

Finding Freedom and Fitness after 40 years – Andy’s Quit Story



Andy Varney from Oakwood was a smoker on and off for 41 years. He had stopped smoking a few times but with ongoing help and support from the Council’s Livewell service, he is celebrating eight months smoke free and is nearly a stone lighter. The 52 year old dad is fitter and healthier and aims to reverse his type 2 diabetes. Here he explains his story:

Life before Livewell

“I started smoking at 11 and managed to stop for 10 years at the age of 38. Due to stress and anxiety issues I started smoking again. Everything I tried - hypnotherapy, counselling, vaping and going cold turkey would result in me being drawn back to cigarettes. I was smoking 20 a day.

My life revolved around smoking. I planned my day around smoking opportunities (even now I could tell you when and where I would have a cigarette). I made excuses to leave the house so I could smoke and hid my habit from my partner. I couldn't go to bed unless I had at least one cigarette for the next morning.

Most of my spare cash went on cigarettes. I prioritised cigarettes over food and would frequently miss lunch. There was never any money left at the end of the month to save or do something nice with my partner.

Even though I regularly missed meals, the weight was piling on. Being overweight combined with smoking was affecting my health. I am type 2 diabetic, suffer from mild asthma and there is a history of heart disease in my family.

Making the change

My partner was a Livewell weight loss client and I went along to exercise classes to support her where I was introduced to Livewell’s stop smoking programme.

Getting professional help makes all the difference. My advisor, Sufyaan helped me figure out the best treatment. I used a nicotine replacement mouth spray and lozenges to ease my cravings. These medicines are free for 8 weeks so I started to benefit from the cost savings of quitting straight away.

Combining the medicine with regular support worked really well for me. I used the stop smoking drop ins and Sufyaan was at the end of the phone if I needed him.

The people at Livewell really care and having worked with lots of people like me, they tailor the advice and the treatment to the client. Knowing that if I relapsed I could try again helped me to succeed.

Another important source of support has come through other Livewell clients and volunteers. Once you’re smoke free for four weeks, you can take part in Livewell’s friendly fitness classes. Clients are all in the same boat and relatively new to exercise, so they understood how nervous I felt and welcomed me to the group.

Life now

I’m a different person – healthier, happier, fitter and I can breathe properly. My diabetes is improving and I aim to beat it into remission. I’m more relaxed than I have been in years now I no longer plan my day around cigarettes. I feel in control of my life again.

My daughters are delighted I've quit and I'm determined to be part of their lives for longer. My partner is happy that my clothes smell fresh and she tells me I'm a much nicer person to live with.

Financially I'm better off and can now put money away, something I have never been able to do. By eating healthy regular meals and exercising, I've lost 5.5kg and my sense of smell and taste are returning.

Since quitting, I have taken up running, something I haven't done since school. I now run 20k and attend five fitness classes each week. I've signed up for this year's Derby 10k and I'm aiming to run the Derby 10 mile race in November. It's amazing to think that 8 months ago I couldn't run to catch a bus!

My love of running has encouraged me to help others get into the sport. I am currently a co leader with Jog Derbyshire and will be completing the jog leader training soon.

I'm proud I've turned my life around and there's no going back now."

Inspired by Andy's story?

Livewell Derby offers 12 months free support and stop smoking treatments to people registered to a Derby GP practice. Apply and book your first appointment at www.livewellderby.co.uk or call the friendly customer team on 01332 641254.

Andy's top tips

Keep busy – don't sit around and dwell. Exercise is a proven way to curb cravings so head out for a brisk walk.

Your motivation – remind yourself of your motivation to quit by keeping a list of reasons handy.

Think positive – congratulate yourself on a regular basis – you are doing something amazing. Treat yourself and your family with the money you're saving.

Socialise with non-smoking friends – when you're at a party/gathering, stick with people who don't smoke.



Andy before his lifestyle transformation (left) and standing proud now he is fighting fit and smoke free.