



Press Release
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Nottingham Mental Health Patient Trains Medics of the Future

A Nottingham patient who has been in mental health services since she was 13 is now giving talks at Nottingham Trent University where she is helping trainee medics understand how best to support those with severe mental health needs.

Kerry Bristow has been a patient at Cygnnet Maple House since November 2023. The service, on Kneeton Road, East Bridgford, is part of the Cygnnet Health Care division and is a 16 bed highly specialised service providing assessment, treatment and rehabilitation for women with personality disorder and complex needs.

Kerry has a diagnosis of Personality Disorder. Since being at Maple House, her condition has stabilised to the point she was invited by the University to be part of the training delivered to future medics.

She is now delivering her own training package on personality disorder, and is teaching paramedic students, occupational therapists and nursing students at Nottingham Trent University.

She has been giving talks, sharing her own personal story about her experiences as an inpatient in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Acute and Psychiatric Intensive Care Units as well as medium and low secure wards.

She has been offering advice to the students on how they should best handle someone with Personality Disorder, particularly when they are called to the scene of somebody who has self-harmed or taken an overdose. Due to her own background Kerry can give insight from her own experiences of these scenarios to help students see things from the patient perspective.

Kerry said "I explained to them about what Personality Disorder is and the impact it has had on me throughout my life.

"I managed to talk about what helped me and also what hindered me when I have had to interact with medical professionals.

"For instance, their behaviour and language really matters. They need to be open-minded and supportive, rather than judgemental. Often paramedics are interacting with us at the most distressing moments of our lives, when we are really at our lowest.

"It is crucial that they understand the power they have to really play a positive role in those awful times."

Kerry will now also use her experiences to help shape the new curriculum for students next year.

Explaining how empowering it felt for her to deliver her very first lecture, Kerry said: "It felt amazing, I absolutely loved it and for the first time I felt like I was making a difference and using my bad experiences for some good."

"It also made me realise how far I've come and that my dreams are within reach."

"I want to help open more services like Maple House to ensure everyone with Personality Disorder has the chance to receive the wonderful support I have experienced here and give them the best opportunity to live their best lives."

"When you have been in hospital all your adult life, it's hard to imagine yourself as anything other than a patient. This was a powerful moment for me to realise there's hope out there."

Nicola Mullender, Head of Care at Maple House, said the team at the university were very grateful Kerry shared such personal details about her experiences.

She added: "We all felt very proud of her. When she first arrived at Maple House, she was completely different to how she is now. She has come such a long way and I do believe that Maple House pushing Kerry to take control of her journey has given Kerry a lot of hope for her future."

"It takes a lot of courage and strength to stand up and share your experiences and she did it beautifully. Her lecture was extremely well received by the paramedics and it is exciting that she gets to keep working with them on an ongoing basis."