

## Kevin, Edinburgh Access Practice

Edinburgh Access Practice offers medical advice to anyone who is experiencing difficulty in accessing Primary Healthcare, whose accommodation arrangements are uncertain and who may have additional support needs.

Granton Information Service provides a benefits service at The Access Practice funded by NHS Lothian through Edinburgh's Health and Social Care Partnership.

Kevin, 57, is an alcoholic and currently lives at the Grassmarket Hostel. A civil engineer, Kevin's drink problem began when an employer went bust. Since then, Kevin has made numerous attempts to stop drinking, including a £60,000 stay in a private health clinic.

However, after dry periods, Kevin has relapsed.

### Rock Bottom

Twelve months ago Kevin was at rock bottom. Having gone through marital breakdown and eviction, he was sleeping rough. In November he found temporary bed and breakfast accommodation, but there was another setback.

Kevin said: "I still had pension policies to cash in but I was in a bad way and made some bad decisions. I foolishly gave my PIN number to a girl who lived in the hostel to get me drink when I couldn't. It was crazy - she's an addict, and she ripped me off for £9000. Over the years drink has cost me many thousands of pounds - and much more besides."

Kevin moved into his current lodgings in the Grassmarket in April.

He said: "Years ago I used to drive past the hostel and saw the alcoholics hanging around outside. I promised myself I would never end up like that - but I have.

"I've now reached Day 117 of abstinence - I see active addiction around me and I think: 'Christ, I used to be like that'. I sometimes get frustrated with some of the

people I live alongside, but seeing how unreasonable people with addictions can be spurs me on to keep going: I do not want to be like that again.”

Kevin now has a schedule mapped out for his week.

“I attend Access to Industry on Monday afternoon and Thursday all day and I go to the gym at Libertus on Monday morning.”

### **Advice and Support**

With insurance policies exhausted, Dr. Budd at the Access Point encouraged Kevin to speak to Granton Information Centre (GIC) for benefits advice.

“A few years back, I would have dealt with these things myself. I haven’t ever had to deal with benefits, and the forms are incredibly complicated. One application form alone is sixty pages long. GIC were able to explain the system to me and we have worked things through. They have been really helpful, incredibly patient. I trust them absolutely.

“I was struggling, mentally ill at the time, and if it hadn’t been for GIC I would have been overlooked and missed out on what I am entitled to, despite having worked all my life.

“The government say they are trying to simplify the benefits system, but in making it simpler for them they are making it more complicated for ordinary people. Thank God we have people like GIC who can support us through the process.”

### **The Future**

“I take every day as it comes, trying to look after my health. Given what’s happened in my life I won’t plan too far ahead, but I would still like to work with animals in some way.

“I was attending college in Dumfries to train to become a veterinary nurse before my last relapse.”