

## **My name is Ronaldo and this is how CGL Newham Rise has helped me**

“I have had issues with drink from the age of eight. I had a traumatic upbringing and was subjected to extreme violence from my father who was a gambling addict with a bad temper.

This led to my mum leaving him and moving to Canning Town. Canning Town was rife with racism when I moved there in 1975 and me being black, I was attacked regularly, my own headteacher told me to go back to my own county.

“My mum had a serious drinking problem and when my dad got back into our lives when I was eight, I started to drink when he started beating me again. There was always drink in my house and I would turn up to school drunk.

“I got a letter sent home when I was nine, reporting that I was taking cans of special brew to school. I did not get told off by my mum because she was drinking heavily herself and suffering from depression, instead, she thought it was funny. I was well liked at school when I started to fight back and was recognized by the other children as the best fighter. I was also a brilliant footballer and intelligent.

“I was depressed and suicidal throughout my childhood, always drinking, carrying it to school in my sport bag. I stopped playing football at 16 because of my drinking even though I was recognized as one of the best players in England for my age.

“I became a father at 17 and my drinking became worse, I was now a full on alcoholic. I was in and out of jobs and lost contact with my daughter when she was three because of my drinking. My life was now drinking and getting into trouble, in and out of prison for many years. Soon I started taking drugs.

“My flat became a crack house, and I was addicted to crack, heroin and alcohol. I was now in my early fifties attending CGL and planning to kill myself. My keyworker came to my flat and prevented me from killing myself. I was sent to rehab and settled down and listened to my keyworker there. She taught me to live in the present and forget about living in the past and thinking about what might happen in the future. For the first time in my life, at 51 years old I wanted to have a future.

“Today I am a Peer Mentor at CGL and a volunteer for Build on Belief at weekends. I go to NA and AA meetings, and I have got respect from my mum, the community and have my daughter and grandchildren back in my life.

“I believe anyone can change with self-belief and taking support from CGL and other agencies or support groups. Life now is worth living!”