



Sam goes the extra mile (or thirteen) for her health

Employer: DISC

Area: Durham

Theme: Outstanding Individual Achievement



Sam Oram (bottom row, second from left) was the winner of the 2014 Greatest Individual Success Story category at Durham's Better Health at Work Award Celebration Event. Here is Sam's story to illustrate just why she won:

I started my employment with DISC as an HR Adviser in March 2011. I thoroughly enjoy my job but at times it can be quite challenging and demanding so after a busy day in the office it was quite easy just to head home, sit on the couch and snack on things I knew I shouldn't.

I started my fitness and weight loss journey approximately a year and half ago. I recently got engaged and for health reasons was advised by my doctor that I needed to lose weight and become more active. I'd tried all of the usual things like going to the gym and various exercise classes but found that I had so little time on an evening at home and I didn't really enjoy it.



When the Better Health at Work Team introduced exercise classes in lunch breaks and straight after work I jumped at the chance to get involved. We do a range of activities such as boxing, circuits, running club and walking club and it means that I can do the activities straight after work and can get home at a reasonable hour.

The biggest turning point for me was when the Better Health at Work Advocates decided to set a challenge to the organisation to undertake a full marathon - 26.2 miles of nonstop running in Edinburgh. I had completed a couple of smaller running events but thought there was absolutely no way on this earth I was capable of running this distance.

I must admit it did take some gentle persuasion from the Health Advocates and my colleagues but eventually I found myself signed up with a place. I did take the training extremely seriously with the understanding that this wasn't something that I could just turn up and do. It required a whole lifestyle change including my diet and months of hard work, determination and training.

I really got in to the running buzz and was out in all weather conditions – hail, rain or shine however it wasn't without its complications as I suffered a number of injuries along the way. I didn't let them get the better of me and I was determined to run the marathon and raise money for our charity. This is possibly one of the toughest things I have ever done and words can't describe the feeling you get when you reach the end and you receive the medal. I may have even cried at the thought of what I had just achieved as I crossed the finish line.

Since the marathon I have kept up with running as I thoroughly enjoyed the training and have now joined a local running club with my friends. I have been involved in local events through the running club and have encouraged my friends and colleagues to get involved. My next challenge for 2014 is to complete a triathlon!

In between all of this I decided to relive my youth and I also joined a local Back to Netball club. The club is aimed specifically at beginners and those who have been out of the sport for some time but would like to get back in to it. I now play netball several times a week in a local league. I have enjoyed it so much that I try and encourage friends and colleagues to give the sport a try.

Apart from getting fit and active the increased level in exercise also had other side effects in that it has helped me to lose a significant amount of weight and also helped to reduce my blood pressure. The Health Advocates introduced the Biggest Loser challenge at work with weekly weigh in sessions and I won the prize for losing the most weight over a 12 week period. I have continued with the weekly weigh in and I only have a few more pounds to go to reach my target.

I am so pleased that the organisation supports these campaigns as it has made such a difference to my lifestyle and my health.

Sam Oram
HR Adviser
DISC

