

Hi Gillian,

I had my first "experience" one week before my 26th birthday in July 1996. I basically woke up one morning with the whole left hand side of my face, body and leg numb and with pins and needles.

I saw my local GP who thought I may have had a stroke, so got me into hospital in Halifax that night.

I then had an ECG test and other cognitive tests and was booked in for an MRI scan later that week.

From memory, a few weeks later I saw a neurologist who said that they would need to carry out further tests. At no point was I informed that I had Multiple Sclerosis. I then had to wait around five months until I went to Pinderfields Hospital for further cognitive tests, using machines, and I also had a lumbar puncture.

A few more months passed and then I finally saw the neurologist back in Halifax. He said that I'd experienced demyelination and that this could lead onto MS. I was given a leaflet explaining demyelination and told I would be seen in 12 months time.

I wasn't told anything in any detail regarding MS and I don't believe at that stage Halifax/Calderdale had a dedicated MS Nurse. If they did, I certainly wasn't informed of this.

A few months passed and I suffered another, what I now know was a, relapse. As no one had explained to me anything regarding Relapsing Remitting MS, you can imagine how worried I was. I called outpatients but was told that the neurologist had no appointments free. I therefore paid £100 to see him in his private clinic at the local BUPA hospital. I was basically told that I hadn't anything to worry about and I would feel better in time.

It was around the time of a relapse I had in 1998/99 that I was finally told about the MS nurse in Halifax, who was a great help, taking time to explain my condition and MS in general to me.

I was given the MS Society's contact number (as I didn't have access to the internet back then) and I called for support on a number of occasions.

Please feel free to refer back to my experience for your writing course and good luck with it.

Paul