

TRIUMPH

OVER INJURY



Angela McShane's life changed forever when she was left for dead by a speeding van driver. But she has rebuilt her life, and today shares her experiences to help others fight back from adversity

In September 2001, Angela McShane was returning from work in the early evening. She stepped off the bus, and waited until it had gone so that she could see in both directions. The way was clear and she stepped off the kerb... a split second later she was lying on the road with multiple serious injuries. She'd been hit by a Transit van travelling at 70mph in a 30mph zone.

That one tragic moment transformed her life. At 23 years old, her chosen career as a nursery nurse had been denied her and she faced years of treatment and rehabilitation for the injuries she suffered. Yet, these days Angela says she's lucky. She uses the trauma and trials she's undergone to give advice and guidance to other accident victims and their families and spread the message about road safety. Indeed, she relishes the fact she's able to help others.

"It turned out the van was driven by a young man who'd taken drink and drugs," Angela explained. "My face was smashed, my eyes gouged, my pelvis shattered, my hips, arms and legs broken and part of one leg was missing. I had more than 16 life-threatening and life-changing injuries. However, he just drove off and left me. There was a hospital nearby and, luckily, a nurse making her way home spotted me and gave help. I spent the following year in a hospital bed."

At the time, Angela had her own flat and was self-sufficient and independent. Life was blossoming, but everything she had was taken away. She said: "One of the toughest things was getting my head around everything that had happened – it wouldn't register that I had simply been making my way home and then found myself lying in hospital staring at the ceiling. It's a cliché, but I never thought this kind of thing would happen to me."

Recovery has been slow, as Angela revealed: "Initially, when you're lying in hospital your muscles become weaker because you're not using them, so it takes even longer to manage any kind of movement. It was at least eight months

before I was able to shower without any help and it took years to relearn all the basics that we take for granted."

Angela has had numerous hospital visits and operations and years of intense daily physiotherapy at the sports injury clinic at Hampden Park. Today, this rehab involves regular travel. Yet she insists: "The support and treatment I've had from people at Hampden and in various hospitals has been life-changing."

She also still has great difficulty with mobility, revealing: "On a good day I can walk a short distance – from the car to a shop doorway perhaps. Beyond that, I have to use crutches. Some days are better than others."

After Angela's ordeal, returning to her flat was never an option. It took time for her to live fully independently and, in a happy development, married her partner, Christopher, in June this year. "I feel very lucky to have found someone who is so supportive of my experience," she said.

"I still read about people drinking and driving. It's distressing, because we only need to make small adjustments to our lives."

Now through her business, The Reinvention, she spreads understanding of what accident victims and their families go through. The aim is to "support and inspire individuals and families to triumph over injury". As well as talking about the psychological effects, she's able to give practical advice on how to cope with injury.

She's particularly keen to support road safety and drink-drive campaigns, as she explained: "I see them as action that's taken to keep people safe, not as efforts to lecture people on what they're doing wrong.

"Especially during the festive season, when people are out and about having fun and visiting friends and relatives, it's all about preventing accidents. I know from personal experience there are huge consequences when safety is not at the forefront of everyone's mind.

"Sadly, I still read about people drinking and driving. It's distressing, because we only need to make small adjustments to our lives – don't go in your car when you've been drinking, get a taxi home. If there is an incident, stop and check that everyone is OK. We all make mistakes but when a road

traffic collision happens it's very important to do the right thing.

"I embrace the opportunity to work on campaigns such as the Zero Tolerance Christmas campaign and the Young Driver's Scheme. Above all, I don't want another individual or family to go through what I've experienced because it can be prevented. Stay safe this Christmas."



PATH TO THE REINVENTION

When Angela began The Reinvention it was simply a blog intended to share her experiences in the hope that someone in a similar position might see it and realise that they are not alone.

However, it has now gathered pace and turned into a community interest company. She explained: "Three years ago I was invited to go along to talk to a patient at a hospital that I'd attended. Things have snowballed and today I'm asked to speak to individuals and families who have been affected by similar incidents, or to groups and organisations with an interest in helping people who have been involved in incidents."

Angela has given conference presentations and talks to colleges, universities, high schools, primary schools and businesses about road safety, overcoming major events and moving forward with life.

She explained: "We're currently expanding the blog to create a fully-fledged website. There is such a need now and having a presence on the internet allows me to communicate more widely and, hopefully, help more people triumph over injury."



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thereinvention1.blogspot.co.uk/

