

STEPHEN WACKETT: ENGLAND

My name is Stephen Lennon Wackett, I'm 42, white, male, British born. I've been offending since the age of about 13 or 14. Mainly assaults and drugs and have served time in prison. A few years ago I wanted to stop re-offending and try to live a normal life but kept slipping up and making silly mistakes, because of my temper. I felt that I was embarrassing my two teenage children, when they would see me in the local papers for this and that. It was when I picked up my daughter from school that I heard a couple of kids taking the mick out of her about me beating someone else up in the shops; she looked embarrassed and so was I. That really hurt. The slip ups would happen because of drink and drugs so I dealt with them issues first.

In March 2011, I was convicted of assault again and lucky for me I received a four month suspended sentenced and was placed under the supervision of Hertfordshire Probation service. I attended A.R.T (Aggression Replacement Training) sessions once a week group sessions, studying 'moral dilemmas' and 'skill streaming' for 18 weeks. I didn't know what to expect but kept an open mind. Straight away I started learning about what goes on in your body and the anger sequence what gets you more wound up and how to calm yourself down. It was an eye opener for me personally. It taught me how to get out of difficult situations and not put myself in them in the first place, understanding other peoples' feelings. It gave me the confidence I didn't have before. I now recognise the triggers and cues, external and internal. I'm able to cope better in certain situations and think about my actions and others. The skill streaming sessions have been a major learning curve for me and now I feel that my life can be different as long as I continue to practice and recognise the triggers and cues.

I've managed to use these skills on a number of occasions now and have been surprised with the results. I know when I'm getting angry and recognise the triggers so quick that I'm able to stop the red mist descending and flying off the handle and doing something I'm going to regret. Before I would let my internal demons take over and tell me to lash out - don't take no crap. But now I'm not letting them in anymore. I've got the control back and it's up to me to remember what I've been taught and to practice it.

March 2011 was my last conviction and I haven't offended since. I would like to think that I have stopped. I'm hopeful. The group sessions have had a major impact in me stopping offending and my children as well. I'm trying hard to find a job at the moment, which isn't easy at this time. So the temptation of easy money sometimes enters my mind (internal demons) but I think about the consequences and what I'm going to lose (which I've never done before), the contact of my kids, my flat.

My lifestyle has changed dramatically this last year. I have more time for family and my new hobby – carp fishing. I don't know why but I feel like a weight has been lifted off me in a strange kind of way. I can't explain it. The thing that has changed the most is my way of thinking and that is down to Diane Williams and Rose Graham (the tutors), can't thank them enough. The future looks better than it has ever before and I'm confident I won't offend again. I show a lot of empathy towards people, something I've never done before as well. So let's hope things have changed. Thanks again to Rose and Diane.