

Ricardo's story

As a child, I loved leaving London and going to the seaside or zoo, or on a trip to the safari park. I like the idea of leaving London and sightseeing. London mostly looks the same once you have been raised there. It felt like being free for the time I was away from London.

When I was a child there was abuse in my family. I have a big family of my own, plus lots of aunties and uncles. I suffered having sexual abuse done to me which had a very bad effect on my life.

I've had many jobs in my life. So far I've worked in construction. I've worked as a minder or protecting people. I've worked as a chef. The funny thing is the best job I've ever had, or the job I felt most at peace in, was when I worked on a farm. I did it for a year. My job was feeding the pigs and cleaning out their pigpen in a tractor. On the farm there were cows and lambs. Different people were responsible for their part. For some reason I love animals and loved working with them.

I've always been good at sports: football, athletics, table tennis, tennis, snooker. What I think I'm best at is people, vulnerable people. I'm able to feel sorry for them or have empathy, and I am able to understand what they have been through and what they need to change their lives.

I became homeless when I became addicted to drugs. This happened very late in life for me, when I was 30 years of age. I was able to go cold turkey by myself and become clean, but fifteen years later when I was 45 years of age I became addicted to heroin again. I did not inject but I smoked it. Because of this I had to move into Simon House so I could sort myself out.

When I was living in Simon House, I started volunteering for the Gatehouse and also volunteering for St. Aldate's Church. I never had done anything like that before, as I was more interested in making money, chasing girls and basically getting into all sorts of trouble. What changed is I stopped drinking and taking drugs, and my mind became much clearer.

I like when the public, women and children are able to live with freedom, without children being abused. I like when the wealth in this world trickles down to those without money, so that they can make a life for themselves, better themselves.

I hate the greed in the world and the violence. It destroys everything it touches. Look at the world now: wars all over the world, people trying to kill innocent people and themselves, to



say that they think things are not fair. All the wildlife, i.e. lions, elephants, tigers and the fish in the sea are slowly being exterminated by mankind and his greed.

If I could change one thing in the world, instead of mankind using their knowledge and skill to think of new ways of spying and killing, making new bombs and guns, they would use the energy to get rid of diseases like AIDS, cancer and to get rid of world poverty and hunger.