

*Stories help describe what services do.*

*Every-day and ordinary, or life changing and extraordinary?*

**Patient story: Richard November 2021**

**Service name: START** (Short Term Assessment Response Team)

**Main purpose of service:**

START is a dedicated rapid response team of nurses, therapists and health care assistants who work with patients to prevent unnecessary admission to hospital, and when patients are ready to return home from a stay in hospital, the team will ensure the correct support is in place to reduce the risk of re-admission.

**About the patient:**

Richard is 37 years old and a sudden, unexpected change to his circumstances at home meant that he was in urgent need of support. Richard takes up his story,

**“My wife came home one day and told me that she was leaving.**

**And she packed and went that day.”** Richard explains that he

lives with a condition called ‘arthrogryposis’ and that his wife had

also been his carer. **“I was diagnosed within hours of being**

**born. No two cases are exactly the same, some people can**

**need a wheelchair, others may have one limb affected.** It effects

the development and range of joints. Richard has had 27

operations, including surgery to fuse his ankle and lumbar spine. His

left leg was lengthened due to the ‘growth plate’ not being level. **“I**

**spent a lot of time in hospital as a child. We were told I**

**wouldn’t run or walk, but with my Mum’s determination and**

**help from my Consultants, and perhaps some stubbornness, I**

**can walk and run. I use a wheelchair for longer distances, like if**

**I was going around town shopping. And I have crutches too,**

**but at home I can walk without aides.”** Richard’s medication

regime includes 57 tablets a day, many of which are taken to control pain. He requires help with some everyday activities such as washing his upper body.

For more information on ‘arthrogryposis’ see <https://www.arthrogryposis.co.uk/patients>



**Shock to the system:**

Richard was assessed by START and two visits a day were quickly arranged to support him with personal needs and making a hot meal each day. **“They were completely on my wavelength.**

**After a couple of weeks, we got to know each other. You could have some banter, jokes,**

**good conversation. You need people like that – people who want to do their job. It’s a big**

**shock to the system! It was the first time I have had care from outside the family. I still**

**have carers now [START referred Richard for long term care from Social Services] and 5**

**months down the line, it still feels a bit alien. If things get on top of me, it’s because I**

**sometimes wonder if I wasn’t as independent as I thought I was. That’s the hardest thing.**

**It feels difficult at times to know you need care, but it feels easier than it did.”** Richard

continues, **“I can’t fault START. They were friendly and non- rigid. It wasn’t a case of ‘this**

**is what we have to do, and we have to do it now’. They were brilliant with me”.**

Richard talked with Jo Vaughan from the Engagement Team and gives consent to share his story.