

## The Great Outdoors in my recovery journey: Hannah

I wanted to share with you why I think getting outside is important, so here is my story:

It was a sunny Wednesday morning and as I got up out of bed, I realised something was wrong. The left hand side of my body felt really weak and I felt lopsided and dizzy. I got myself dressed very slowly and walked across Gloucester Park to work, walking into a cyclist on the way, because I just didn't have full control of my body and kept veering to my left. I went to see a Dr and was told I had vertigo.

Skip forward 6 months and I am having an MRI scan of my brain. After appointments with Dr's, a psychiatrist (is it all in my head), Ear Nose and Throat specialists and a neuro consultant I was finally told they believe I had a neurological episode, probably a mini stroke, or Transient ischaemic attack (TIA). I was 29 years old.

I spent about 9 months never going outside of my flat or my workplace. Colleagues would drive me to and from work, because I lived alone, and whenever I walked at work I had a colleague escort me. I was still weak, frail and was so afraid of falling. I was fortunate enough to have a supportive employer and colleagues, as well as fantastic doctors at Gloucester Health Access Centre, a lovely neurological consultant and, my favourite, a specialist neuro physiotherapist called Kate Moss!

However, the real life changer was Teddy. Teddy is a dog, not a soft toy. I finally realised I couldn't live stuck in a flat, never going out. It was really getting me down. I told myself if I could walk one loop of Gloucester Park I would get a dog. After 2 months, I managed it and in November 2012, Teddy came into my life. It meant I had to leave my flat every day. I walked him 3 times a day and on weekends we explored Gloucestershire together. In a way, Teddy saved me. He forced me to move my body, regain my strength and get out into nature. Getting outside was really important to my recovery, both physical and mental.

