



## SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

# Project Case Study: Need to Talk: Gill's Story

### THEME:

Health & Social Care

### FUNDING:

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### MATCH FUNDING:

Department of Health  
(Northern Ireland and  
Ireland)

### LEAD PARTNER:

Royal National Institute  
of Blind People North-  
ern Ireland (RNIB)

### PROJECT PARTNERS

Royal National Institute  
of Blind People (RNIB)  
Scotland and Fighting  
Blindness Ireland

Start Date: 01/01/2017

End Date: 30/06/2022



<https://www.rnib.org.uk/your-area-northern-ireland/services-rnib-northern-ireland/need-to-talk>

Need to Talk is providing a cross-border counselling service and confidence building programme for people affected by sight loss throughout Northern Ireland, the border counties of Ireland and Western Scotland (Ayrshire & Arran and Highlands & Islands).

*“One minute I was leading an active independent life teaching P1, driving the school minibus and managing the over 50s Irish Masters Hockey team and then the majority of my sight just went overnight.”*

Gillian Jackson, from Moria Northern Ireland, attended the Need to Talk Living with Sight Loss course in Lisburn in November 2018. She had a condition known as keratoconus, which involved her undergoing regular cornea transplants over a 25 year period.

Despite losing the sight in her right eye after an unfortunate complication during surgery, Gill still had perfect sight in her left eye and continued to until her cornea failed and overnight, she had to accept the reality of becoming partially sighted.

A mum of two and a primary school teacher for over 30 years, Gill was determined to remain upbeat, though admitted to struggling.

Gill's social worker recommended she attended the Need to Talk course. With new confidence and skills came new relationships.

*“I felt those six weeks were so important for me. I sat beside a lovely lady called Louise and we started to talk and built up a great friendship. We text each other all the time and now meet up for coffee.”*

Gill learnt to do things for herself and enjoyed talks on transport; home security; benefits; counselling; and opportunities in sport and local groups. She was even inspired to get involved in the Hillsborough Castle and Gardens Community Access Scheme, amongst others.