

# Tales of a Patient's Mental Health Journey

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## 0.1 The Story Behind my Illness

### 0.1.1 College-BTEC National Diploma

I began studying with the intention of going to university in the fall of 2012. I picked Chemistry, Biology and Accountancy as my choice subjects at the age of 19. Initially at 16 years of age i had wanted to go a different path to my brother who'd studied chemistry at A-level and at university too. Which he successfully completed i should add. He now works as a chemist making grass grow greener. I went to study a vocational course called Motorsport Vehicle Technology at the Bletchley campus, MK College. I was quite intimidated about getting my hands dirty and as much as i liked the theory behind race teams and how cars worked. I had little aptitude for the physical nature of the job. So at 18 i left college with a distinction in my BTEC Diploma and went to work in a BP Petrol Station. I worked there for around 10 months. Whilst there i applied to become a student/worker/apprentice at Cummings Engineering in Daventry. I saw a lot of engines and had a cool day consisting of three short interviews and a tour of the factory, and then i came back having been successful enough to make it into the final 20 from about 400 or so applicants. My BTEC definitely helped me stand out. Which i think proves that a diploma is a worthwhile qualification. I wasn't successful at the final stage. They took on about half the people there in the final stage. About two months later they laid people off due to a decline in business. So then i felt pretty relieved i hadn't gone there. During my time at BP i had a couple of customers drive off without paying for their fuel so i wasn't in the good books with the manager haha. But i enjoyed having a good income living at my mother's rent free.

### 0.1.2 College A-levels

In September 2012 i left BP to start as a full time student back at the Bletchley campus. I was very prepared. 10 months in retail had provided me with a chance to think about my future. I went to Ikea and bought a load of furniture such as a desk, drawers and paper baskets etc. I spent a few weeks reading up in a GCSE revision guide and got about a B grade in the biology mock they gave us during the first week of term. I was extremely diligent and desired to learn everything i could. On journeys to and from home on the bus i would use the 2 hour round trip to revise from the biology text book. And it was a really efficient method to improve my knowledge - and grades. I also just felt fascinated with my subjects. Less so for accounting but even then i loved it because it was an efficient language to learn business. I could study company

balance sheets, income statements and cash flow reports and understand what they meant. Its been about 6 years so i'm not as good at it now but i could pick up an old book and probably relearn it in six hours because it's easier to reacquire old knowledge. I had a brilliant Chemistry teacher and i relished every lesson. We learnt about molecular shapes, acids, bases, moles and physical constants. All of a sudden i had a new framework for how i looked at the world. Before i was looking at life through the lens of a layman, but i was learning to look at life through the lens of a scientist. And it felt pretty great!

### 0.1.3 Studying Chemistry at University and Going Home

So why am i telling you this? I'm telling you this because in this information is the seeds of my illness. I became so interested in the subject that i neglected my mental health. I put myself under immense pressure and as a result of being around a many talented, naturally gifted people at a prestigious university. I became insecure and kept studying harder and harder. I was pretty insecure and i felt out of place a lot of the time. But i could always just shut those thoughts out and obsess over the wonderful theories and scientific concepts i was learning. I left University at the age of 24 years and a couple of months. The first semester of the third year i managed a couple of 89% scores. The final examinations were harder but i still averaged above 70% so i managed to earn a first class degree. I graduated third in my bachelor class - I'm glad it wasn't first. I feel pretty uncomfortable with how well i did as i can't perform at that level in the real world. By the end of my degree i was really tired and i was glad to be bailing out at the 3 year mark rather than waste a 4th year of funding on a subject i didn't feel i had a future in.

At the end of uni a catalyst for my illness came along and whilst in the initial stages of leaving uni i was doing alright, i quickly began to decline. *I can't really talk about the catalyst but i may refer to it later on. But in short, you could say that i'd been warned and threatened.* Mostly what was happening was i was coming from a really stimulating environment into one where i watched Holby City each week. I didn't have a really bright friend around anymore who i could talk to about maths and science. And i really struggled to adapt back to my old family environment. I kind of left my house in uni because i felt a little bit unobserved. He invited people over to sleep in the house without telling me. Or maybe he did but i forgot. But yeah i was quite shocked that people were staying in my room without my say so. Also i tried to hang out with his girlfriend now that the exams were over and when i suggested we watch a movie her pupils constricted and i could tell she really didn't like me. So i felt like a burden. I was tired and i went out for a walk, about half way in i texted him to say i was going to leave. My dad was happy as he'd seen me on webcam and could tell that i had been suffering. I needed to wind down and just do nothing with my life for about a year or maybe two. But all i could care about was how my CV looked. So i took the first job that came my way even though i had a bad feeling about working there. I think inevitably i was coming to terms with the fact that a degree score is no reliable prediction of how well you're gonna do

in the big wide world. And i have to say, looking at my achievement i feel like i've underperformed in the world outside of academia. But then also, i look how far i've come with my mental health and feel proud of that. I'm a better person these days, perhaps not as logical or rational but my emotional intelligence is much higher. Science made me completely reject my emotional wellness and i know i'm not alone. The people working in academia - many are insecure people that work way too hard. But you know, if you're coming out with important scientific results and theories it can make you feel a godlike sense of power to be finding out something so fundamental. But, i'm glad to be away from uni.

#### **0.1.4 Working as a Production Chemist**

I took a job as a Production Chemist not too far from where my brother lived and worked. I moved in with my bro and paid rent to help him, his fionsay and my nephew out. I was only intending to stay there for a couple of months and then commit to a house of my own. I was becoming ill by this stage. I would spend hours on the computer trying to learn stuff rather than just chilling out and enjoying time with family. I think i had a bad aura about me. My Sister in law was kind of unnerved by my presence. From the moment i started to work i developed a sleep problem. I would keep on waking up in the night and failing to get back to sleep and it was affecting my ability to perform in the job role i had. Eventually i really started to decline. My memory worsened and my obsession with being successful took its toll on me as i began to have memory failures and just felt stressed out that i wasn't getting up to speed with the requirements of my job role. See like i found with the Motorsport course, i wasn't very naturally gifted with the practical side of my subject. I could answer questions in an exam perfectly happily though. I knew someone at uni who was the same as me too. Great exam results but a bit naff when it came to using his hands. The job mostly consisted of following instructions written in a step by step guide. You didn't have to actually understand any of the chemistry behind it to do the job. So i was surprised that their only interest was with people from a chemical background. As far as i was concerned, anyone with a good enough memory to learn the processes could do the job. I also met my arch nemesis. Computer software. They had some complicated software that kept track of stock materials in storage and in use. There was quite a lot of processes to remember. Had i been sleeping well like i was at uni i think i could have learnt everything in the job. But i was becoming ill. I had a friend that was going to Beijing, China to teach english. And the idea of travelling appealed to me. I'd already gone with him on a tour around Scotland so i figured it would be good fun for us both to live in China concurrently.

#### **0.1.5 Applying to Work in China**

I went up to my uni city to see friends again across a weekend and upon arriving home i told my mum that i was going to write my notice and cling on to whatever sanity i had left. I tried to reverse the direction i'd been heading and get my

mind back again. My sleep improved a little which was nice but it was still bad. And at this stage a student from my lab group started getting really mean and giving me a combination of nice and nasty messages. The longer time went the less they messaged me and the worse the messages seemed to get. But three days would go by and some shitty text would come through, and initially i'd be upset but then i'd forget about it. I had no idea she'd intended for me to go to China. But later i remembered the catalyst of my illness once i got to Beijing. It was pretty upsetting to realise i was lured out to China. The timing of the texts and her giving me a hard time coincided with my decision to quit. I just needed a break. My self esteem had plummeted and i wanted to get it back. In the early stages i thought China would be a lucky break for me and that i'd come back with it on my CV that i'd learnt mandarin and get a good job. If i were more emotionally intelligent i would of realised i didn't actually want to put myself under pressure to achieve a high profile job or career. I wanted to be successful. I wanted to go to China and prove myself. I started working at HelloFresh in their refrigerated warehouse. But after three days i found another job. I found the experience of doing mindless work upsetting as i was deskilling and i felt i deserved better after trying so hard in my degree. I started working in a call centre for Charles Tyrwhitt. I was seriously depressed and one of the staff trainers took a disliking too me. I think he felt threatened by my degree. And to make things worse i'd lied and said i got a 2:2. If that was problematic what would've he done if he knew i had a first. But i can't prove this is why. The biggest issue was i was stressed and wasn't sleeping well. And my memory was still impaired by my illness. So i wasn't learning either. After a week of training we had a test. I needed 80% but got about 70%. Loads of people there had looked at my CV and thought i was really bright but then the results came through. I didn't mind them seeing my score. But it was upsetting to see people kind of distance themselves from me. They were only so nice to me because they thought i was special i suppose. Perhaps they thought of me as a fraud. I think i could of done alright if i wasn't being gaslighted though.

### **0.1.6 My Ultimatum**

I quit the job a few weeks later. I went up to Liverpool with a litre of methanol in my back pack and in my head i thought i'm either going to kill myself or i'm going to China. So i abstained, which was a good thing because methanol might not kill you but it could leave you blind, and it would suck to have to go through life blind because of your own actions.

## **0.2 Departing for China**

About two weeks later i was flying off to China. I tried to sleep on the plane but i couldn't. And to my disappointment all the mattresses in China are rock hard. So my sleep didn't improve. I was pretty much incapable of thinking rationally and my short term memory was stuffed after months of sleep deprivation. I

had no creativity left in me and i struggled to adapt to the new culture. It was quite scary the first month. But then i started getting used to it. My classroom assistant somehow ruined my relationship with my boss. She asked me if i was going to Shanghai with her husband to see the Formula 1 race. I said i hadn't heard anything from him. So she sent a message back saying that i didn't want to go with him. That super pissed me off as that wasn't what i said. Another time she said they see me as a baby. So i said i dont want to be seen that way. Next day i see my boss and she's got tears in her eyes and wouldn't look at me. I should have got someone to translate for me and discuss it. But i was so messed up i couldn't think how to solve a simple problem. I should have just sold my assistant down the road as a liar and someone that was manipulating the truth. But, unfortunately i just decided to accept my new environment even though i was getting isolated. After spending three months around people that refused to have a conversation with me and not having any english to read on signs and in shops etc. My mind became quite empty. The speed of my thoughts slowed down and i was running out of ideas for English lessons. Once again, i found that i sucked at working in a skilled job. So of course my self esteem plummeted even further. I tried coming into school later in the day in a bid to get more sleep. But in reality, all that happened was i laid in bed for two hours each morning wide awake. Eventually the feelings of isolation made me paranoid and depressed and i started wanting to commit suicide again. I would wake up hungry in the mornings and it just made me want to climb up to the top floor of my block of flats and throw myself off.

### **0.2.1 Discussion with my Recruiter**

About two months into my time living in China i had a discussion with the director of the company that recruited me to go into China. I asked for some help with planning lessons but to no avail unfortunately. He told me to have a meeting with my line manager. So i did. She asked me whether i wanted to leave at the six month mark. But i was still trying to cling to my reputation and make a success of myself. So i told her no. I want to stay for the year. She picked up on my dishonesty and made some sort of remark about it. The assistant that was translating to me also smirked as she asked me the question. Which made me think the school would go crazy if i said i wanted to leave. So i stayed. But i remembered what the director told me. Some people get to the three month mark and decide its not for them. A week or so later a teacher told me to leave in mandarin. And this was the catalyst behind my decision to leave the school. I got the impression that i wasn't wanted there at the school.

### **0.2.2 The Meeting in Late June**

I had a meeting with a member from the BIEE called Tian and my boss Ms Wang. She asked did i want to stay until September? i said no and just asked if i could leave in two weeks. And what a terrible miscalculation that was. The kids and teachers became quite hostile towards me. I sent a suicide note to my

family. Bought 6 beers and started to make my way to a bridge. Whilst on the way there my brothers fionsay saw the messages i'd sent and told him to contact me immediately. So i told my bro with tears in my eyes that i couldn't take it anymore and that i was going to throw myself off of a bridge because i didn't think the school would let me catch a plane home. He got me onto the phone with my dad. I heard voices in my head telling me that if i didn't jump off of the bridge that i'd get brutally murdered to death. My dad told me that even if that was true he wanted me to at least try catching the plane. So i went back to my flat, grabbed my partially packed suitcase and went to the airport. I stayed on the phone to my dad, bro and mum whilst i waited for the guy from the BIEE, Tian, to turn up. I got on the plane at the later time than Tian said. He said it was leaving at half 5 but i remembered from the website that it was actually 5:55 that the plane leaved. So i turned up at that time at my gate with a cup of costa coffee in hand. I took the plane to Phuket, Bangkok and then London Heathrow.

### 0.3 Arrival Home

My dad was waiting for me at the gate looking pretty shattered around 7am. He was so worried about me, understandably, that he hadn't slept that night. I was just relieved to be home. My dad told me over a subway meal that my stepmum's MS had got a lot worse. In my illness when i was at home before going to China, i threw food and tea at my step mum and told her to fuck off i think. I'd really gone off of the rails. I'd been screaming and shouting at my mum as well. My poor mum had to deal with a husband that was grumpy because he was in need of a hip replacement and was in constant pain. And i was an arrogant and distant son that didn't appreciate his family. So she started taking an anti-depressant around the time of my arriving home. Thankfully she improved and pictures of her on messenger improved - her eyes were smiling now. I'll never forget the photo she had on WeChat. The school must of thought we were a terrible family. And it was all my fault for disrespecting my family so heavily. I hurt my dad's feelings before i left as well. I didn't appreciate his advice or listen to him. He tried to discourage me from going to China but i was completely ignorant of everything everybody told me. This last point left me feeling extremely ashamed and guilty. But that part can wait for now until later. I initially kept my distance from my stepmum but later on we went some length to reconciling. But i started hearing voices all the time. There was an abandoned car outside my dad's and the voices told me to get into it, drive to a bridge and throw myself off. They told me my mum and dad were going to die. That a truck would crash into them in the road. I told my dad on the way back to my mum's what i'd been hearing in my head. I was very stubborn and refused to go to a therapist at this stage.



### 0.3.1 A Friendly Chat Turned into a Mental Health Admission

I began talking to my cousin on Facebook. And the syntax she used to talk to me with freaked me out. I was hearing voices commenting on the messages she sent me and i was left with an impression that she had been abducted by the two people i associated with the gaslighting and catalyst to my bad health. So i freaked out and remained downstairs staring at a laptop screen. I must've been without sleep for a good 30 hours. I told my mum what i thought had happened. I had this vision of my family all being around the table at my aunts asking for my cousin to come back, on the phone. So i decided to do just that. I phoned my dad and told him to get to my aunts. There was one condition. If i was wrong i had to go into the mental health services and start talking about my problems. Sure enough we all turned up and i quickly realised i'd been mistaken. We walked around some large house my cousin was house sitting and then went back to my aunt's. I told them a bit about my suicidal thoughts and that i was going to throw myself off of a bridge when my brother phoned. We went straight from my aunt's to the MK hospital. Technically we should of gone to a different hospital but MK hospital was nearer to my dad's and my aunt's. The women assessed me and gave my family a crisis card.

I met a lady called Karen at the Whiteleaf Centre the next day. But it was quite disconcerting for me. From the car park i could see a youth offenders prison and the voices in my head started going crazy. I thought prisoners came out of the prison in a van and onto the wards to kill patients. So i was quite scared. I can't really remember what i told Karen. I just agreed that yes i'm hearing voices, i feel like the tv and radio are communicating with me. They signed me up to have quetiapine. Their initial instincts were that i had schizophrenia. I was mortified by this diagnosis. I was still a little career minded at this stage and thought schizophrenia would scare off employers. I went home to my dad's, said sorry to my stepmum and then headed back to my mum's. Sometime in the next couple of days i just couldn't cope with the idea of my mum and dad dying and i had a vision of me in London or on a train somewhere. So i went into town and had an overpriced pint. Then took the bus to MK central. I went into Boots and bought a load of electrical adapters. I'd decided that i was going to go back to Beijing in the hope that it would save my family. I bought a return ticket to London Euston, and then went on a long walk to god knows where. I ended up at Hyde Park. Took a subway to Kings Cross, and then stayed there until 5am. I didn't respond to any texts from my family. I started considering catching a train to Paris. But went to Gatwick and promptly chickened out on going back to Beijing, because frankly i knew i couldn't cope with the isolation. I was also seriously tired from being awake 36 hours or so, and couldn't even remember why the hell i was there in the first place. I thought about going to Toronto. I left Gatwick and ended up at London Victoria i think. I felt like people were after me and pursuing me in the streets. I took a circle line train and got off at King's Cross. Then i went for some random walks around surrounding streets. Eventually i found myself a couple of miles away from King's Cross. I

don't know where but there was a Sainsbury's a bar and a bridge over a railway. The voices in my head started telling me that i was going to get stabbed and murdered. So after i had a chat with a passerby who totally freaked me out, i mounted the bridge. Initially i was too scared of the height and i didn't like the landing site. So i walked along to the halfway point and lined myself up with a concrete block next to the railway line. Some guy kept yelling at me telling me to get off of the bridge. I thought if i did as he said he or someone he knew was gonna stab me. So it just helped into jumping. I didn't really want to die, so my hands came out in front of me and my right wrist took the brunt of the force. I blacked out so i don't remember how but when i came around i was laying on my back on the gravel next to the train tracks. Within a few minutes the trains had been stopped and an ambulance crew were tending to me. I stared up at the sky confused and completely overwhelmed by the voices in my head. I just remember thinking "did i just throw myself off of a bridge because of some voices in my head?" I knew i was going to the Whiteleaf, and i felt convinced that i would die there and subsequently my family too to keep it a secret.

### **0.3.2 The Whiteleaf - 1st Admission Circa July 24th 2018**

My psychosis was so bad that i thought i was going to die on the ward. So i decided not to eat. I had maybe a bowl of cereal in the morning and that was it. The rest of the day i'd just lay in bed doing nothing. No phone, no computer. Just me locked inside my own head hearing voices. I'd get freaked out by the staff, stuff would move around the room after cleaning and i would hear voices saying that there might be consequences to leaving items where they are but there could also be consequences if i moved the items. Everytime i made a mistake i believed it would affect the manner in which the prisoners would kill me. I didn't like some of the staff members' names also. One guy is called Ignatious. It made me think of the word ignite. So i thought i was going to get burnt with a lighter and a deodorant can. They put me on Olanzipine, but i didn't believe it was a real mental health ward - i thought the medication was fake. I took it but i really struggled to realise just how ill i was. By the time i had my section 3 signed off, i had gone some way to realising that i was ill. But unfortunately i still had a lot off misconceptions and disbeliefs.

## **0.4 The Aftermath of my 1st Admission - A Cautionary Tale**

I think i got out of the Whiteleaf in late August. I still thought we (me and all of my family) were all going to die but i just tried my hardest to make the most of whatever time i believed we had left. These underlying thoughts and beliefs ultimately lead to me jumping off of a second bridge. I started working at Debenhams as a Christmas Temp. I enjoyed the social side to my job but it

did mean i came off of ESA benefits. I spent quite a lot on this Christmas 2018 because i thought it was going to be our last.

#### **0.4.1 Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Anxiety**

When i left Sapphire ward i realised i was suffering from a lot of anxiety. So my care coordinator put me in contact with a guy who did CBT and was training for a qualification in CBT at Oxford University part time. In CBT the patient looks at there bodily sensations, their thoughts and their behaviours. And it looks at the relationships between these factors as they are interconnected and interdependent on one another. So for example, a patient that suffers a lot of anxiety when they go out or has a conversation might be able to reduce their anxiety by paying attention to their posture and how they comport themselves. They can try keeping their shoulders back and not tightened up against there neck. Rather than crossing their arms they can keep them by their sides. And changing these behaviours can go some length to reducing how anxious the patient feels. For me i suffered a lot of anxiety passing people in the street and i could recall feeling that way when i was about 16. So it had been a fairly long affliction. My first experiment was to say hello to people as i passed by them. Initially i was quite anxious when i did this but as the week progressed i became more and more comfortable with saying hi to people. We next investigated a situation i was in at work whilst at Debenhams. I was working in the fitting room on womenswear and there was a policy that no men are allowed in the fitting room. I asked a man to stand outside and he went ballistic. So rather than standing front on to him i stood side on so as not to appear threatening. He kept banging on about how i was a male and in the changing rooms but he wasn't allowed. A member of staff defended me and eventually they left. So we assessed that experience and decided standing side on was a good way to reduce my anxiety. We also investigated an experience where i was walking down an alley at night and a guy with a torch was approaching me. So he could see me but i couldn't see him. I felt very anxious. So we had a chat about it. After 13 sessions i finished with CBT and i felt a lot less anxious and was in a more relaxed state of mind.

#### **0.4.2 Returning to Work at BP**

A couple of months after i finished work at Debenhams i began working back in my old job at the BP petrol station. I'd become less career minded and quite liked the job. It was good to be back with some old work friends too. I came off of my Olanzipine antipsychotic medication around the same time i started working because i believed the medication was fake and doing nothing to help me. And that was a terrible mistake. I started thinking the TV, radio and other media was communicating with me. I'd see an article on disability and the voices made me believe that that was what was going to happen to me, for example. I saw a licence plate PE59 — It made me think my dad was going to die aged 59, that and the fact the lady paid for £13 of fuel, which i took

as a sign. I also started getting paranoid that a rumour was passing around about me among the members of staff working there. My boss asked me if i was alright at the end of one shift. But i had no idea of how to explain to her that i believed my dad was going to die. I knew it wouldn't make sense to her it was just something that i believed in. As time went on i started to hear voices telling me the longer i lived the worse my family's deaths were going to be. And i began the difficult process of convincing myself to go and kill myself.

### **0.4.3 The Week Leading Up to the Second Bridge Jump**

I considered burning myself. I stopped going into work and only turned up the day after i missed a shift to buy a can of petrol. I think the guy who was serving me, a friend, had some deep down unsettling feeling as he served me at the till. I went home and planned to burn myself in the night. I figured i could do it down an alley at the side of my house. But come 3am the idea of burning myself was clearly never going to happen. For a start there is a good chance that one can of petrol wouldn't be enough to kill me. Initially it would've been easier as all you have to do is push a button on your lighter. But then you probably have an agonising half a minute or more of burning. And if you live you will have terrible scars, possibly blindness among other issues. As your nerves grow back you'd be in complete agony and you run the risk of getting an infection and dying from that. Its a grizzly end, so i knew i couldn't do it in that way. I couldn't throw myself in front of a vehicle or train because i felt bad for the person driving. So i knew i had a knife, i thought perhaps i'll go and slit my arms. But the voices in my head told me that if i have a peaceful death there would be consequences for me and my family. I thought they'd find me in a bush bleeding out and kidnap me, then torture me. So i decided i would throw myself off of another bridge. I also felt a need to die before my birthday. If i had a good birthday i feared the consequences for family and friends would be terrible. Getting myself to jump after scarring my memory with the trauma of the first jump was really hard. My psychosis was getting out of control. If i saw someone in the street that looked vaguely like someone i know i thought there was consequences for them. I believed there was an electronic device in my head allowing someone to hear my thoughts. Someone that was keeping track of people i'd seen and failed suicide attempts i made. The first bridge i went to in MK wasn't like the bridge i had imagined. So i went in search of another bridge. I looked down at the cobbled partition breaking the road into two. Some poor sod would see me fall but i wouldn't fall in front of the car. But i was so scared, the fear was unbelievable i can't put it into words just how terrified i was. So i quickly decided i couldn't do it and i went home. I felt ashamed. I thought my failed attempt had consequences for my friends and family. A couple of days later i went back to MK and decided to get drunk in Whetherspoons first. But then i just kind of shut it out and relaxed for a bit. I went home again knowing i probably couldn't throw myself off of a bridge whilst drunk. A couple of days later i returned to the first bridge i found on my first attempt. It was high enough to kill me, but the fall was short enough that i wouldn't suffer for long.

I saw a break in the traffic coming from a roundabout, hauled myself up on the marble sides to the bridge and rolled off. But something took hold of my body, as i don't remember consciously choosing to do it, but my fingers latched onto the marble ledge of the bridge. I thought about letting go but i realised my body had already rotated enough that i would just go down and break a load of bones but survive. Mainly because my head wouldn't take a big enough blow to kill me. So i just held on and once i was positioned to go feet first down my fingers just slipped off of the ledge. It all happened extremely fast. I buckled at me knees and my bum came into contact with the road. I heard something break and felt a fair amount of pain coming from my pelvis.

#### 0.4.4 John Radcliffe Hospital

I laid in bed with moderate pain for a few days and then i went into theatre to get my pelvis fixed. One of the doctors seemed to want to cause me additional grief by rubbing in the fact that i was laying in the bed fucked up and waiting for an operation on my birthday. He also seemed to think it funny that i'd failed at life so bad and that i was reading a book called heroic failures - Actually it was difficult to read because no matter how bad the people in that book had failed i felt like none had got their family and friends slaughtered. My failure was on an unprecedented level as far as i believed. The doctor seemed to understand what was going on in my head is all i'll say - and now lets move on. Initially walking was difficult. I had to use a pulpit - a large frame with wheels - to walk around. After a couple of weeks i was using a crutch. It took a long time for my nerves to settle down. I practised a bit of mindfulness with the doctor, that laughed at me reading Heroic Failures, on the trauma ward i was staying in. At least he did something to help me. I had a lot of troubling thoughts. For failing to kill myself i thought i would have to suffer the worst death imaginable. That i'd be taken to a warehouse full of ladders and platforms. And that with a ruined pelvis and a lot of pain i'd have to run up steps and throw myself off. All the while it would be timed on a stopwatch. If i failed to do a challenge within a target time there would be a consequence for a friend or family member in the way they died. But on the upside if i did it within the target time i could make their death less painful. I don't think i believed i could possibly save someone though. But i knew i probably couldn't complete this task. About two weeks after my 2nd jump i was sectioned again and i requested to return to the Whiteleaf centre. I thought my parents were going to get slaughtered at the John Radcliffe hospital, so i figured the Whiteleaf at least gave us a chance if i had made it through in the past. I also rejected a lot of the food on offer. The menu would say *good for diabetics*, or *rich in energy* or *Suitable for vegans/vegetarians*. I thought if i ate these items there would be consequences for my friends and family that were vegetarian and my dad who was diabetic. I felt like if i had any enjoyment or positive thoughts there would be consequences for others. After being sectioned they started giving me olanzapine for a few days and then i was transferred to the Whiteleaf.

## 0.5 The Whiteleaf Centre - The 2nd Admission

In my first ward round they suggested that i go on a depot. Which is an injection of antipsychotic medication given on a monthly or sometimes three monthly basis. I agreed to it but i didn't believe the medication was real yet. I spent quite a long time trying to figure out how this operation worked. I saw patients with cigarette burns on their arms and operation scars on an army veteran. I thought these patients were actors who'd gone to extreme lengths to conceal the true nature of their being there on the Sapphire ward. I got quite angry with my Consultant Psychiatrist because she wouldn't give me any leave. Something i believed was important for my rehabilitation. I wanted to go on a walk and once again i didn't realise just how ill i was. She told me i could do laps of the garden to develop my fitness. I left the first ward round feeling fairly pissed off. Little did i know that it would be a good three months before i got independent leave again. So i thought the staff, except the consultant psychiatrist, were fake. And the patients too. The occupational therapist recommended the Opal Ward to me when we went out to get ingredients and cook a meal in the day hospital kitchen. The next day she came to me to tell me a patient had left the Opal ward and that there was now a bed for me. The army veteran told me from what he knew of talking to Opal ward patients that i was going to have a good time at Opal. He said they do activities and often get out off of the ward.

### 0.5.1 Opal Ward - The Start of my Recovery

As time progressed i began to get a little more rational about my circumstances. Just to give you an idea about where i was in my recovery when i went to Opal. A member of staff on Opal called Charlotte spoke to me 15 minutes after i arrived. I thought Charlotte wasn't her real name and that she was just saying that it was because someone i knew called Charlotte was going to die. On Sapphire i believed there were hidden cameras watching me 24/7 and that the person listening to my thoughts was watching me through them. I was unsure about whether Opal ward had any cameras. There were patients on the Opal Ward that i'd seen on Sapphire ward during my first admission. I started to have theories that perhaps two of the patients who joined the Sapphire ward just before i left weren't actors and were genuine patients. But there was another guy there who'd been on the ward since i was admitted to Sapphire for the first time. He used to walk the corridors saying "*I never slept all my life!*" and "*Bye bye*". I thought he was referring to the fact i'd gone a year without sleeping properly. And i took bye bye as - you're going to die bye bye. Because i believed prisoners were going to come on the ward, i saw bye bye as a negative. I have no idea today why he said these things on repeat. But it was triggering my psychosis. Initially when first admitted to Opal ward, he started ranting on repeat "*i never slept all my life*". But he'd stopped saying bye bye. Which was comforting. I still laid in my bed having an psychotic episode thanks to his ranting though. As time went on i began to realise that it was unlikely that all the people around me were actors. I also trusted the staff on Opal more than

i did the staff on Sapphire. The staff on Sapphire did some pretty odd ball things when i was there that didn't help my condition at all unfortunately. Like moving my glasses from one position on the window sill to another. I didn't know what to do. Do i move the glasses back for when the prisoners arrive or leave them where they are? I didn't know. I just thought there was a chance they'd stab me in the eyes on a 50:50 chance that i'd get it right or wrong by moving or not moving them. The best part about being on Opal ward was all the activities i could get involved in. We played basketball one day. Went to the driving range to play golf. I could work out in the gym with a trainer. I made smoothies, had current affairs sessions discussing the news and reading newspapers. There was an anxiety management group and once a week i'd cook a meal in the kitchen on the ward. A Pets as Therapy dog called Ruby came on the ward with its owners most weeks. There was also music therapy groups on Fridays where i'd play musical instruments and improvise with other patients. At least once a week there were music sessions where we would listen to music and watch music videos for at least an hour. There was also a good pool table on the ward and i could play with staff and patients. I made two really good friends on the Opal ward. We support each other as best we can. The best thing to come out of jumping off of the second bridge is the friends that i've made. One of which is a member of staff and my one to one in the supported living i'm in.

### 0.5.2 Therapy with a Psychologist

During my second ward round my consultant psychiatrist asked me if i'd like some psychotherapy, to which i agreed. The therapy sessions did a huge lot of good to convince me that the Whiteleaf was a safe place and that prisoners don't come on the ward. It also helped me come to terms with my beliefs such as there being a device in/on my brain. The most helpful thing was that my psychologist simply believed what i had to say to her. It was the first time i was able to talk about what happened to me in China and at home. No one else wanted to hear any of it. She was also very careful not to say any buzz words that might upset me - such as *bye bye*. But *bye* on its own is ok. We decided that i should check in with the person who was listening to my thoughts once a day. Perhaps tell them how my day went and what i got up to. I thought the person listening to my thoughts wanted to kill my family so at the advice of my psychologist i was to appeal to their friendly/good nature. Because no one is completely evil. There is some good in everyone. I found this technique really helpful especially when i was having psychotic episodes. I would talk to her in my head and i'd get some relief from the overwhelming anxiety and depression that stemmed from caring for my family's well being.

We tried to address my psychotic episodes and ways i could try and help reduce their intensity. I bought some essential oils with various different smells in them. The idea was it would work as a grounding technique. If i felt a psychotic episode coming on i would sniff the oils and it would help to keep the episode at bay. It helped a little bit.

To comfort myself i also wrote a couple of sentences out on flashcards. Things that i could read when i was feeling really depressed that might comfort me. So i wrote down various theories that showed my family were safe and it was just a game going on in my head.

We discussed my experiences with socialising. A couple of beers could help reduce my anxiety and keep a psychotic episode at bay but if i drank too much things would go the other way and i'd suffer psychosis.

One time i managed to stop a psychotic episode by being very honest with myself and criticising my decisions not to listen to my family and not appreciating enough. I told myself i deserved to suffer for my actions. And to this day i do believe in some ways that i deserve what happened to me because i didn't love my family enough.

I'm slowly phasing out my psychotherapy sessions now with the aim of being ready to go to work as a peer support worker at the end of 2020. We mostly now have a chat and check in with each other. Occasionally i have something to share but i've become good at forgetting negative experiences. I do my best not to let myself think about them whenever there is a trigger. I just try my hardest to keep my mind blank and let the thoughts and feelings pass.

### 0.5.3 My Medication Journey

Because i stopped taking my olanzipine my consultant psychiatrist wanted me to go on to a depot injection once a month, of paliperidone. It helped reduce the intensity of my psychotic episodes but it didn't eliminate them. I had a really bad episode at one time so she topped up my antipsychotic medication with a couple of milligrams of respiridone. Since i had been on the Sapphire ward it was taking me two hours to fall asleep and i was waking up in the night three or four times. I believed this was the device in my brain that was stopping me from sleeping. When on paliperidone and respiridone my psychotic episodes lost some intensity but they didn't eradicate them. Now that i'd tried at least two medications and had found they didn't work effectively enough i became eligible to start taking clozapine - a wonder drug. Initially as one medication phased out and another phased in i was really unwell. I kept twitching uncontrollably - a symptom of schizophrenia, but i believed it was from devices in my body. I also felt very strongly that someone was listening to my thoughts. I had about two days worth of psychosis. But once i'd completed tritration of the clozapine (during tritration they slowly increase the dose of the clozapine each day) i started to feel much better. I haven't had a psychotic episode since i've been on clozapine and i've been getting to sleep within about twenty minutes and i don't wake up in the night. I've put on a little bit of weight but i look healthier for it. When i came back from China, because of all the walking i did there i weighed about 60 kg. I now weigh 92 kg but i'm not overweight. I just used to be extremely skinny.

I moved to a supported living accommodation just a short walk away from the Whiteleaf centre. Which is handy because i have to have a blood test once every two weeks because i'm taking clozapine. I think two blood tests a month



are much better than one painful depot injection. Every time i had the injection it really hurt and i also would see colours because my body would think i was seriously wounded and drop my blood pressure. The blood tests are done by staff who give hundreds of blood tests every week. So its painless and quick. Initially you go about 18 weeks of weekly blood tests. Then it goes to two weeks and then four weeks. After your blood test they give you the medication. So there is no faff about trying to get your meds from the GP which can be a hassle and sometimes they cock things up and don't have your meds ready. At least that was my experience when i tried to get my olanzipine after my first admission to the Sapphire ward. The reason for the blood tests is that one side effect of clozapine can be that you lose white blood cells. They have a traffic light system. Green - and your white blood cell levels are normal. Amber - and they have dropped slightly. Red - and you have to stop taking the medication until your wbc levels recover. You can start clozapine again but if you get another red light you have to come off of the medication. I think its about 1% to 3% of patients that react badly to the drug. I can't express enough just how good of a drug clozapine is. It has improved my quality of life massively and i think i will probably take it for the rest of my life. Because i don't want to ever go through what i've been through in the last few years again.s

## 0.6 Supported Living

I've been living in supported living accommodation since December 9th 2019. It took me about a month to settle in. I'm glad that i get to cook my own meals now. I usually do one new recipe a week. I like to try recipes from Saturday Kitchen. I've had pasties with cheese sauce. Chicken with a creamy mushroom and mustard sauce. I also cook asian food with the help of my one to one member of staff who i also consider a friend. We've made Qeema mince, chicken curry and lentil dahl recipes. Most recently i tried Qeema with pasta. I love the flavour from the spices in asian food. It also freezes and reheats very well. My chicken with creamy mushroom and mustard sauce turned a bit acidic after freezing because it has wine in it. I've made friends with one resident in my side of the house. We play video games and watch films, and often go into town together taking it in turns to buy one another food and drink. I'm having to socially isolate from the other side of the house at the moment. But when there wasn't a lockdown in force i was going over there and chatting to the staff and residents on that side of the house. My side of the house is all male whereas its mixed sex on the other side. I got to go swimming at a discounted rate before the coronavirus lockdown. They asked for my address and they could tell i'm a mental health resident. So i'm eligible for an approximately £3.00 discount on each session. I miss playing golf with the Opal ward staff and patients. I might try and join them for a swing when Coronavirus has been defeated. When i was on Opal i did a lot of reading books. I was managing about two books a week. But i'm now playing a lot of ps3 and ps4 so i don't read as much. I should probably spend a bit more time reading but i'm loving gaming currently. I'll

talk about benefits in the next session, but recently i had a pay increase from universal credit and PIP. I was on £317 a month. But it was difficult not to overspend. I could tret myself to a couple of coffees but once all my bills were paid for there was only just enough to buy my food.

## **0.7 Claiming Benefits**

### **0.7.1 Universal Credit**

My mum used to manage a job centre so she had a lot of knowledge about what i was entitled to and she also understood the Universal Credit system. I will ask her to write a section later in this report giving advice on applying for benefits. I know of a lot of people on ESA earning about £80 a week. But since my UC claim was reassessed and i was put on a list of 'in need of support' i've been earning more than people get paid on ESA, paid to me on a monthly basis. ESA is a weekly benefit of about £80. I'm earning nearly twice as much from UC. You need to make sure you are put on the right benefit though otherwise you might get paid only circa £400 a month as of June 2020 which isn't too far different from what you get on ESA. Since i filled out a questionnaire sent to me by the job centre i've been earning about £750 a month. And they backdated it to when i first claimed the benefit way back to December 2019 i think but it might have been since i first applied back in May 2019. The thing you need to be aware of with UC though is that you need a computer or equivalent with an internet connection as a lot of it is managed online. You will have a work coach and occasionally you might have to message them or attend a meeting at the Job Centre. I've always had a fit note from my GP so they've never tried to push me into work and now that i'm listed as 'in need of support' i no longer have to produce fit notes to declare i'm unfit for work. If you start out on the lower rate you will need to produce a fit note each month excusing you from searching for work. A fit note is a statement authorised by your GP doctor excusing you from work or looking for work.

### **0.7.2 Personal Independence Payment**

PIP is a payment that people with poor mobility or mental health issues can apply for. Whether you get awarded PIP is based in a points based system. You get points for things like your mobility - do you need a wheelchair or have special requirements when you travel due to anxiety for example. You need to score 8 points to be eligible. But, if at first you don't succeed. Within a month of your results back from PIP you can appeal the decision they've made if they decline to give you the benefit.

To claim PIP, you will have to phone a number and give your address as well as your national insurance number. You make the call to get them to send you an application form. Its really important that when you fill out this form you think of how you are when you are at your worst - when your illness is affecting

you most. For example i can operate a washing machine most days but if i'm ill i stop eating and just lie in bed all day. I'm not capable of much when i'm in that state of mind. hopefully a member of staff from the Whiteleaf can back up your claims by including medical documentation with your application.

Once you've sent the paperwork off you will most likely get invited to have an interview. The nearest centre to Aylesbury is at MK train station. Its important to note that the sooner you apply for PIP the better, as this process can take quite a lot of time. I phoned them up in the summer of 2019. It took nearly two months for the paperwork to arrive. I had an interview in January 2020. Initially they scored me 5 points. A support worker then helped me to appeal the decision. And i was successful. I now get about £300 a month from PIP. So my financial situation has improved drastically. Before i was having to borrow money off of my parents to get me through the month. But now i'm fully independent. they also backdated the PIP to the date when i left the Whiteleaf and began living in supported living. Its important to note that you can't get PIP whilst you are sectioned on a mental health ward. But once you are living independently/ semi-independently they will grant you it.

## **0.8 Perspectives from a Parent-Carer**

### **0.9 Mum's Story**

#### **0.9.1 A Mums account about her son's Mental Health journey**

**Dated: August 2020**

##### **Summary**

I am immensely proud of my son and his insight to his journey through a mental health condition I had heard of, but not for one-minute thought it would ever come close to me and my family. If I could have a wish, I would make it all go away in a heartbeat, but as that isn't possible, I am doing all I can to learn about the condition so that I am able to support him in whatever way he needs, now, and in the future.

#### **0.9.2 Early days**

Always a cheeky chap growing up, talented actor and musician, and with several friends, nothing to suggest anything an issue. It was a bombshell when he told me what had happened to him at a young age, and as me and his dad had by then split up, it was even harder to deal with. He was brave but the Police couldn't prosecute. He should have had counselling at that point but there were no offers or guidance from any statutory bodies. Did that have any bearing on where we are today? For now, following 2 years of support through mental health services, I am loving seeing him having fun and doing things that I do

not think he has truly been able to do with full enjoyment for several years. He is a very caring individual and that shines through in how he relates to people he comes into contact with. My best hopes are that he finds a job at some point that he will enjoy doing without any regrets in relation to his academic journey.

### **0.9.3 Where did it start**

The first time I thought something wasn't quite right was when he was at college. He struggled with communications with a tutor, saying he couldn't understand him, and yet he still completed that BTEC with a highly commended, equivalent to 2 A Levels. After that he started work for a few months doing night work which he seemed ok with, but clearly was below his academic capabilities, finally deciding to go back to college to take further A-Levels to get into Uni. He had to pay his way this time, but he proved to be a bright scholar so he got some help from the college to pay for it. He did really well, and had a girlfriend he met on his course, and all seemed ok, although he was struggling to cope with his step-mother during the time he was living at his dad's. Out of the blue I got a call from his girlfriend, saying she was really worried about him. To this day I don't know what happened other than it was black moment for him, but he dropped out of his Christmas job and moved in with me. He finished his A-Levels with my help to get him there as he just didn't seem in a good place. He told me he was now aware he was gay, and I thought that must have been why he had a black moment with his then girlfriend. Success with his A-levels and into Uni. All seemed good. By the end of the first year and into the 2nd, I started to feel things were not quite right, and he was spending a lot of time studying and seemingly not following the usual "Uni student" socialising behaviours. Short term jobs in the holidays seem to be attract little problems, although at times he had some good ones he really was enthused about. I talked to him about how he was coping with things, and he made an appointment to seek help on his return to Uni. I thought he needed to talk about the past incident when he was young; but he didn't go to the appointment or make another one. Graduation Day – a First in Chemistry. I couldn't be prouder as me and his dad sat in the audience to watch him receive his degree. After, he introduced me to a couple of girls whom I hadn't heard him mention before, and he saw them after leaving Uni too, a couple of times.

### **0.9.4 Post-graduation**

He landed a chemistry job and moved to live with his brother for a while. During that time, he started telling me he couldn't understand his manager's communications, or why things couldn't be written down, and why did people want to know personal stuff about him. He seemed absent minded as he had a near miss accident at work. I began to feel like we had been here before as I spent a lot of time talking him through things he was experiencing. He quit the job after 12 weeks and said he wanted to teach English in China instead, which I found quite surprising as he had never mentioned this before when at

Uni. During the period between quitting that job and leaving for China things got steadily worse. He asked me why were people breathing on him or laughing about him when going for inoculations; the company not doing their best for him; or not getting the school he would have preferred. At one point he got incredibly angry with me and told me to get away from him or else. I calmed him down but I couldn't believe this was my son. I had never ever heard or seen him like this. I knew there had been a recent bad incident with his step mum and he was barred from his dads. I put it down to stress as he just wanted to start his new job in China and it seemed to have taken a long time to get to the point he could fly there. He found another job which he seemed ok with, but then I got a text out of the blue to say he was in Liverpool instead of at work. He had had another black moment but he wasn't prepared to tell his agency so he lost that job, and I didn't know what the problem was, so I felt quite helpless really. I took him to the airport in March 2018, and felt really low myself. I wished he wasn't going as I worried how he would cope by himself out there. He was going against his dad and brother's advice too but it was his life, so I supported his decision. It seemed he was ok in China; I got regular communications, and he told me he was fine. I was on holiday 3 months later in Turkey and heard from him whilst away, he said he was ok; but then his brother told me he would be coming home soon, which was news to me. A week later I got a message I would not want any parent to get. I rang his dad and he said he'd had one too, and his brother was on the phone already to him and he would call me back when possible. That proved to be the longest 24 hours ever. Somehow, thanks to his brother and dad, they got him home! How he managed that in the state he was in and changed Planes twice I will never know, but I was just so, so, pleased to see him home alive.

### **0.9.5 Getting help**

Perhaps the journey back to England was the easiest thing we managed looking back. It was quite clear he wasn't well. He barely slept at all, ate very little, and was telling me all the time to take a holiday whilst I still could. I turned to my GP for help and started on medication to help me cope. It brought me and his dad back together for the first time in 14 years. We had to work together on this one to help him. At first, hearing his account of things, we both tried to contradict his explanation, which made it even worse for him. I tried calling 111 and was told to speak to the GP Surgery, but the GP told me they couldn't help unless he went there himself, but he didn't think he was ill, so he wasn't going to do that. Catch 22 then. After 3 weeks when it was clear this wasn't going away, we came to an arrangement with him and my family to get together and he would have the chance to tell the family what was going on, but in return he had to visit hospital afterwards with us. Following the gathering where he showed his photos from China, talked about life as a teacher, and was able to visit a house where his cousin was house sitting for her friends, he then agreed to go to hospital. I could tell he was scared. A long wait later, we were told he was very ill but it wasn't the right mental health hospital because he didn't live

in their area and needed to go to another. They did contact them to register he needed an appointment with them, and advised they would call us late that day. We were given an emergency crisis number to call if we needed it before we got to the other hospital. I tried to call it later that day at my son's request as he was very scared by now, but turned out they couldn't help either as not their area! I rang our Mental Health hospital switchboard in the end and got through to a gentleman whom gently reassured me and him, they would call shortly. When they did, they asked us to take him the next morning to see the duty support team, so still not a quick turn-around. I don't think I slept that night so that I could keep watch over him. Mental Health Team; Our first contact with Mental Health services. Following a consultation with a key worker allocated to him, and then a locum doctor, he was prescribed Quetiapine and was told it was for schizophrenia, which completely threw him. He didn't want that diagnosis and he didn't want the medication either. It took me and his dad a couple of hours to persuade him to take it. That night he slept for 12 hours. He needed it. His key worker called again and told me not to let him out of my sight until he had a mental health assessment. This was arranged for the next day, but strangely they never asked me or his dad for any information or input, and they decided he should remain at home, and arrange to collect further meds the next day. Three hours later he left home saying he was just going for a coffee down the town. I spent the next few 24 hours frantic with worry and hoping the Police would find him soon. British Transport Police broke the news to his dad who rang me to tell me he was alive. I cried. The next time I saw him was in a London hospital. He tried to kill himself by jumping off a bridge on to the national railway network out of Euston. I was so relieved he was alive as at last it seemed he would now get the help he needed. He was sorry about jumping off a bridge and I just wanted to hug him and say it would be ok, but he was so agitated he didn't want that sort of contact. Thankfully injuries were light, possibly due to him being so underweight. We were there for just over 24 hours waiting for a bed for him in our MH hospital. I had called the manager there as I was not happy about the MH Assessment, which had in my view contributed to my son ending up where he was. I was assured this was being looked into and they were doing all they could to sort out a bed for him. I snatched a few hours sleep on a hard hospital floor whilst the most fantastic nurse looked out for and watched over my son. She woke me with the news that we now had a bed and an ambulance was booked to take us. I called his dad to meet us there. Following admission to the MH Hospital, his first assessment on the ward finally explained to us what was wrong, and what it was called; Psychosis, possibly as a result of deep depression. I was asked lots of questions and was told that medication was needed to help him recover, that he needed to be Sectioned. It took 8 weeks before he was well enough to be discharged. It was tough going seeing your son so ill, but also a relief to see him gradually getting better and able to eat and sleep better.

### **0.9.6 Recovery 1**

Everything was stable for a few weeks and he took a temp job for Christmas and seemed to be coping with it and enjoying working there. Being temporary it ended and around the same time, he began to stop taking the medications despite my requests for him to continue. There had also been an incident between him and his step dad and relations were very tense at home. He then applied and started a nightwork job he had worked in before. I noticed his sleep pattern was not good but put it down to him working nights. It was almost his 26th birthday. He went out saying he was going shopping. The next call was a hospital A&E. He had jumped off a road bridge. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. I should have realised things were not right at all, he had gone quiet, tidied his room and thrown things out in the days leading up to it, which was odd. I should have tried to get him to his early intervention team for re-assessment. On reflection I wish they had been able to tell me what to look out for after his discharge a few months before, but I don't know if it would have made a difference.

### **0.9.7 Recovery 2**

This time the injuries were more severe so it took longer to be discharged from trauma ward back to his MH hospital. I hated seeing him like this going through the psychosis but he was willing to get back on his feet and go back to the MH ward when fit enough. It's a strange thing psychosis as it seems to come with pain relief! Once there he was on the acute ward for a month with a different anti-psychotic and agreed to have a depot, and was struggling a bit with side effects, and worries about things being moved around, however he responded well and was soon moved to the recovery ward. During this time, he gained access to a psychologist, occupational health therapist and further revisions to medications. Eventually he was able to have leave to me or his dad, and a close friend. Although this stay was longer, I could finally feel confident he was receiving and responding well to the best treatment to reduce his psychosis and to self-manage his condition; his medication was changed in September 2019 to Clozapine, which I know has risks attached, but he is in a much better place mentally since then, and was able to help his psychiatrist decide the right dosage to reduce the psychosis. He made friends with others in the ward, got on well with the staff, and said it was such a relief to have a psychologist he could open up to. He's even taught me some of the techniques of mindfulness! His dad and I spent a lot of time going to the ward to see him and help with his recovery, attending his ward reviews, which helped me to better understand the steps being taken to help him recover. He also received further operations to sort out the physical injuries and never really complains about it. You have to have patience with people whom have mental health problems, and be a good listener, skills which I hope I have demonstrated through my son's mental health journey.

### **0.9.8 Discharge from Section 3**

In December 2019 he was discharged with a care package in place to supported housing. This came as a relief as I was worried he might relapse if he came home and away from where the support is. I can honestly say I have seen him getting better over the past months since being on Clozapine; it is working well for him, and he has shown some great insight to his mental health. I feel more relaxed as a result and no longer on medication myself. I have learnt a lot about psychosis through the Mental Health Team, workshops, online tutorials, all offered to me as carer for someone with psychosis. What I have today is my son enjoying life, and positively doing things like getting his fitness levels back on track. It's not been fun during Covid-19 lockdown for anyone but I think it has helped him to detach from me and his dad a little and stand back up on his own feet again. I am very, very, proud of him; his self-reflection, honesty and openness in his own words about his illness, is simply amazing. What the future holds, I don't know, but I will always be here to support him when he needs it.

### **0.9.9 Benefits**

I do have some understanding of which benefits people can claim, which has enabled me to support my son to get financial help for his particular circumstances, however it is not one size fits all. My best advice is to use Gov.Uk/Benefits, to seek guidance on what people may be entitled to depending their situation, and seek the help of someone to complete and check forms and add to your own assessment of how you are when things are not good.

## **0.10 Dad's Story - Dad's Perspective**

I read Hayden and his Mums story and their detail and perception are accurate and leaves little for me to add so I will not go into much detail and try to tell you how it felt for me and start from his time a university. Firstly, it is important to put this into context as a parent my job is to protect, guide, love and nurture. The fact that they are adults does not make any difference, and I am sure that any parent that goes through this will feel the same. I was really happy when Hayden decided to go to university, I believed it was a chance for him to gain more independence let his hair down, sow some wild oats and have a good social life while studying for a future career. In reality Hayden missed out on the partying and became more of a hermit only studying. As he attended university, he appeared to become lonelier and started to be more depressed. I was relieved when he came home and decided not to stay in Manchester but the relief was short lived and with hindsight, I can see he was already suffering mental illness and I guess at the time I put it down to mild depression and running away from life's problems. When Hayden decided he was going to China I was dead against it. I could not tell him directly because it is in his nature to be stubborn and dig his heels in to prove you wrong, so I tried to encourage him to teach English within Europe as it was closer to home and easier to get to and from. Deep



down I knew China would be a major culture shock for him and worried that the distance and time shift would make him even more distant and remote. I knew Hayden was going to China I remember the disappointment and worry of receiving a call from him telling me he was at Heathrow about to catch a plane to go to China. About 4 weeks into Hayden's China trip the penny started to drop that he was suffering with a mental illness but to be honest to me at the time to me it was depression, low self-esteem. It was only two weeks before his return from China that I realized that he was living in an alternative reality. It took many hours of discussion to get Hayden to agree that he would be better at home but when he did finally agree his stress level was so intense, he was totally out of touch with reality and we nearly lost him. When Hayden was in China every day I was worried, the feeling of despair because it felt that the only thing I could do was talk and support. I am sure I could have done more but I do not know what, I wish I had flown over bludgeon him over the head and dragged him back but I am not sure that is legal or would have worked. Once Hayden returned, he did not do as I hoped and just make a miraculous recovery. I learnt mental illness is not a physical thing like a broken arm and I feel guilty for missing it and putting it down to him having not found his way in life yet and being a bit unhappy / depressed. On his return he perception of the world and incidents got even further from reality and it was difficult for me trying to make him understand reality by asking him to look at things logically. He would agree with my logic but say that what was going on was not logical. It was a constant struggle to try and make him understand reality. This sounds awful but it was a relief when he was sectioned and put in secure accommodation. At least he was finally getting some help he needed and I was starting to feel like I would see him alive the following day, I was also beginning to understand his condition a little more. To cut a long story short I feel desperately saddened that Hayden went through what was his worst nightmares becoming his reality. And for me after a couple of years of constant worry and turmoil, feeling totally helpless and having no way to communicate to with him I now see him being happy and moving forward with his life. I take comfort in the fact that his account of his illness is very detailed, honest and insightful and as each day goes by I am beginning to believe that he will be fine and that he will find his way. I still worry about him but now it's more with a smile rather than a frown.

## 0.11 Thanks

I'd like to give thanks to everyone who's supported me in my recovery. My advice to anyone going through mental illness is to allow love, friends and family into your life. Don't shut people out when you are at your most vulnerable. It can be hard to do and you might want to hide away but love, friends and family will get you to the light at the end of the tunnel. This is the lesson i learned whilst in China away from the people that care about me and from my mental health incidents in the UK. Everything went bad for me when i was away from my family. I left home and went to London. If i'd just stayed home with my

family i might have never been through some of the awful things that happened to me. But, also, i see that these experiences have shaped me for the better. So i'll reiterate my main lesson learnt from all this. Keep love, friends and family in your life. If you think you're not cared for by your friends, find some new friends. If you're on a mental health ward, look out for friends. I've made friends with two people i was on Opal ward with and i also made friends with an ex-opal patient when i moved into supported living. Hitting rock bottom - if you feel like you are there - can be a chance to reflect and make drastic changes. Look for and share love and keep your family and friends close.