

C's story: "Now I see a glimmer of hope"

C is a graduate who came to the UK when she married her British husband in 2003. The relationship was abusive and ended in 2005. C remained in the UK. She has one adult child from a previous marriage who is at university in the UK, the rest of her extended family live abroad.

In 2008 C gave up work due to persistent low mood and severe anxiety and was unable to finish her masters degree. She has received support from the Community Mental Health team since 2007 for a severe depressive disorder.

C's depression and anxiety has been resistant to treatment. She was unable to access traditional day services due to the extreme levels of her anxiety. C struggled to leave the house at all which compounded her low confidence and self-esteem. She felt extremely socially isolated with no hope for the future and felt that the support that was being offered to her was of little benefit. She was desperate to return to work and get her life back on track.

"Without a personal budget I may never have had the chance to return to work – which I'm passionate about"

C was referred for a personal budget as part of a pilot study within the West Leeds Community Mental Health team, and was assessed using the self-directed assessment questionnaire.

During the assessment it became clear that she had eligible needs in relation to mental health and wellbeing, and that being able to take advantage of leisure, work and learning opportunities was vital to improving her quality of life and aiding her recovery.

She put together a support plan which met her eligible needs and identified personal goals including one-to-one support to overcome her social anxiety and social isolation, and build confidence to help her leave the house, shop alone, and explore voluntary work opportunities and educational courses.

C uses her direct payment to pay for nine hours of agency support a week to enable her to meet the goals outlined in her support plan.

The support agency uses the Mental Health Recovery Star approach, which provides Adult Social Care with an evidence-based tool to use at review, to check how well the support is working, and whether a person's goals are being achieved.

C is coming up to a three-month review and the agency has found that she is already showing clear signs of improvement. And C's feedback so far is very positive:

"My world shrank considerably when I became ill with depression, anxiety and

panic attacks. I was frightened of being outside the house, and struggled with grocery shopping or visiting the doctors or dentist. I hardly ever left the house.

“SDS has enabled me to choose the type of support I need and to focus my recovery process. The sustained and intensive exposure is helping me in leaps and bounds.

“With my support worker, I’ve been able to go to places I would previously not have dreamt of going to. I now see a glimmer of hope that I will one day return to my normal self. I realise that had I remained under the old arrangement I may never have had a chance at recovery and returning to work, which I am passionate about.”