How it all began: A friendship that brought us to brainstrust

My motivation to support brainstrust and its Wear Grey campaign came from two very personal experiences.

The first began when my work colleague, Beth, received the devastating news that she had an acoustic neuroma. I saw first-hand the impact her diagnosis had on her and the fear and uncertainty that came with it. At the time, I simply wanted to be there for her and her partner, Lee, in whatever way I could. As I supported them through this difficult period, Beth and I became good friends. Her bravery, resilience and determination were truly inspirational. Little did I know then just how significant this friendship would become, as I had no previous knowledge of brainstrust or the support the charity offered.

Around 12 months later, my own family received the news that my brother, Brian, had been diagnosed with glioblastoma. As we began to come to terms with what this meant for him and his family, Beth stood alongside us, drawing on her own experience and introducing us to brainstrust.

Remembering Brian: A brother, a friend and an inspiration



Brian was diagnosed in March 2024. Following a craniotomy, alongside courses of chemotherapy and radiotherapy, he was given more precious time with us. Sadly, he passed away in April 2025.

Brian was seven years older than me, and growing up I always looked up to him and aspired to be like him. He seemed to be doing all the exciting things while I was still at school; getting jobs, having motorbikes and cars, and going out with his friends! As we got older, our relationship naturally evolved into a close friendship. We were always there for one another, helping each other through the various challenges life threw our way.

When Brian received his diagnosis, he asked me to help him navigate the medical teams and the considerable amount of life admin that suddenly needed attention. Being naturally organised, I took on as much of the practical and administrative burden as I could, helping him work through things like wills, pensions and Power of Attorney. I wanted to take as much of that stress away from him as possible, so he could concentrate on what really mattered.

He trusted me completely. I made sure I explained every decision and recommendation as clearly as I could, and in a very short space of time we managed to get almost everything in place.
One of the things that has stayed with me most is realising just how much he valued my opinions and how proud he was of me. I don't think I had fully appreciated that before.

The year leading up to Brian's passing gave us the opportunity to share so much together and create some really special memories. We were never particularly a family who hugged or openly said "*I love you*", but we were able to put that right during those final 12 months. We became more open with one another, and I'm incredibly grateful that we had that time.

Brian's strength and bravery throughout his illness were incredible. Although he understood what might lie ahead, he refused to let it define him. He continued to focus on what he would do when he beat the odds and recovered, while also making sure his daughter, Maria, would be supported if the worst happened. Seeing how passionately he cared about her future reminded me what an amazing dad he was.

At Brian's celebration of life, so many of his work colleagues came along to pay their respects. I already knew he had made a positive impression on people throughout his career, but hearing directly from them about the impact he had made was incredibly moving. Their words were so genuine and heartfelt, and they reinforced just how proud I was of him.

It also made me realise how much of Brian I perhaps hadn't fully appreciated. He believed in doing things properly, cared about precision and getting the details right, but above all, he cared about people.

The support that made a difference



Our first contact with brainstrust was through the Brain Box, which Beth recommended. The resources were incredibly helpful, particularly for me as Brian's next of kin.

Having information about each stage of the journey laid out so clearly, but with such compassion, made a huge difference. It helped me understand what might be coming next and gave me the tools to guide Brian through each phase, step by step.

Brian was also incredibly proud of his brainstrust wristband and wore it every single day.

Looking back, there was something quite special about the connection between Beth, Brian and brainstrust. Although the circumstances were difficult, Beth understood exactly what we were going through because of her own experience.

She had become so much more than a work colleague; she was a source of understanding and support for both of us. In many ways, she was our tumour buddy, just as she had found her own through brainstrust.

Seeing the support brainstrust provided to Brian and the difference it continues to make to Beth and so many others made the decision to support the charity an easy one.

Riding for Brian: Turning memories into action



Beth's fundraising support for brainstrust has been amazing, and taking on a bike ride together felt like the perfect way for us to raise both awareness and funds, helping the charity continue to support people facing a brain tumour diagnosis. Beth, Lee and I all love our bikes, and Beth certainly loves a challenge! The ride felt like a natural fit for us, giving us something positive to work towards together.

One memory that particularly stands out was the morning of day two. Beth announced just how much pain she was in after completing the first day, knowing we still had another three days to go! But we kept refreshing the fundraising page, watching the donations come in and seeing the support from everyone cheering us on. It gave us the determination to push through the pain and keep going until we completed the challenge.

Beth's strength of character is truly astounding, and I have so much admiration for her.

Helping others feel less alone

I had really wanted to thank the brainstrust team personally when we reached the finish in the Isle of Wight. However, I hadn't quite realised how raw my emotions still were, and when the moment came, it was all a little too overwhelming for me to find the words.

I hope this goes some way towards expressing just how grateful I am for everything the charity does. Having seen first-hand the support brainstrust provides, both through Brian's journey and Beth's experience, I know how important it is to have somewhere to turn when life changes so unexpectedly.

The work the team does to help people understand what's happening, feel supported and, most importantly, feel less alone is incredible. I'm so grateful that brainstrust was there for Brian and our family, and I'm proud that our bike ride has helped the charity continue to be there for others facing their own journeys.