

IMAGES OF POSSIBILITY

Disability and Employment
By Kathryn Littlewood



Our Stories

This presentation has been put together using sound bites from all the people I have met whilst working in my role as an Employment Development Worker for Right to Control. Along with drawing on the experiences and comments of the people who work and volunteer in the organisation I work in, Sheffield Centre for Independent Living.



My Story

I am 44 and am both physically disabled and have bi polar disorder the first impairment was caused by the second. I am a qualified social worker and I became sick when I was employed.

It was nine years ago this year that I became severely ill and I have been back in employment for the last three years.

I do not think I could function without work as I find it hard to get motivated left to my own devices and I also need the cash to remain living in my home.

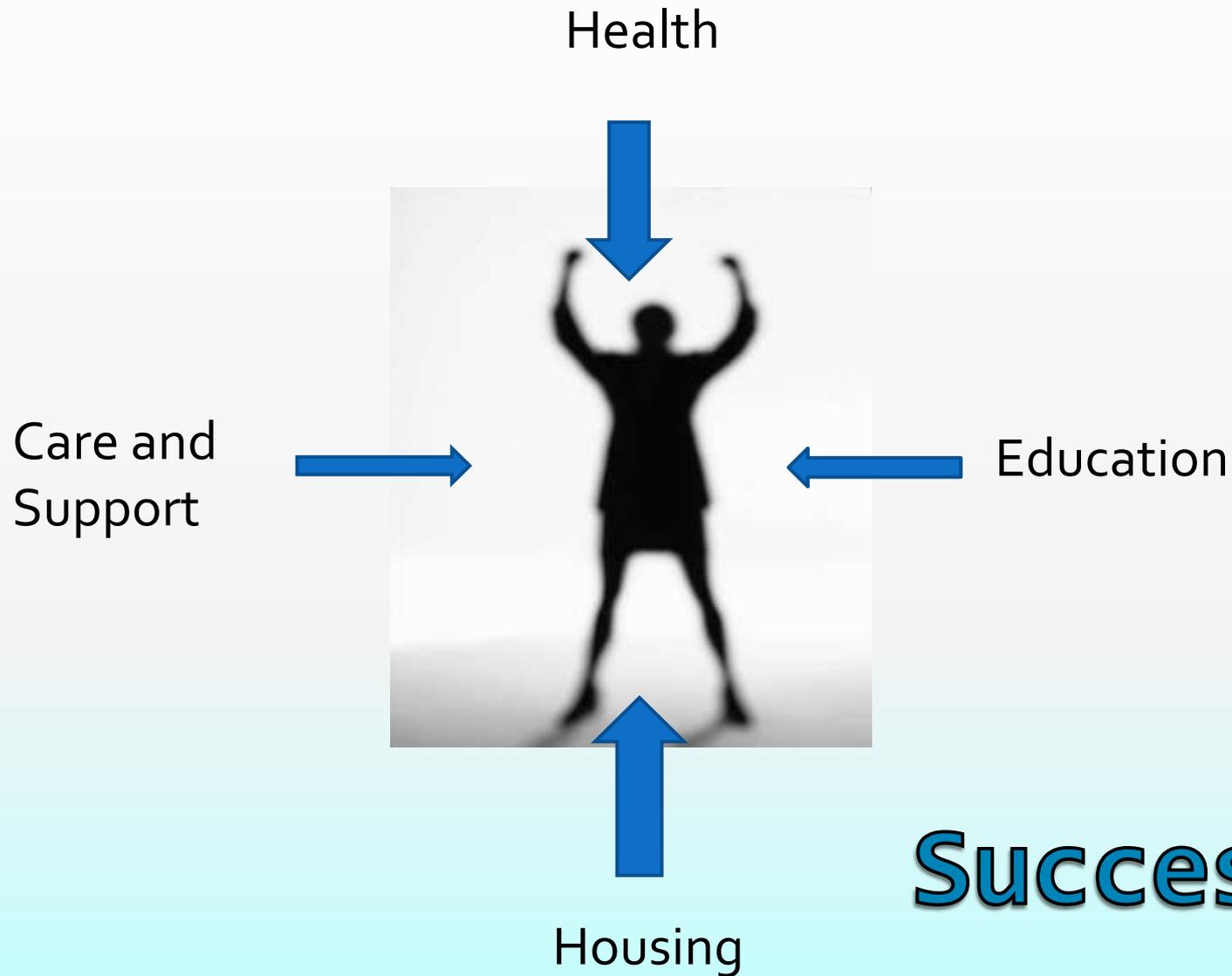
Being so very unwell rocked my confidence enormously and it wasn't helped by other peoples attitudes towards me. Thankfully through a combination of meeting amazing people at the right time and my own determination and ability to use the resources I have around me, I have managed to salvage much of what I thought I had lost.

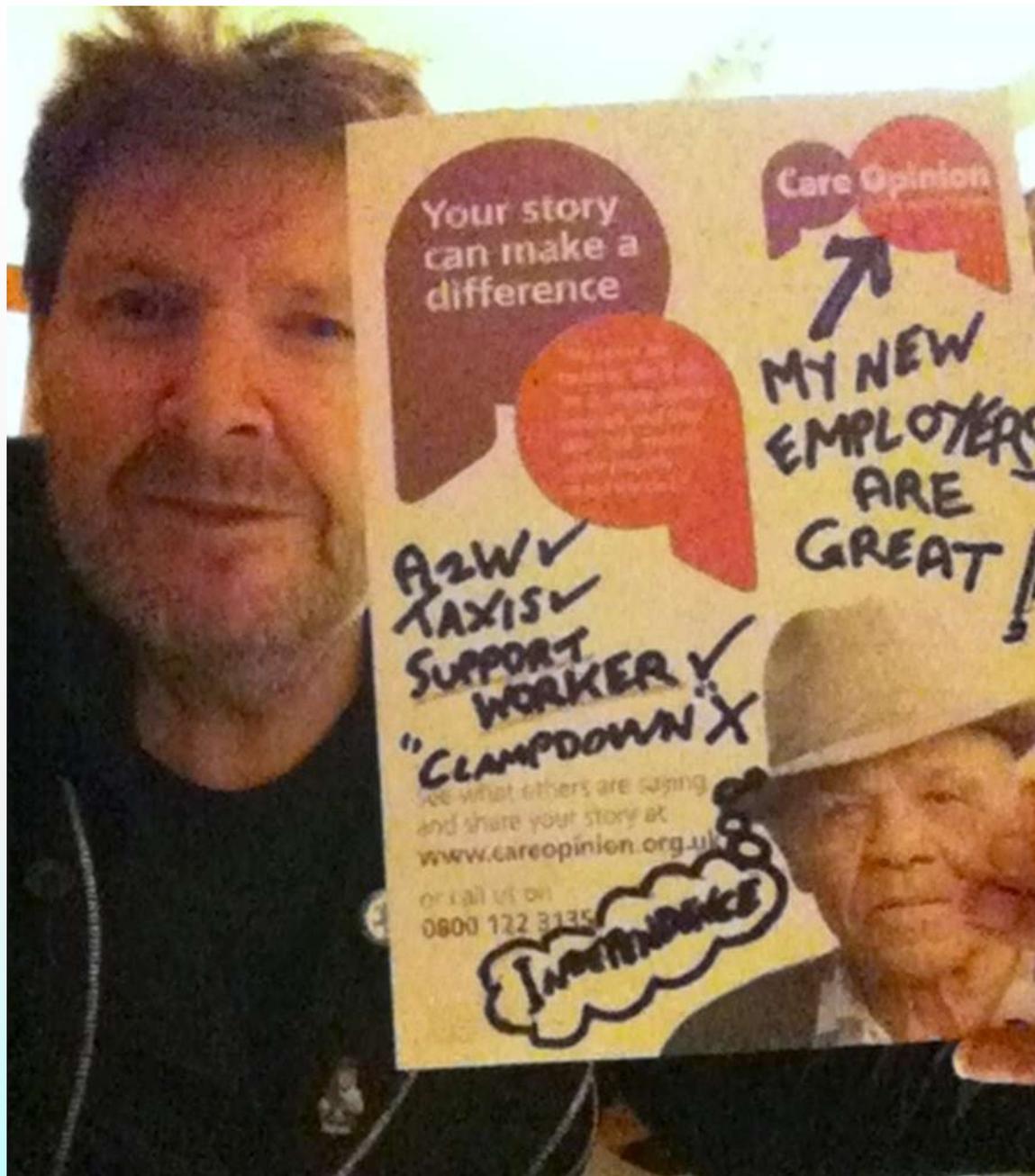
Work has not been plain sailing and coming back into paid work has had its moments but I am so glad that I have battled through the difficult times. I am so much more than someone who had a serious suicide attempt, I am so much more than my diagnosis and I am proud to be a functioning part of society again.





Aspirations





Sound Bites

“Its easier going to work than having to deal with my life on benefits”

“I want to work but how do I know if I'm well enough if I have to come off my benefits to give work a try?”

“It felt empowering to have Access to Work as if I was doing something really good to help myself rather than just carrying on trying to cope”

“I need to be back in work but I'm not sure whether to tell an employer I've not long since been out of hospital”

“Now I'm working I don't need as much Support in my everyday life’

“I'm worried my carer wont turn up on time to assist me to get ready to come to work”

“I want to work but don't know where to start. I have many things going on and don't know whether I will cope”

“I'm afraid that if I come off benefits and start a job, they will get rid of me before my first year ends so I have no rights”





Why work is important to us

- ❖ Gives us reason and meaning in our life and something to get up out of bed for
- ❖ Gives us some structure to our day and occupy our time
- ❖ Provides us with a sense of worth; an identity
- ❖ We get paid for work and that is really the only way to provide for our family and lift us out of poverty
- ❖ Makes us feel more confident and it improves our friendships and networks





Our concerns about work

“I don't think I'm ready to manage more than one day a week at the moment”

“I'm doing so much better at getting to work now that I've completed my travel training”

“I need to know that I can get on the bus each morning in my wheelchair so I can get to work on time”

“I'm worried that if I take a job and I can't cope that I won't be able to go back on the same rate of benefits I was on before because they will see it as me being able to work”

“I want to try work out but don't know how to tell my employer that I have a serious mental illness”

“I need to know that I have some support that is right for me”





What other people worry about!

‘My care worker doesn’t think I am ready for work but I do? ‘

‘My dad says that work is no place for someone with my problems’

‘My boss is worried that I will have a lot of time off work and I know that I may need some time but probably only as much as anyone else’





✓ WORK makes Me
HAPPY
AND I have Cash!



What has helped?

“My employer really understands that I cant always get to work on time due to my medication and sleep problems, he says I can work flexitime”

“Sorting out my problems with housing and care has now helped me to think about getting back into work, before it seemed overwhelming”

“Travel training has really helped me in learning my route to work”

“Access to work has really helped by paying for taxis for me to get to work and back”

“I need people to see my potential not my lack of experience and to see beyond my diagnosis as its not a summary of who I really am”

“Seeing other people with disabilities achieving things makes me know now that anything is possible”





*"It feels good to
be
Contributing in some
Way - However Small"*

Helen



A word cloud featuring various adjectives and nouns in different colors and orientations. The words are scattered across the page, with some appearing vertically and others horizontally. The colors include shades of blue, green, yellow, red, and purple. The words are: Scared, Living, Anxious, Need, Confident, Optimistic, Isolated, Lonely, Normal, Included, Satisfied, Interesting, Happy, Unfulfilled, Insignificant, Broke, Hopeful, Pleased, Secure, Positive, Unwell, Friendships, Bored, Timid, Poor, Dependent, Fulfilled, Independent, and Normal.



The benefits of employing a disabled person!

Disabled people:

- ❖ Have a great awareness and interpersonal skills as they have had to navigate through a world that excludes them
- ❖ Can often have special skills that few other people have
- ❖ Complain a lot less as they are used to putting up with things and getting along
- ❖ Have a strong work ethic
- ❖ Often go that extra mile in their jobs
- ❖ Can bring qualities to teams that you would not find anywhere else...



Some people I have met

Craig

Craig is a professional and has a diagnosis of schizophrenia. He has a very strong work ethic and is a committed and loving parent.

‘The benefit system seems so inflexible in supporting people like me back into work, I want to do a bit of work and if I cant manage it I need to know I can get straight back on benefits as I have a family to support’

‘I hate not being in work, it makes me feel more depressed and adds to my own lack of self worth’



Continued...





Alan

Alan has AS and was employed by a housing provider. Alan found it hard as his employer had little understanding of his condition and refused to make adjustments. Alan was very distressed and didn't think he could ever work again. He started working at SCIL as a volunteer to boost his confidence and he has since gone back to university to do an MSc in Technology.

'I'm glad that I didn't allow my past experiences to affect my future, being with disabled people who understand and accept me has really helped'





'Being in good employment is protective of health. Conversely, unemployment contributes to poor health. Getting people into work is therefore of critical importance for reducing health inequalities.' *The Marmot Review, 2010*



Crazy People

Dictionary Definition:- Very Enthusiastic Person

'Every team needs a crazy person on it, someone who will stick their neck on the line, someone who will do something that everyone else wants to do but daren't.

Crazy people get things moving and make a difference.

When you find a person that fits that description, there will be a long queue as everyone wants to know a 'Crazy Person'.

(Paul Scanlon – The Crazy Friend)



With thanks to all the people who kindly let me take their picture for this and those who have allowed me to spend time with them so I am able to produce this training programme.

Kathryn



**Employment increases wellbeing,
wellbeing increases confidence,
confidence increases friendships,
friendships offer support, support
equals less dependent on services.**

