

Jane's Story September 2023

Service name: Pulmonary Rehabilitation

Main purpose of service: Locala's Pulmonary Rehabilitation team works with patients who have reduced their daily activity because of difficulty breathing. Pulmonary rehabilitation helps people re-gain confidence and a level of fitness they need, to do the everyday activities that matter to them.

About the person: Jane is a retired Assistant Head Teacher and has been diagnosed with asthma, emphysema and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). A year ago, Jane felt that **"things were sliding. You have flare ups, and I was dealing with them myself, but you can feel you are operating in the dark and don't feel you know what you are doing. You can feel isolated."** She was referred to the Pulmonary Rehabilitation team who also introduced her to the 'Shared Harmonies' singing and breathing group. Jane says, **"My quality of life has improved, I've got greater strength and I feel 10 years younger!"**

Breathing: Jane describes the start of her journey with the Pulmonary Rehabilitation team. **"At first it all seemed so slow! I'm used to doing Yoga, Pilates, going swimming. But those breathing exercises are sneaky!"** She was told about 'Shared Harmonies' and feels **"empowered and very fortunate"** to be part of both the singing group and the rehabilitation service. **"Seeing others improve is such a boost!"** For Jane, improving her breathing technique has changed everything. **"The first week of the singing group focused on the skills of breathing. Somehow, at some point, I had stopped breathing properly – I had been breathing backwards! I was only using the top part of my chest. I have had to relearn how to breathe properly! Suddenly, breathing properly through your nose, you get massive rewards. I even practise when I go swimming."** She feels the more that breathing techniques can be taught and practised in the pulmonary rehabilitation sessions, the better.

Life change: Jane explains, **"I've learnt techniques to do when you go into crisis. When you can't breathe, it's frightening. I'm more aware now and monitor [my symptoms] and change my behaviour if I need to. If I know it's going to be a bad day, I can do different things."** She remembers what it was like when she still worked, **"My consultant told me to do things every day that increased my heartbeat and made me short of breath, but I just didn't have time. Life is so pressured and demanding, the first thing that goes is care of yourself."** Jane considers that maintaining her improved breathing technique and fitness level is key. **"It has to become the routine of your life. It takes time to do these things. It can be boring and repetitive, but I don't want to lose the benefits. It has to be part of your life. You have to want to take responsibility."**

Ongoing support: She continues to attend the Pulmonary Rehabilitation drop-in sessions once a week to keep on track. **"It's easy to start doing the exercises wrong or too fast."** Jane also attends the singing group each Friday. **"I like the singing, but for me it's more about practising breathing skills."** The singing group provides peer support too. **"It's one and a half hours – you are listening to others talk about their lives [living with pulmonary conditions]. It's amazing what you pick up from others."** She urges people with breathing problems to come along to the group, even if they think they can't sing. **"You could practice the techniques resighting poetry or reading anything out loud."**

Singing Group: For more information on 'Shared Harmonies' contact jackie@sharedharmonies.co.uk. The group meets at Moldgreen United Reformed Church, Huddersfield each Friday from 2.00-3.30pm.

Jane shared her story with Joanne Vaughan on 29.8.23 and consents to sharing widely.