

My pain is in my neck, shoulders and spine.

The pain in my neck is when I tilt my head backwards or turn to look to either side.

The pain to my lower spine is as if I've been sat in a crouched position for hours and then try to straighten up.

I can't remember exactly how long I've had these pains as I just got used to living with it and making do but I do remember having them as far back as 1986.

The pain in my shoulder is relatively recent, about 5 years now, and is a combination of pain when I rotate the joint and pain in the surrounding muscles.

I saw my GP who is very accommodating but by his own admission doesn't really know how to begin treating thalidomide. He does, however, want the best for me and is open to suggestions.

I then spoke to the Health & Wellbeing team at the trust and that's when things started moving. They liaised with my GP and referred me to specialists in London who are dealing with both my neck and shoulder issues. The specialist who I saw regarding my lower spine didn't work out and that is still an ongoing issue.

However, I have had surgery on my neck for what proved to be four slipped discs and I am having further surgery soon to replace my shoulder joint.

After all these years of 'grin & bear' it I am finally making progress.

The psychological boost from this alone is amazing, suddenly after a continual downward spiral I've moved on to a plateau.

There is no easy fix and I'll never be 100% pain free, it is a case of maintaining the movement and independence I have for as long as possible and the physical improvements I have gained so far are well worth the trauma and anxiety of surgery.

I would urge any beneficiary with problems to contact the Health & Wellbeing team at the Trust. They do understand and you are not alone. They will never give up on you and they will get you to see the top people who are best equipped to help you.