

Maureen's Story October 2020

Service name: Out- patient Dietetics

Main purpose of service: The service is based at Princess Royal Health Centre. All patients are assessed, treated and advised during clinic or telephone consultation appointments. The service receives referrals for people who are registered with a Huddersfield GP and who need the expertise of a dietitian. Patients are referred to the service for dietary advice related to a wide variety of conditions including Diabetes, Irritable Bowel Syndrome, Coeliac Disease and Nutrition Support.

About the person: Maureen was referred to the service by her GP. She had lost weight and was very weak. Maureen had no interest in food and was experiencing black outs, dizziness and low mood. Even talking on the phone for 10 minutes was exhausting. She believes that admission to hospital was imminent. Maureen has many health issues to contend with. She feels that most of her weight loss over the last year was due to a complicated fear of being sick. A serious injury to her neck left her feeling particularly anxious about nausea as she worried that she would hurt her neck if she vomited.

Being referred: When Maureen's GP suggested she was referred to a dietitian she thought it was a joke. *"I thought only people who need to lose weight saw dietitians!"* She openly admits that she was very negative about the referral and decided to give the service a go, more than anything to prove that the referral was pointless. Now Maureen feels that working with dietitian Vanessa has *"given me my life back"* and that the referral *"has been the best thing that has happened to me."* All of Maureen's appointments with Vanessa to date, have been over the phone.

Feeling human again: Maureen describes feeling like a zombie because *"everything was slow to process"* and that she really thought she was dying. *"I had just given in."* She even rang the local crematorium to plan her own arrangements. Maureen remembers how it would take her 4 hours to do the washing up. A couple of pots and she would have to sit down to rest. Even her voice became weak. *"I had no life...I was in a dark space."* Maureen describes her improvement as a *"miracle"* and explains how *"it's just so nice to be able to think straight again"* and says that Vanessa has *"saved my life."*



Turning a corner: Vanessa gave advice about different foods and suggested that Maureen ate little and often and to keep a food diary. Maureen says she had lost interest in food so much that she had



forgotten what she had enjoyed in the past. She recalls Vanessa asking her what food she liked and she just couldn't think of anything. She started to eat porridge and cereals, adding blackberries and other fruit. She followed Vanessa's advice and swapped white bread for granary and she set an alarm that reminds her to eat every 2 hours. Vanessa also organised fortifying powder which Maureen mixes into soup and other food with a cocktail whisk! After 5- 6weeks Maureen realised she was

experiencing normal hunger pangs and had to relearn what that felt like, eating cereal with milk when she was hungry. One day she realised that she had done half the washing up before she had to rest and noticed she felt stronger in other ways, *"I can even talk on the phone for an hour now and people have noticed my voice is stronger....I wrote about the washing up in my diary – it felt like a big goal!"*

Kind and caring attitude: Maureen feels that she is now *"getting there"* and that she *"wouldn't have been able to do it without Vanessa. She is so kind and caring ...you feel like you've known her all your life....she has a lovely attitude...she doesn't chastise you when you have a relapse. She encourages you to move ahead. Even when I went backwards she told me I was doing well and to think 'Tomorrow is another day!' She is a marvellous lady. She needs a medal."* Maureen is keen for others to learn from her story and to understand that she didn't initially think a dietitian could help her. *"Even if it helps just one person – please share my story anywhere!"*