gave him 10 Euro, it was a cheque, it was, took his number and I don't know why I done it because in the end I just threw myself in the Liffey and ended up in Brendan's then over what happened to me but there was a Bean Gardai, her name was Lynn she's from Store Street very nice to me she was at the time real supportive and charitable as well.

But em, I start drinking, very bad, very bad, I start drinking 20 to 30 cans a day, you know Budweiser, I never went near Vodka or anything, but em, the drinking led to one thing, neglecting me kids, you know and just leaving them with me sister not paying her money and everything and she used to send them down to me because I used to drink, there used to be a wall over there where the Axis is now and we all used to drink there but, em I do feel like crying when I'm talking about this.

So one, one day they got caught shop-lifting. I got a phone call, the Manager out of Ballymun Shopping Centre came down to me and said "Lynn your kids are in Finglas Police Station, you've to ring them" So I rang them and a Bean Gardai on the other end said to me "Don't bother coming up there gone"

I said "What do you mean they're gone?" She said "They're gone into care" she said. The next morning I met my Social Worker. That Ban Gardai told me lies. They were still there in the Police Station, she just didn't want me to have them. They were put into Peamount, the home, they were put in there and I was brought out two days later to see them. But they were happy but I still got on with me drinking more and more, the alcohol used to blank things out for me you know like things that happened to me and like I'm off heroin now seven years or longer eight, eight years or more I'm off it. But when that happened to me in Lindor Buildings, I really, I used to drink Whiskey, you know, em, Bushmills, I used to drink a bottle of that, with, but after that happened, I just, I don't know, I just loved the drink and then I had to get somewhere to stay because I knew I was going down. I can't but, you know, down with the drink. A few of me friends died and about seven of them in a year. They put me into Abbey Street, they put me in there and it was grand, but, I was still drinking. So I got put out of Abbey Street, got put out of it, got put to the Regina. I stopped, I start, I stopped drinking because me daughter was living with me in the Regina, and I stopped drinking and I went through awful, very bad D.T's. I was after losing me partner, he died from drugs, I lost me Mammy and then losing me friends, you know, it was just, the whole ten years I was homeless, was just an awful, horrible disaster, you know it was like a time-bomb going off in your head.

I used to be down on the Quays, the soup run, it used to be great, they give you blankets if you have none to sleep, you know, I used to sleep at the back of the ILAC, really horrible, but, we'd nowhere else to go. So, we bought a tent a few of us and put it up in the Phoenix Park but we had to hide it from the, em, Control, you know the men that go round in the car and we had to climb over railings to get into it, but, there was you could hear rats and all, you know and I'm terrified of anything like that so I wouldn't go back to it I went back to the ILAC it was o.k for me.

But when me friend died, Joan, I said enough is enough and I was on access visits with the kids and I, I wanted them back and I said F it, that's it, I'm coming off it so I, I was on Methadone so I wasn't so bad if you know what I mean, but it was bad but other people that just come off it without anything could die, you know, I.

I got Aylward Green, do you know Aylward Green? Aylward Green is kind of a, a housing place that. It's something like Sophia Housing only I had to learn to be a mother all over again. I had to learn how to cook, how to wash because I was on me own for so long I had no one to look after. So, I done two years in Aylward Green, that, that was grand I was delighted with it because I got all me kids back you know but I was clean off the drink clean off the heroin and everything and em, I'm still on Methadone, I want to come off it because I'm 43, and I really want to come off it, you know, and it's going to take a long time because I'm on it 25 years. I had a meeting with the Corporation and she told me about Sophia Housing but she said there was rules with it as well, you know. When I moved into Sophia Housing Anne was very good, you know, em, she really helped. I couldn't handle money or anything at that time I hadn't a clue how to handle it because when I was living rough it was just going into the pub for cans of Budweiser. As I said to you I had to learn how to be a mother, and, you know, and cook and this and that because and when I moved into Sophia, with Sophia, Anthony came back, they're all back except for Stephen so I'm cooking like, for a farm, you know, it's mad but I don't mind doing it now, at one stage it would have been a no-go and when I was on the drink I never even thought twice about the kids, do you know, I used to cry now sometimes at night-time thinking of what I done to them I've never hit them or anything but, I did ruin half of their lives. All that I can give them is me love and they know that I love them and my partner he died the 15th of February six years ago, em, he got his leg amputated from the drugs and got a pain through another pain in his stomach and they done another operation and he died under that. But he wasn't missed all the hidings he used to give me and I didn't miss him and it's very harsh words to say, they're very hard to say but I didn't have to look around the corner to see was he there for another hiding. Yeah, and as I was saying like I have six children and most of them weren't planned. You know the first two were planned but the other four were kind of, em, alright, he'd give me a hiding and he'd want sex after it and you know I'd be crying having it. Like I had little (name omitted) and (name omitted) was born with a black eye from a hiding. He was after hitting me with, em, you know an arm off a chair and he got the baby. They asked me what happened me all around here so I told them and he got six months for doing it. Terrified, you know, it was, it made me feel so low, you know, and the sex part made me feel like dirt when I was with him, because as I said, it was a hiding and them "I'm sorry and I love you, and what are you crying for?" you know, I'd say" you're just after giving me a bad hiding." Boots into the face, punches you know like, if he was walking by me I'd be doing nothing and he'd just whack, you know, I don't know how he lost it because I never done anything on him because I was afraid to.

But at the end he left me for an 18 year old girl. He came back to me the Christmas before he died asked me to got back he said "I'm sick" That was the end of that. I don't think if I was still on the drink, I don't think I'd ever, I don't think I'd be here on the Earth. you know, either the drink would have killed me or the cold you know, from sleeping here there and everywhere or I'd have done it meself.

All that I can give them is me love and they know that, I love them and I am surviving and I'm doing a good job. I, I'm on that, I'm on Methadone an awful long, long time but I don't mind, in a way I'm glad, because next year, please God I'm going to start to detox and come off it, but you know, I'm, I've four grand-children, six children of me own. I have to do it for meself and for them and I really want to come off it, you know, I feel, I feel great that I've achieved an awful lot in me life in them ten years I've achieved an awful lot.

I got, em, a job in the Star Project, everything, V-Tech, computers, family law, I have certificates for all of them. But it was, I've twelve certificates, you know, em. I've a degree in law, I got a certificate for law.

You know you wear them hats and coats, yeah, we were brought up to it, a big college over the South side, I don't know the name of it, but we had to wear a cope (coat?she means a cape) and the hats and a Minister shaking our hands and it was lovely. What I didn't do in school I done there. Yeah, I never talked to anyone, like the way I'm talking to yourself. I love them to bits, I do I'd go through Heaven and Hell for them, what is it, Hell and Heaven and back again, whatever but I do I love them to bits and I am making up for what years I missed from them you know, so I just love me family and I'm delighted that I'm clean and I'm just so happy, with Ann I'm delighted, with Sophia Housing too for giving me the chance to be a mother again you know, so, I don't know what else i can tell you...

Lynn thank you so much

No, thank you. What's your name again?

Cecily

Commissioned by Breaking Ground, the Ballymun Regeneration Ltd per cent for art programme.
The project focusing on people living in Ballymun, a small village on the outskirts of Dublin city.
Five people with different lives and experiences tell their stories.

Their interesting and fascinating life stories cover a wide range of issues, including alcoholism, sexual and physical abuse, homelessness and self-harm, but perhaps most importantly, the interviews demonstrated each individuals capacity to love and to survive hardship. Each interview could be listened to in private on Audiophones which were available in the exhibition space.

A photograph of the person interviewed or an image suggested by what they said in their interview was specially made for the project by Cecily Brennan.

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