

Matt's Story

27-year-old Matt suffers from paranoid schizophrenia, depression and anxiety. Having relied on doctors, social workers and his parents for vital support over the years, Matt came to Independent Living West Country (ILWC) in 2018 with next to no confidence, self-esteem or hope for the future. With ILWC's ongoing support and reassurance, Matt's life has transformed entirely for the better.

Before being diagnosed, Matt worked as a chef. He thrived under high pressure and in social settings until one day everything changed. Days of feeling low turned into weeks, which then turned into months as Matt started to hear voices in his head. He struggled on, but realised it was no good. Matt then made the difficult decision to leave the job he loved and move back in with his parents. It was at this point that he was diagnosed with severe depression and started taking medication.

Whilst living at home, Matt's undiagnosed schizophrenia really started to take hold of his life. Voices in his head instructed him to self-harm or else 'his family would be hurt'. One night, the voices led Matt down to a bridge over a train station where he attempted to take his life.

Classified as a danger to himself, Matt spent the next four months in a mental health hospital in Exeter and was diagnosed with psychosis and paranoid schizophrenia. At the end of this period he was considered well enough to leave. He went on to make two further attempts on his life and was once again sectioned. This was the lowest point in Matt's life.

Through a combination of medications, Matt's condition improved, and he was eventually released from hospital on the condition that he worked with a mental health team and social worker.

Matt says, "I was introduced to ILWC through my social worker. They have been a real saviour. For me, just having someone there to talk to whenever I'm feeling low has really given me stability, helping me to get my social skills back on track.

"I currently work with Kyah and she's been the best support worker I've ever had. She's positive, patient and doesn't pressure me to do anything before I feel ready. Kyah made a personal effort to get to know me and find out about the types of activities I enjoy. We have a shared interest in walking, and I've already noticed a huge improvement in my fitness just from walking together. It's crazy to think that I used to struggle to walk for just five minutes at the start.

Kyah says, "When I first met Matt, he was extremely shy and reluctant to have a conversation. How times have changed!

"It's been wonderful watching him grow over the past few months. He's found his voice, has just moved into a new flat with his partner, and he's now at the stage where he wishes to return to work.

"After hearing that his dream job would be to work as a support worker at ILWC, I knew Matt's empathy and caring nature would make him a perfect fit for the job. I spoke to the management team straight away and secured Matt an interview. Matt is now completing his care qualifications in the hope of becoming a support worker.

"It's great to know that Matt's condition has improved so much that he is virtually at the point where he no longer needs our support. It would be lovely to have him as part of the team, completing the circle of his recovery.

Matt explains, "Working with so many different support workers over the years has helped me to realise that great support is all about establishing trust with people. Having suffered so badly myself, I would love to have the opportunity to show others that there's light at the end of the tunnel. I've overcome so much and truly believe there is hope out there for everyone if they have access to the right help and chances in life.

"I'll forever be grateful for all the help I've received as I wouldn't be here today without it. Life's great, I'm back on track and very much looking forward to the future."

Working with private clients as well as those supported by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Devon County Council (DCC), Independent Living West Country creates tailored packages informed and approved by DCC Support Workers where appropriate. Designed to meet the precise needs of each individual, our packages of support are always built to help our clients on their journey towards greater independence.

If you would like to find out how Independent Living West Country can help you, a friend, family, client or patient, do please get in contact.

You can find out more about our range of services [here](#) or simply call one of the team on 01392 467007.