

Rita's Story

Rita lives in the Fenland area of Cambridgeshire, and until Christmas 2007, held a good job in Cambridge. She was driving home from work one day, when she felt something in her eye and thought she might have a problem with her contact lens. She drove home carefully and that was the last time she ever drove. Rita had had a haemorrhage behind her eye and her sight deteriorated rapidly. She had to give up work and was deeply distressed by her situation.

Rita received immediate support from the Cam Sight Emotional Support Worker, and as this proved so helpful, she accepted the invitation to join a Cam Sight peer support group. At the end of the six sessions, Rita wrote:

“After being devastated about my sight loss, coming to the group, meeting a variety of people and listening to their anxieties, I realised that there was hope. I also gained from being able to get the aids and being informed about what is available to me. The most helpful aspect of being part of the group was being able to share concerns and anxieties with people that understand. I definitely feel emotionally stronger as a result of being part of the group - I've stopped crying.”

Rita also received training in daily living and mobility skills from Cam Sight's Rehabilitation Officer. Rita described how she needed to re-gain her kitchen skills after her sight loss, but that she is now able to prepare a whole meal, including fresh vegetables, and clean up afterwards without help. She had also felt unable to go out unaided, but thanks to the mobility training can now walk into town by herself and use the local shops, coffee shop and library.

When Cam Sight opened a resource centre of low vision aids for visually impaired people in Chatteris in October 2008, Rita was one of two volunteers who helped set up and run the centre from its beginning. She now meets the clients when they arrive, makes them a cup of tea and finds that many visitors to the centre gain great comfort and reassurance from being able to talk to someone who has also lost their sight. Rita herself is delighted with her vital role in running the resource centre, and glad to be able to offer reassurance and inspiration to other blind and partially sighted

people. She cannot speak highly enough of the emotional and practical support she received at Cam Sight and the difference it has made to her life.

Rita said, "Without the help and support of Cam Sight, I wouldn't have coped. I just love helping at Chatteris, and it means so much to me. Thank you so much".

For more information about Cam Sight, visit www.camsight.org.uk or telephone 01223 420033.