

Case studies from CNWL services in BLMK:

1. From postnatal trauma to empowered advocate:

Mary (not her real name) was a service user at CNWL and is now a key part of a CNWL Quality Improvement project, helping people from ethnically diverse communities access perinatal mental health care.

After experiencing severe Tokophobia, prenatal anxiety, a traumatic birth, and postnatal depression with PTSD, Mary felt isolated, overwhelmed, and disconnected from life. This resulted in a lack of interest in her baby, her day to day life, feeling despondent, suffering from loss of appetite, weight loss, low mood, constant tearfulness and feeling unable to cope. Mary explained:

“I felt like escaping from life, I felt like a burden... The whole experience not just impacted me but also my husband too.”

Mary's turning point came when she was referred to the CNWL Perinatal Mental Health (PMH) team and the MK Maternity Trauma and Loss Care (MK-MTLC) service. Their compassionate, expert support helped her rediscover her identity, rebuild her confidence, and reconnect with her baby and herself. Doing this also led to Mary reclaiming her career, becoming a certified coach, and joining the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists as a People Partner. Today, she is a key contributor to CNWL Quality Improvement work focused on engaging ethnic minority communities in perinatal mental health, offering coaching, and advocating for maternal wellbeing.

In Mary's own words:

“No words can describe how grateful I am to the PMH and MK Maternity Trauma and Loss Care teams for helping me find myself again. This time last year, I thought I had forever lost myself, my personality, my career, my motivation, basically my whole life. If it wasn't for the professionals, I don't think I would have even survived. I am a new person now, with even more motivation and a new-found passion for helping expectant or new mothers. I am utterly grateful that I got the opportunity to take part in this Quality Improvement (QI) work (thank you, N, for your constant encouragement. And of course, the rest of the QI team) and strive to make a difference, to create empowerment, to encourage new mums (and dads) to come forward and talk about their struggles, seek help, and ultimately live the life they deserve with their little ones – to Thrive, and not just Survive!!

Mary's story is a testament to the life-changing impact of person-centred, compassionate and empowering perinatal mental health care.

2. How the CNWL Employment Service changed my life:

“My first psychotic episode made me withdrawn, I had feelings of confusion, with uncontrollable worrying, racing thoughts, suspicion, low mood, and visual and auditory hallucinations. I was admitted to the Campbell Centre for three weeks, as the voice became more intrusive, and were spiritual in nature. I was later accepted onto the community mental health services. When I became unwell, I was working at Domino's Pizza, the late nights had an impact on my sleeping pattern, I felt it difficult to keep on top of things and I lost my job. I was also undertaking a university degree in Chemical Engineering, although I completed most of the course, I became no longer interested in this line of work.

I joined the CNWL Individual Placement and Support (IPS) employment service, as I was struggling to find the right job for me. When I did find a job on my own, I was unable to keep it because I didn't have the resources to deal with any issues that arose. I was unemployed but wanted to work.

My CNWL employment specialist helped me create a CV and cover letters to use for when applying for work. She spoke to employers for me and sent my CV to them on my behalf and negotiated interviews and helped me prepare. Eventually I got a job in a supermarket. My employment specialist helped me set out a timetable of a working week, a budget to ensure I stayed within my means. She also explained ways that I could talk to my employer about my mental health, as well as what reasonable adjustments I could ask for should I need to.

Working helps me keep my dignity, it will help me to save up to learn to drive, I can make friends at work and have a social interaction. I am enjoying my job. Work training is better than what I have had before. I have been trained by someone who knows what they are teaching me, and I am absorbing this information.

I feel more in control of my mental health and having worked on a budget with my Employment Specialist, I know where my money is going and can start saving. I feel more relaxed and even though I am working early shifts, I still have the rest of the day off which I can spend doing things that I enjoy.

I am more optimistic about my future. I feel that working has given me back the dignity that I lost. Working with an employment specialist has meant that I am able to face any issues that arise, as I am not alone.”

Aside from co-producing a booklet full of powerful stories of hope and recovery, the CNWL Employment Service has also introduced a Health Passport— a tool that empowers patients to talk openly about their mental health at work. With these innovations, MK IPS are keeping equality, diversity and inclusion at the top of the agenda in the workplace.

Quotes from patients and families

Milton Keynes Lifespan Eating Disorders Service

From a Service users parents: “I just wanted to express my gratitude for your support and professionalism in regards to my daughter’s transfer to your service. After I had expressed my concern about her not having had an initial assessment since her discharge from an inpatient unit in a different area, you responded in arranging a meeting with the whole MDT in a timely way. I felt listened to by you.”

Milton Keynes Mental Health Hub - Psychological Therapies, and CNWL Addiction Recovery Community (ARC)

“Thank you so much for the past year of [the DBT] group, it really has made a difference in my life and the way I view myself and others. I am very grateful for all you have taught me and all you have done to help me during this time. I would like to update you on the fact that I am currently with ARC and on medication that helps with cravings and am 6 weeks sober and hoping to get to a year and beyond. I am also in touch with adult social services for help in day to day life and the hope to move out when I am ready to be more independent. I also am taking driving lessons and am hoping to pass within the next couple of months. All this could not be achieved without your help so again I am very grateful. Many thanks for this - very much appreciated during a time of high anxiety and transition.”

Feedback from a service user as part of our Deep Dive Intelligence-led site visits: (MK PMH)

“Without perinatal’s help the first time I honestly don’t think I would be around today. I’d lost all hope, I didn’t know who I was and I couldn’t see a way through. Through EMDR therapy, being listened to and then joining the walking group and knowing I wasn’t alone and my feelings were completely normal, I recovered. Through the walking group, I have an amazing support and friendship group with other mums who just get it. This second time round, when I was pregnant I was terrified of getting post-natal depression again and Perinatal helped me put a lot in place to protect against it, the staff helped me make a mental health birth plan with very clear

instructions to professionals involved in birth/my care to follow so I wouldn't get triggered. My son was in neonatal for a few days and B from the team visited us there as I needed some support – her being there meant the world to us in that difficult time and really helped push neonatal to be a little bit more mindful of my mental health. There's been a few times last few years I needed the team after discharge and they were there. They gave me pre-conception counselling twice when we were thinking about our second, Dr S and A helped me decrease my medication so I was more comfortable getting pregnant again.. They care, the families they support are not just seen as numbers and stats they're seen as people by perinatal. I could go on forever about this amazing team and how much they've done for my growing family. Thank you!"

Promoting care closer to home

CNWL's Milton Keynes Community Services' shine in campaign to promote NHS care close to home: 28 November 2024

Community psychological health services in Milton Keynes took part in a month-long campaign to show the different ways the NHS cares for people in the community.

NHS community care has developed a lot in recent years, closely monitored care that was once only available in hospitals can now be done in the comfort of a patient's home. During November 2024, CNWL staff in Milton Keynes hit the road and visited community centres, care homes and schools, as well as holding virtual events to network and learn from each other to further improve patient care.

Lorraine Gardener, Lead Nurse for Milton Keynes' Community Health Services, said:

"Milton Keynes' staff have hugely appreciated all of the local webinars and going out and spending time in their community. They have expressed that they have learnt lots about other services and how they support patients, and our teams have really enjoyed being asked to present their service and feel proud about the care they give."

Highlights included:

Milton Keynes' CNWL Community Services visit the Parkinson's Café

Lindsay Ashman, Neurological Conditions Services Manager said, "We were able to have many conversations with people and provide information on the service we offer as well as signposting to local services in MK, encouraging people to manage their conditions in the community." The team also spoke with local Parkinson UK volunteers and Parkinson UK, who organised the event.



Lucy Hill, Physiotherapy Assistant Practitioner - Neuro Rehab Service and Madi Criclevit, Rehab Assistant were with Lindsay at the event.

Milton Keynes CNWL Community Services visit Shenley Wood Retirement Village

Milton Keynes community services visited Shenley Wood Retirement Village to promote our local and specialist services with staff and residents. Lorretta Carson, Specialist Continence Nurse as well as Amanda Black and Louise Addis from the Home First Frailty Team attended. Community nurses also popped in to chat with residents and share information about the services we offer across Milton Keynes. The team attended as part of the Trust's Community Services Month, a month-long campaign to highlight how CNWL's physical health community services support residents in Milton Keynes and across London. Shenley Wood Retirement Village were holding their own month-long celebration on well-being, so were very pleased the team was there and they hope to link up again.



Milton Keynes Tissue Viability Nurses help raise awareness of pressure ulcers

Milton Keynes' Tissue Viability Community Nursing Team visited their colleagues in other community teams to help raise awareness of pressure ulcers and how to treat them. Tissue viability nurses are specialists in treating wounds that take a long time to heal, this includes pressure ulcers. This was part of the Trust's Community Services Month campaign, to showcase the work CNWL's community services do to care for residents in their homes and close to home. Part of this campaign was to encourage teams to work closer with each other and share expertise to further improve care. The team had lots of engagement and interest with staff, but the trolley they used to carry their teaching equipment may not recover – it did a lot of miles that day.



Understanding the needs of local populations

Following an engagement event with people from Hong Kong, CNWL staff received this feedback:

“The information, resources, and most importantly, the welcoming atmosphere your team brought to us meant a lot to our community. For migrants like us, feeling accepted and supported is vital, your team helped normalise mental health needs and services, making them feel accessible and approachable for everyone. One lady told me how, after speaking with your colleagues, she finally found a pathway to support her family who have been struggling with mental health issues. It was a powerful and moving moment, and it is thanks to the hope and guidance your team provided.”

CNWL staff collaborating with Age UK on drop-in sessions to empower local residents:

“I spoke to that lady from the mental health, ...and I manage to get a doctor to ring me about my issues..it was quick as I had a call from them and they are going to see if changing my tablets will help and they are going to look into bipolar too..”

Other news stories we may want to include:

- [Milton Keynes expands mental health support with new service for young people :: Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [Neath Hill Garden officially opens as a hub for nature and wellbeing :: Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust](#)
- [Milton Keynes City Council to continue drug and alcohol treatment service](#)
(delivered by our Addiction Recovery Community Milton Keynes (ARC-MK) service)