



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Bristol Neuro Hospital “Gave me my life back”

A man with a lifelong neurological disorder has described how the support from a Bristol-based hospital has 'given him his life back'.

Phil Skeates, 55, of Moredon, was admitted to the Great Western Hospital in Swindon after suffering a seizure in a local supermarket.

He spent three months in the NHS hospital trying to recover, but treatment was having little effect.

“I completely lost the use of my right arm and my ability to speak,” said the former lorry driver. “It was really scary, doctors initially thought I had a stroke as my symptoms were identical.”

However, an MRI revealed that Phil has Functional Neurological Disorder, a condition in which people experience neurological symptoms such as weakness, movement problems, sensory symptoms, and convulsions.

“The best way to describe FND is that your brain is like a computer where the hardware is okay, but your software is completely muddled up,” Phil said.

“I’m a really sociable person so when it affected my speech, it was frustrating. It wasn’t just the physical disabilities which impacted me, the mental health side was devastating.

“I couldn’t do anything for myself and it was really frightening. The nurses in Swindon were amazing and they tried their best to get my arm working and my speech to return. But I just wasn’t progressing and I was getting more and more depressed.

“One day I got so low that I really felt like giving up, it was crisis point for me.”

Eventually doctors referred Phil to Cygnnet Brunel, a 32 bed service providing neuropsychiatric and neurodegenerative rehabilitation for men with mental health difficulties and acquired brain injuries. It is part of the Cygnnet Health Care division.

Phil was a patient there for another three months and said "being referred to Cygnet Brunel was the best thing that ever happened to me."

"Cygnet Brunel was my lifeline," Phil explained. "I was in a dark place when I got admitted. I was really nervous and anxious when I arrived."

"But I was greeted with open arms. From the minute I went in through the door, the staff were welcoming and the other service users were amazingly friendly and supportive."

"That first day, I was led in hospital, I couldn't even clean myself. I've always been independent and I lost all that. Just a couple of hours after I had been admitted, one of the doctors came to me and said 'I promise I will make you better'."

"He fulfilled that promise and more. To be back in control is incredible. I can't thank them enough for giving me my life back and also treating me with respect and dignity."

Phil underwent a full treatment programme with support from Psychiatrists, Specialty Doctors, Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language Therapists and Physiotherapists.

"The treatment blew me away," he said. "Within a few weeks my speech was back fully and my right arm felt really strong again."

"Staff were so patient with me and they helped me to see the bigger picture when it came to my health. They encouraged me to invest myself fully in the treatment and the results were mind-blowing."

"They gave me my life back."

Phil said staff also encouraged him onto a healthy eating plan and he lost five stone from when he was first admitted.

"When I left Cygnet Brunel, I felt like a totally changed man to the one who walked in. An improved version, one with real hope for the future."

"I'm not naïve, I know I have a lifelong condition and it is something I will have to battle every day."

"But I have strategies in place to cope now and to overcome hurdles which come my way, thanks to the team at Cygnet Brunel."

"My life has totally changed but I'm really positive and I genuinely feel amazing at the moment."