

Selwyn started attending the Social Hub coffee morning in Penkridge in April 2016. At that time it was being held at The Haling Dene Centre, due to Lottery funding to set up social hubs in harder to reach areas. Selwyn attempted suicide twice 6 months before attending. He had previously owned his own business and then suffered a stroke and became epileptic, which affected all aspects of his life. He describes it as an earthquake- everything he knew before had gone, turned upside down. Selwyn had to sign some forms to give his business away and could no longer drive. He found the whole ordeal heart breaking. He accessed therapy for 12 weeks 1-1 at Chase Emotional Wellbeing in Cannock and was referred to The Social Hub from there. Selwyn received a letter through the post and threw up immediately at the total fear of attending. He wanted to go, to socialise with people who had suffered similarly with their mental health and to gain support from others. On that first day to just get through the door was terrible:

“I could hear everyone talking and I thought ‘I’ll never fit in here’. I struggled to talk, I was so nervous. I was chuffed afterwards, that I had actually done it on my own- no one had forced me, or held my hand, it was totally my own decision and I fought all the way to get there. It was literally a fight to get there, I had a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other telling me what to do. It felt a tremendous battle. I do remember going through the door and going cold from head to foot, it was the worst thing I ever had to do, going through that door. But afterwards I thought, nothing bad has happened, no one shot me, the coffee was brilliant and the penguin chocolate bars were fantastic!”

“I love attending the group now and partly that’s due to the diverse conversation- talking about all kinds of things. I walk home from the group laughing to myself, thinking about the weird and wonderful conversations. I listen to music on the way home and always have something bouncy on.”

“I come to the group every week, sometimes the room is full, other times there are just a few people. I can’t wait to get here, this is a massive part of my life, I live for Wednesdays. It is a break from my abnormal life- a complete break from worrying about filling in forms, taking tablets, worrying about what’s going to happen to me. I walk away full of euphoria!”

“It has affected my relationships, in that I can approach people now and talk to people and socialise. I am able to share my problems at the group- I have told people things that I would never have told anyone else and I find this so helpful.”

“I would like to continue coming to the group and eventually start helping to volunteer and run the group. I want to do this because I want to give back to the group that has supported me so much. I want to give my time to helping others so they can get the same kind of support. I plan on starting the peer mentor training in Cannock in the next few months.

“If I had to sum up this experience I would say: It’s a train journey, it’s a long haul but at the end of it, you get to your destination. It’s scary waiting on the platform but it’s your decision to get on that train and once you’re on, it’s one way, and the next stop is your destination- the goal you have set yourself- whatever that might be. I am actually taking a train journey to Inverness to visit my sister in the summer this year. I would not have even contemplated doing this a few months ago as I struggled to walk down the road in my village to the local shops. Whereas now I am looking forward to the journey and intend on enjoying the whole process.”