



## Surviving or Thriving: **Robert's story**

Robert is a middle manager in a small manufacturing company. He has been in the job for 10 years, and has always been a sociable and well-liked employee with other workers and managers. Over the last 6 months however, he seems to be more withdrawn, less sociable, and is noticeably agitated at times. When asked by colleagues if he is alright, he has been quite terse in response. At a line management meeting with his boss, the subject is tentatively raised with him and he responds, angrily, that he is fine.

However, he realises later that day, he cannot go on pretending everything is alright, since it is obvious he is not fooling anyone. The fact is that his marriage broke up and his wife moved out 4 months ago, but he has been unable to tell anyone as he feels ashamed. He has been angry, sad, resentful, grief stricken and confused. He has resorted to drinking too much to allow him to sleep, but knows he has to do something before his job becomes jeopardised. He is aware the firm has a service which would allow him to access some therapy and to which he can self

refer without revealing uncomfortable information to colleagues. He signs up with Working Minds, a North Staffs Mind service, which allows him 6 sessions of counselling paid for by the firm but which remains confidential.

He is finally able to speak openly about what has happened, how he feels and how it has affected him. Just being able to speak freely and say out loud what has been going on makes a massive difference to his mood and the way he feels. He can also now recognise that the marriage had been on its last legs for years, and they had been pretending it worked for the sake of appearances. His wife had been the one to decide to leave, having realised that they were living a lie and wanting something better for herself. Once he acknowledges that, although still sad, he can now see that the future could bring possibilities of a different life for him too. As a result, he has now told colleagues about the relationship breakdown and been surprised at their support and concern for him.