

Becky's Story

I was visiting my GP regularly with **chronic pain** & I ended up being signed off from work. I was struggling a lot with my mood, feeling low, **tearful** & having lots of thoughts about being a failure or not being good enough. I wasn't coping at work & I was falling behind with my university deadlines which made me feel embarrassed & ashamed so I **stopped communicating** with the university.

Overall I was in a bit of a state & wasn't accepting my condition. **I missed my 'old self'** & felt that any other way of being wasn't good enough, but I couldn't keep going like I used to. My GP suggested a referral to the **Wellbeing Service** a number of times & I eventually said **yes** as I knew I wasn't in a good place. "

I was initially reluctant to **seek help** from the Wellbeing Service. I think this was to do with my professional identity, that as clinicians we are supposed to be able to help people, & if I couldn't help myself how was I going to be any good at my job? I had heard that the main model of working was using CBT & through my own work I find this isn't my preferred model. However I knew that what I was doing at home wasn't working, & that being able to **speak to someone** could only be a **good thing!**

I found the suicide risk questions a bit uncomfortable & the scripted nature of the assessment a little robotic, but I understand that these are important. In spite of this, the person I had my telephone assessment with was still **friendly & informative.**

The experience I had with the Wellbeing service was overwhelmingly **positive:** I was contacted really **quickly** after the referral & when I called for an appointment the person I spoke to was really friendly & helpful which **put me at ease.** I was a bit nervous it would feel like a bit of a conveyor belt but it didn't feel like that at all. "

The person I spoke to for my assessment was understanding & informative, and although some of the questions felt uncomfortable (ones about suicide risk) I knew they had to be asked. I was interested in the **long term conditions** groups, but while I was waiting for that I saw Janice Morgan who was really lovely and gave me lots of resources. She gave me a space to talk and **listened without judging** me in anyway. She was **approachable** and kind, but also very knowledgeable and that put me at ease. Then my experience of the long term conditions group was equally positive, with warm group facilitators and the opportunity to meet other people who were feeling like I was felt really important.

I definitely would **encourage others to seek help.** I was nervous at first but realised I had **nothing to lose** by talking to someone. Talking to friends & family is good, but having someone who dedicates a session just to you, who listens without judgement, is **invaluable.** I also found the group really helpful as it was a way to meet local people who were going through the same thing as me. It helped me to feel less alone. I felt I had a sense of belonging for the first time in a long time. I now feel much **more settled** & emotionally stable. I still have down days, but I try to remember all of the things we talked about in the group & it helps me to reframe my negative thoughts & take me back to all of the things I still am & still have, rather than focusing on the loss. My personal identity & sense of self feels stronger. I have also made a friend through the group. I **feel less alone with my condition** than I did before.