

# Debbie Dye – ‘Overcoming The Rift’ Photography

The great thing about being a Photographer is you never know where it will lead, and each request is still a surprise. I still love taking photographs and I also teach photography to adults and children, which includes work for local mental health organisations: The Harrow Council’s Well Being & Mental Health Projects and Mind.

I really get a buzz from sharing my knowledge and to see the enjoyment when students capture the magic moment. The look on their faces when it all ‘clicks into place’ is priceless.

Alongside the normal work I enjoy photography that helps raise awareness for charity organisations, and this has led to help support Comic Relief, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Rethink, Harrow Mencap, Mind in Harrow and the Invictus Games:



I’ve also taken photos for celebrity events and had an amazing experience of photographing some of the Motown greats performing, e.g. R&B singers Martha Reeves and Peabo Bryson.



## The Project

Since 2008 I have been working on a personal project that I hold dear to my heart, which enabled me to get back into the swing of things after a period of being unwell. It’s about people I have met on my journey overcoming difficult times in their lives, and it also focuses on the organisations that help many others and also helped me. The project is called “Overcoming The Rift”, and is a Photography Documentary Project of Ordinary People being Extraordinary. Photography is a very powerful tool to help and support people of all ages who are suffering from mental health illness. According to MIND, 1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem in any given year.

The project showcases, through photography, individuals and organisations that have overcome hardship, mental health issues, addiction, homelessness, physical problems and other types of illness to show and prove that we can all overcome a “Rift” (as I like to call it)!

My goal is to raise awareness to inspire and support those who are suffering from the above problems which overtime can provide opportunities for them to build their self-confidence and self-esteem.

The aims of the project are to:

- Show that recovery can be achieved with help and one does not have to be alone; it can happen to anyone at anytime!
- Encourage volunteers to come forward and share their inspirational story with the photographer after hearing the stories.
- Celebrate recovery.
- Generate funding for photography workshops to help those in recovery. This has been achieved in the last couple of years and new workshops are planned for next year.
- Identify organisations that would like to showcase and help raise awareness for the project.

## Achievements

- Over 80 people have been photographed and a selection of images is given below.
- An official exhibition supported by Mind in Harrow in December 2013 and the Mayor of Harrow in April 2014.



- Teaching photography workshops have been organised for Mental Health organisations,
- Video’s produced for Mind in Harrow as part of the Harrow SWiSH (Support & Wellbeing Information Service Harrow) programme.

## Example Portraits

The portraits are of very brave people who in the process of coming forward, sharing their story and having a photo taken, is a very brave step to do for someone with low self-esteem, poor health or mental health problems. The result is an uplifting experience and something for them to feel proud of being a part of. That was obvious at the exhibition where most of the people I photographed brought families and friends to see their photos in the two exhibitions I arranged.



**Jonny:** a campaigner for mental health who has suffered with mental problems when younger.



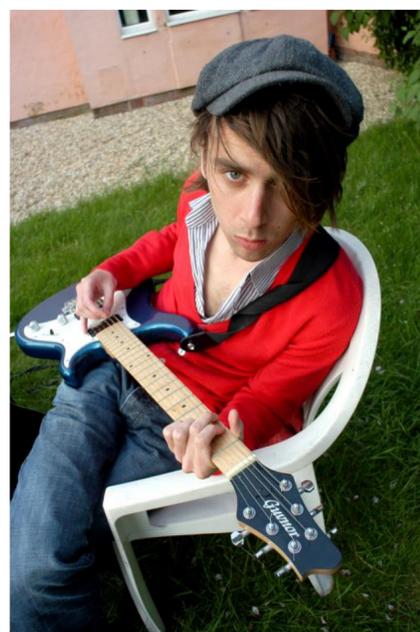
**Mark:** an amazing artist grateful to the amazing and wonderful people who him into recovery.



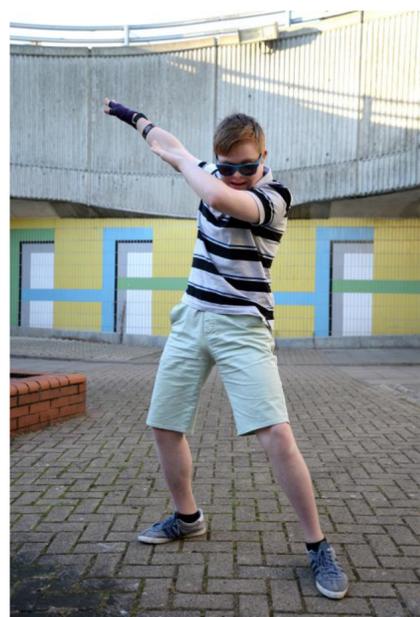
**Emma:** struggles with her health.



**Gary:** "Since getting sober I've overcome feelings of usefulness and look for a purpose in life."



**Riley:** a talented artist and musician in sobriety for over a decade, now married and living in New York.



**Jamie:** This picture was shortlisted in a National Photography competition.

## Further Information

If anyone would like to find out more about the project and share their stories with me, I would be delighted to chat in more detail. Also, to photograph and interview you if this is of interest.

Details of the Overcoming the Rift photo project are at: <https://overcomingtherift.wordpress.com/>  
Debbie's other photography work can be seen at: [www.debbiedye.com](http://www.debbiedye.com)