

Why Sylvia is sky high

WHEN Sylvia Brown was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis she was devastated.

Then aged just 21, she thought her hopes and dreams for the future had been forever shattered.

But six years on Sylvia from Uppertorpe, Sheffield is living life to the full, and after a charity sky-dive her life has taken unexpected directions. Health writer KATE LAHIVE reports

“I HAVE had MS for six years now, have learned a lot about the condition and found my own ways of living with it. At first, it was awful, though. I just wanted to run away.”

For Sylvia the last few years have been full of challenges and her latest focus is to help set up a new group in Sheffield for MS patients under the age of 35.

“Discovering you have MS can come as a devastating blow and young people especially often do not know where to turn for information and support,” she said.

“At first I wasn’t ready to contact the local MS groups but the existence of a Young MS group without any pressure would have been really helpful,” said Sylvia.

“That is why I want to help set one up now. I hope that this group will offer young people with MS both support and encouragement to make informed decisions about how they can best live with MS because, although there is no cure for MS, there really is so much that you can do to help yourself.”

The group is being set up in Sheffield in conjunction with the Sheffield MS Society and MS Therapy Centre, and it also involves MS specialist nurse Adrienne Cox from the Royal Hallamshire.

Adrienne said the group is in the very early stages. News letters are being sent out and they are looking for sponsorship and a suitable venue for meetings.

For Sylvia, getting involved

factfile

■ Sylvia has written all about her experience of life with MS at www.livingwithms.co.uk (e-mail: sylvia.m.brown@btinternet.com). For more information on the young MS group can contact Adrienne on 0114 271 2302.

was overwhelmed by the response I got from the people of Sheffield, which gave me hope and the courage to fight on”

But after the high of skydiving came the distress of an MS relapse.

“Six months after my jump, I found myself wheelchair-bound and in free-fall decline. I knew that I had to start trying to take control of MS myself.”

The internet opened up a whole new world, as she was able to get in touch with people with the condition from across the world.

“It was wonderful, suddenly I was no longer alone,” said Sylvia, “Immediately I started changing my life. I went to see a good nutrition consultant, Brian Hampton of the Caring Clinic and together we set out a supplemented dietary programme to try to stabilise my aggressive condition. I felt like I had nothing to lose by trying and only my life to gain.”

Since this time two years ago, there have been good times and bad times.

“Overall, the MS has not progressed at all. I am gaining in strength and can even walk short distances with just a stick.

“After a relapse, I bounced back and recovered naturally, so, although I still have MS, I no longer live with the fear of MS,” said Sylvia.

“I firmly believe there are answers out there for everyone, provided they are prepared to search and never give up.”

Her go-getting attitude has also found love – in the shape of her very own “Mr Wright.”

She recalled “Through the sky-dive publicity, I made friends with former pop star from ABC, Stephen Singleton.

“Stephen and his family have played a crucial role in helping me to get my life back on track in many ways, including taking me



On the up: Sylvia Brown with boyfriend Dteve Wright, right, and former ABC man Stephen Singleton

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A new medication is being investigated for the treatment of urinary incontinence (sometimes called overactive bladder).

You may be able to take part in this research study if you are over 18 and have