

This is Markus's story who is seeking asylum and has received excellent health services whilst in Bolton. He feels this is helping him stay healthy by accessing a range of services that ensures he stays well.

I moved to Bolton from Liverpool but I'm originally from Cameroon and my first language is French. I have three long term health conditions: Bipolar disorder, hypothyroidism and Angina, and I needed care as soon as I arrived in Bolton. Being new to the town, I was unsure where to get any information on how to register with a GP so I went for help to Brass, which is a local charity that supports refugees and asylum seekers in the borough. I was given the correct forms and registered straight away with a local GP practice.

When I took the forms to my current GP practice they looked at them instantly and realised I needed immediate registration and a treatment plan due to my long term health conditions. I was assessed the same day and they ensured I had the necessary prescriptions set up for repeat ordering. From my first appointment they could see that I couldn't speak very good English and immediately rang language line to make sure we could talk properly together. Due to this I was able to tell them straight away how my health conditions were beginning to deteriorate and how I was managing this. They took, and still take, the time to listen to me when I speak which is very important to me. Also, they understand that when my Bipolar makes me feel bad that I don't want to talk very much. Nevertheless, they still make sure I can tell them what's wrong even though there is a language barrier and sometimes I am struggling to find the words.

They referred me to hospital specialists for my mental health, my cardiac condition and thyroid problems, straight away and again my treatment has been perfect. The psychiatrist from the mental health team referred me to a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) who was very supportive and respectful at all times. When I had dark thoughts and I felt suicidal, I could call her and she would come and see me to talk to me. She didn't speak French but I told her when I first met her, that if she speaks slowly I will be able to understand her better; and she always did. That meant a lot because it meant she had listened to me. When I was feeling better in myself she encouraged me to start going out and meeting people. I was nervous at first, with being new to the town but I knew I needed to help myself. She suggested that I go to Mhist and BAND so that I could access groups there, socialise and take up some crafts. I am very grateful of this suggestion as I go regularly and really enjoy it.

I feel I have had a very positive experience of healthcare in Bolton because they made me feel that I mattered. They do their very best and I feel this is why I am well, healthy and making sure I am out socialising. I believe that if this experience hadn't worked as well as it did I would have become a recluse, my health conditions would not have been addressed or looked after by myself and I fear I would probably have died. But I am now busy, happy and full of energy.