

## Citizen Journey 2 | Sam: Economically inactive person, aged 34 with mental health condition (depression) and background of alcohol dependency, parent of a young child

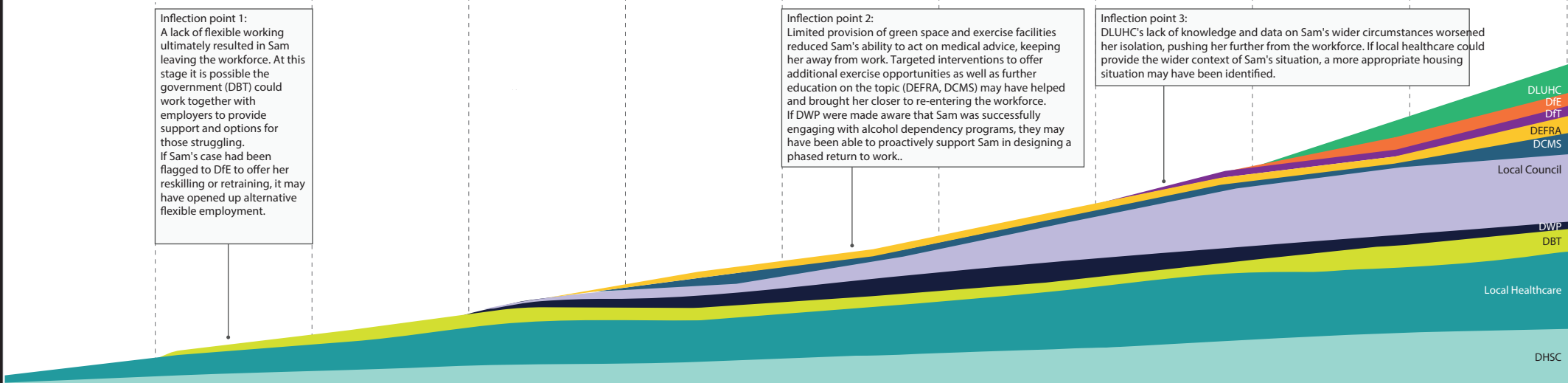


Meet Sam, a 24-year-old former retail worker in a small UK city. Sam enjoyed a fulfilling life until experiencing a family bereavement and the end of a long-term relationship. As Sam's mental health deteriorates, she finds it increasingly hard to manage and stay in work. Sam's story highlights the need for a comprehensive government approach to service design and delivery. Early, targeted actions from departments beyond DHSC, aimed at improving her health could have prevented Sam from falling out of the workforce. Additionally, it may have reduced the number of interactions (and associated costs). Whilst many services may have been available to Sam, the complexity of these – exacerbated by her increasing isolation – make them very difficult to navigate. A more joined-up approach may have addressed this.

**Inflection point 1:**  
A lack of flexible working ultimately resulted in Sam leaving the workforce. At this stage it is possible the government (DBT) could work together with employers to provide support and options for those struggling. If Sam's case had been flagged to DfE to offer her reskilling or retraining, it may have opened up alternative flexible employment.

**Inflection point 2:**  
Limited provision of green space and exercise facilities reduced Sam's ability to act on medical advice, keeping her away from work. Targeted interventions to offer additional exercise opportunities as well as further education on the topic (DEFRA, DCMS) may have helped and brought her closer to re-entering the workforce. If DWP were made aware that Sam was successfully engaging with alcohol dependency programs, they may have been able to proactively support Sam in designing a phased return to work..

**Inflection point 3:**  
DLUHC's lack of knowledge and data on Sam's wider circumstances worsened her isolation, pushing her further from the workforce. If local healthcare could provide the wider context of Sam's situation, a more appropriate housing situation may have been identified.



Day 0										5 years later
1. Mental health deteriorates.	2. Develops depression.	3. Develops alcohol dependency.	4. Starts receiving Universal Credit and support from mental health services.	5. Struggles to follow all the recommendations to improve mental health.	6. Alcohol dependency improves, but depression persists.	7. Becomes pregnant. Sam is offered social housing (local council).	8. Gives birth but becomes increasingly socially isolated.	9. Begins new family support programmes.	10. Can't attend meetings with mental health services and UKSPF-backed local employment support.	
Sam experiences a family bereavement and the end of a long-term relationship. At this stage, she has very limited interaction with health or government systems.	As Sam's mental health deteriorates, she struggles to balance health appointments and shifts at her retail job. Despite trying, she was unable to agree a flexible contract with her employer and consequently left her job.	Sam's mental health continues to decline – she now has severe depression and loses her job. To cope, she increases her alcohol consumption which eventually leads to alcohol dependency.	Sam accesses an outpatient mental health service specifically for alcohol dependency and employment counselling through the Individual Placement and Support in Primary Care (IPSPC) service (local council). By this point, she is engaging with multiple different government and health services.	Sam can't implement exercise recommendations for depression due to limited access to green spaces (DEFRA) and exercise facilities (DCMS).	Sam has a positive experience with the drug and alcohol team at Turning Point and is able to address her dependency. However, her depression persists and she struggles to afford rent after losing her job, forcing her to move in with friends.	At this point, the level of health and government support Sam is receiving significantly increases again.	Sam's new social housing is over an hour away from her hometown and her friends and family. The route is long on public transport and she struggles to make the journey with a newborn. She becomes increasingly isolated.	Sam is encouraged to engage with a local Sure Start centre (DfE) and Supporting Families programmes (DLUHC). As a new mother, she is navigating parent services for the first time – on top of the services for her mental health, housing and unemployment.	As Sam's child is so young, she doesn't qualify for free childcare and without support from friends and family, her caregiving responsibilities make it difficult to access support. She is not aware of local charities and private organisations that may be able to provide help.	