

Patient & Staff Story

Support Transition and
Recovery Service (START)
West Dorset

Sam

Sam is a 27 year old young man who was diagnosed with Schizophrenia, diabetes and other disorders related to excessive alcohol intake. Sam has been sectioned three times under the Mental Health Act over a five year period between 2007 and 2012. He was first sectioned after a Ketamine overdose at the age of 16. Sam currently lives with his father in Lyme Regis after moving from Sherborne. Sam is a very reserved young man and his father assisted him in sharing his story.

Sam's mother and father had been through a difficult split and his Dad felt this was the start of Sam's problems. Initially Sam was still living with his mother when they were in Sherborne. Sam's Dad explained that he knew he had to get more involved when Sam had been sectioned for the third time. He was scared that he could lose his son forever. He hoped to move Sam away from the influences he felt were having a negative effect on his son's life. Eventually Sam and his Dad managed to move to Lyme Regis and they now share a flat.

Sam was originally under the Community Mental Health Team and was referred to Sarah, the Support Transition and Recovery Service (START) Worker in July 2016 for help with his recovery. After completing the "recovery star" where Sam's areas of interest were identified, it became clear that Sam was very keen on improving his fitness. He also understood that his alcohol intake was detrimental to his diabetes and mental health. Sam had a huge barrier as he was worried about using public transport to get to Bridport to exercise.

Sam's main identified interest was his love for animals. Sarah suggested volunteering at an animal sanctuary called "Ferne" in Chard however the location, again, was an issue, as there was no regular public transport. However Sam was happy to apply and deal with the travel issue should he be given an opportunity. Whilst waiting for an opening to arise at Ferne, Sarah encouraged Sam to take up other volunteering opportunities but he remained focussed on working with animals. There was a long period of waiting for a suitable opportunity to arise and his engagement faltered for a while.

One day whilst Sarah was walking back to her car from meeting with Sam, she stopped to talk to a local trader who had a dog sitting outside her shop. They chatted about the fact that the dog enjoyed sitting outside but, when she was busy, she could not take the dog for a walk. Sarah asked whether she would consider talking to Sam about him helping her with the dog. When Sarah had spoken to Sam he visited the shop by the end of that day. Sam now walks the dog 4-5 times a week and has been referred by the local trader to other friends to walk their dogs.

On speaking with Sam he makes it clear that his is in a much better place now. In the last four years he has not been sectioned. He said there are a number of issues which have been important to gain that stability in his life.

Initially his father moving in was a key change. He began to eat regularly and had someone who he could trust. Sam said that Simon, his Care Co-ordinator visiting him at home to organise his medication has been a huge improvement. He says the walk to the GP practice was over a mile away up a steep hill and with his fitness levels was difficult. Sam attributes a significant impact to the change in his life to achieving his aim of working with animals. He says that he loves to walk the dogs, which he does individually for about an hour at a time. Also having made a commitment to walk the dogs makes him get out of the house and not sit around and drink alcohol. He has lost weight due to the walking and his mood has improved considerably. The fact that the community are supporting him has also increased his self-worth and is beginning to embed both Sam and his Dad into the local community. Sam's Dad has also been signposted to carer's services by Sarah who is keen to ensure he is not feeling isolated and unsupported.

Sam and his Dad both feel the journey is not yet ended and there is still a lot of work to do. However they feel positive about the changes they have made together. They continue to feel supported by Sarah and know if they do need additional help she is there.

Sam's story includes:

- The importance of family support;
- An holistic approach to the patient;
- Thinking outside of the norm to support patients;
- Healthcare workers knowing and working with the local community to support patients;
- Understanding barriers and working to minimise those for patients
- The positive impact of having commitments to an individual