

Why I support HEADWAY Worcestershire and why I am asking for your support for them too.

Back in 2012 my husband Lou (Louis) (partner at the time) and I were planning a holiday to Turkey.

Lou worked for Openreach and had been working away on an 11 day fortnight which he had been doing for a while. He had been working for Openreach/BT since the days of Busby (for those old enough to remember Busby).

Lou came home on the Friday before we were due to fly off on the Monday. Over that weekend Lou said he had a headache. He said he would have to go to the doctors on the Monday before we went on holiday. However, events overtook our plans.

I have to tell you at this point Lou suffered/suffers with hard to control high blood pressure.

March 2012 - Monday morning, I lay in bed and then heard a thud! I thought Lou had fallen out of bed, but he didn't get up or say anything. I jumped up and ran round to his side of the bed. Lou had collapsed. I did the shake and shout – but nothing. I called 999 to request an ambulance and as I spoke to the operator he started to come around but seemed to be having a 'fit' and wanting to be sick.

The ambulance arrived and conveyed Lou to Worcester Acute Hospital. He was diagnosed with a bleed on the brain. Lou awaited a bed and was transferred by ambulance to Walsgrave Hospital in Coventry where a further diagnosis of sub-arachnoid brain haemorrhage was made. Lou stayed in Walsgrave for approx. 4 weeks.

Following his brain haemorrhage and increasingly within the last 12 months or so Lou's behaviour had become quite erratic, with his tolerance level for almost everyone being 0. He suffered with depression and anxiety. He doesn't think or comprehend the way he used to. He also doesn't think before he speaks. He was always tired (which is still continuing) and has a permanent headache. This still continues. The situation was difficult to live with and there was nothing I seemed to be able to do that was right or that would help him. We couldn't and can't go out in large crowds. Things that Lou finds funny on one day offends him the next. He can become volatile quickly. I and his family constantly assess situations we go into. This has continued but has become more manageable since Headway.

Fast forward to 2023 - **HELP** – that was the title of the email that I sent to Headway, Worcestershire. An appointment was arranged to go and see them. I told Lou what I had done and he realised how difficult the situation had become and agreed to go. After an initial meeting, Headway invited him to join their fortnightly meeting and various workshops. The workshops didn't suit Lou, but he continued and continues with the fortnightly meeting and other activities/events that they hold. They have taught Lou mindfulness, which is something he would not usually believe in/take part in – but what he has seen in other group members improvement even on the first week encourage him to continue. He would not get by now without his fortnightly meeting. They have helped him understand what has happened and how it has affected his mind/brain.

Lou has since been diagnosed as having two further strokes, which has added to his anxiety and fear.

Headway Worcestershire are there to support him and me and if needed, in signposting to the right place for help, providing opportunities to meet with people in similar situations and share their and his learning and experience to help each other. It is a place where he feels safe and able to find an appropriate person to confide in should he wish to do so. I no longer feel useless in that I can't help him. We do now go out occasionally, but I am careful where we go.

Lou still has a long way to go. He is still intolerant of others. He has a continuous headache. He is constantly tired. He is permanently in pain in his joints and muscles and continues with medical investigations. His depression has lessened. He looks forward to going to Headway and what they and the other attendees offer.

You never know what tomorrow will bring or when you or someone you love will need the services of an organisation such as Headway which is not funded by the government. Headway, Worcestershire need your help to fund the services and activities they provide.

To find out more about Headway Worcestershire, what they do and their newly launched 90 challenge please visit <https://headwayworcestershire.org.uk/> - Did you know - Every 90 minutes someone is involved in an incident that may result in head trauma!