

## Social Prescribing Success: Deb's Story



Social Prescribing in North Tyneside aims to support people with different social, emotional or practical needs to find the right support and improve their health and wellbeing. This article has been written by Deb who has kindly shared her experience of Social Prescribing in North Tyneside.

Hello, I'm Debs and I'm 52. I've struggled with my mental health for many years and like a lot of people I found 2020 really difficult. My problem though wasn't lockdown. I feel like I'd spent my entire life preparing for staying at home and not seeing anybody.

You see I have really bad social anxiety and prefer to be on my own. The pandemic brought a different type of terror for me. Having to go out to work as a support worker left me terrified I was going to bring home the virus and pass it on to my very vulnerable father, who I am also a carer for.

Anxiety and panic attacks began to happen on a regular basis until in June 2020 I was at rock bottom. I finally plucked up the courage to contact my GP and sobbed all my feelings down the telephone to her. As well as a tweak to my medication, she asked if she could refer me to social prescribing. I said yes, as basically I would have agreed to anything if it would help!

A few days later I received a call from Nicola, who explained social prescribing to me and listened as I poured out my feelings. She thought I might enjoy a programme of creative journaling called You:Your Art being delivered by Helix Arts over Zoom. It sounded perfect as I love to be creative but that had fallen by the wayside as my mental health deteriorated. And the fact it was over Zoom was such a safety net, as by then there was no way I would have left the house. The programme turned out to be a huge turning point in my life. It was a couple of hours a week where I simply got to play and have fun.

I reconnected with friends from years ago and made new friends in a group where there was no judgement if you were feeling a bit down that day. I wrote things in my journal I had never told anyone and it was great to get it out of my head and try to move on. The ten weeks flew over and I was feeling so much better and more confident. I kept in touch with the group and even managed to leave the house to go out for a coffee. It had been a great success.

Nicola had also referred me to North Tyneside Art Studio (NTAS) in North Shields and, thanks to my experience with You:Your Art with Helix Arts, I was able to go into the studio to do the beginners sessions. I thoroughly enjoyed them and was so looking forward to attending more sessions when lockdown 2.0 began!

This time I never left the house unless it was to pick up prescriptions or take Dad to the hospital for check-ups. I was

quite happy in my own little bubble. I had counselling online, I did my shopping online, I socialised with the friends from You:Your Art online! Then it was time to get back out into the world and I was terrified again.

I heard of an Art Therapy course that was being run by NTAS and signed up for that. Every session involved chatting with the group, doing some meditation, imagining a safe space and generally relaxing. It was a wonderful experience and was the turning point in my mental health struggles. I learned so much about myself and how I processed my anxiety. I learned how to relax and meditate and how to take those scary few steps back into the big wide world. It meant I could finally meet up with friends I had made through the groups. Knowing they would understand if it got to much and had to run was such a relief. I also took part in a series of workshops with Gateshead Carers and Helix Arts, called Writers who Care. We were all carers and we produced a series of stories and poems that was published in time for Carers Week 2021.

I never thought the day I spoke to Nicola all that time ago I would be adding published author to my CV! So it's a year later, I'm now volunteering with Helix Arts to deliver You:Your Art to a new set of people in need. I love sharing my experiences and feel so proud to have been asked to volunteer with Helix Arts. I've attended so many workshops and groups that have boosted my confidence and helped me with my anxiety. I still get anxious but now I have the tools to help me deal with my anxiety. I have made so many friends and now have a social life that I enjoy. I go out for pleasure, rather than stay at home all the time.

I will be forever grateful for the referral to Social Prescribing. Without it I would never have known about all the good things going on to help people who suffer with mental health problems. Yes, you have to push yourself, but it is so worth it.

*Thanks to First Contact Clinical and Deb, for sharing this story with Living Well North Tyneside. If you'd like more information about Social Prescribing in North Tyneside please contact 0191 4324829.*

#### Related Links

- [First Contact Clinical](#)



0191 4324829



[fcc.ntsps@nhs.net](mailto:fcc.ntsps@nhs.net)



Last Updated - 16th September 2021