

## Richard's Story

I have Fibromyalgia, which is a highly complex condition. Due to working in construction, my symptoms were exacerbated, due to the physical nature of the job. I was also in a bad relationship, where I not only had to support myself through a difficult situation, but also support my partner and her family. I had recently had an operation and, at the same time, my dad was dying from cancer, so it was like a vortex of intra-psychic phenomena breaking out, so I decided to seek help. I went to my GP and he suggested I was quite depressed about life in general and then he referred me to Emotional Wellbeing in Stafford and Surrounds (EWISS).

I sat in the reception area and felt more anxious, as I didn't quite know what to expect. I saw Peter for therapy and he put me at my ease straight away. He was a very nice chap. I had about 8 sessions and we explored some of the issues I had experienced recently. I acquired some coping strategies and changed my life for the better, by taking more time to relax and making some lifestyle adjustments

Once I left the service, I decided to enrol on the Volunteer Training Programme here at The Social Hub. This involved doing a 12 week accredited Level 2 course in "Supporting People in Recovery", which covered a variety of different subjects such as Mental Health Awareness and Coping Strategies. I now assist in the running of the Social Hub Wellbeing Course on a Wednesday at Trinity Church, after 2 years of facilitating it at EWISS alongside their fully qualified staff.

I personally find this quite liberating. The techniques that are used, which are taken from CBT, mainly enable you to live your life in a more relaxed and focused way of being. This is a fantastic course for your personal development, whether you feel emotionally well or not. It is conducted in a safe, informal and friendly environment which allows you to focus on the present moment and put other issues into perspective.

Now, I feel more confident as a person, in myself and also in my ability to engage and mix in groups. I realise now it is ok to make mistakes and seem to have a more balanced view of the world in general. I have now completed an accredited course in Peer Mentoring and use these tools in my group and 1-1 work.