

Client Story

My drinking started in the army, I wanted to feel part of something and belong but I never really fitted in with army life. I was bullied quite badly which added to my isolation and being posted to Belfast played its part, I was drinking really heavily from the age of 17. I continued to drink after I was discharged from the army for my behaviour.

A few years later my daughter was born with severe disabilities and to cope with all the stress I hit in the bottle.

We had another child a few years later also born with severe disabilities. When my son was older he was just going into care and his keyworker signposted me to ESVA (East Sussex Veterans Association, who in turn signposted me to ESRA which was just downstairs. I just walked into their office one day and asked if I could attend the SMART meetings to help support my recovery.

Once I was assessed I was able to join other people and hear their stories, I could relate to others going through the same situation and people were inspirational to me.

Now I volunteer for ESRA, cleaning and helping out on reception occasionally. I participate in events with the veterans' group and I like to challenge myself so I'm hoping to do more courses in the future to build on new found skills and support others on their recovery journey.



ESRA has helped me a lot. I get so much benefit from sharing other people's stories in recovery. It reminds me of how far I've come and not to be complacent. I've done activities and courses that I would never have attempted without the support of ESRA. I've met a lot of people who are going through similar situations that I can totally relate to. It's so supportive here.

I'm learning not to dwell on the negative thoughts and stop living in the past by looking for the positives in every day and using more positive self-talk. I am more mindful of the ups and downs in life, there are things I can't control but it's how I react to them - positively not negatively – no more “poor me” or “why me”, now it's “what can I do to sort this” and looking at things in a different way.