

A HELPING HAND WHENEVER IT'S NEEDED

Sam's story

Sam, from Dewsbury, experiences mental health issues. A range of situations - coupled with previous traumatic events - cause her to feel anxious and things became so extreme she lost her voice and had to take long periods of time off work.

Commuting to her job in Leeds, Sam found her days getting increasingly difficult. Busy trains, often running late, would cause anxiety attacks and she would often "sit and sweat it out".

Sam would arrive at work feeling shaky and tearful and face the conflicting noises of an office, adding to her anxiety.

She could no longer work and was referred by her community mental health nurse to the not for profit Community Links Engagement and Recovery (CLEAR) service.

CLEAR gave her Brain in Hand, a mobile phone based tool providing immediate and personalised support. In a planning session they helped her to identify all the situations that can trigger anxiety, developed coping strategies and entered these into the software.

If Sam is on a busy train and feels her anxieties heightening, she takes out her phone and is reminded to take some deep breaths and to play a word game to distract herself from the situation, relax and continue her journey.

Brain in Hand has a traffic light system. If Sam is struggling, she can press a button to issue a 'red' alert to the team at CLEAR, which triggers them to call her. If they receive three consecutive 'amber' alerts, they'll also check in with Sam.

Phone calls can make Sam feel anxious, so this works well. "Having to pick up the phone and tell someone I'm not OK can be very scary. Just pressing a button and receiving a call from somebody asking if I'm OK makes a huge difference."

Sam uses the system to regularly check in on herself and reduces 'red alert' moments.

"I have reminders set for every three hours to ask myself how I'm doing. If I'm feeling a bit 'amber' I know I need to take a moment, have a bit of Sam time, and do something nice to stop it escalating."

Not only has she returned to work, Sam has started volunteering at her son's school and gets valuable 'Sam time' every Friday at a craft group.

Since being discharged from CLEAR, Brain in Hand has helped the process to feel gradual rather than abrupt.

"It came at the right time for me, I wanted to go back to work. Having this app has given me the helping hand I needed to become more independent and transition out of my support from CLEAR. It gave me confidence."

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KIRKLEES COUNCIL ESTIMATES AN ANNUAL SAVING OF £6,600 FOR EACH PERSON USING BRAIN IN HAND - A TENFOLD RETURN ON INVESTMENT.