

Central and North West London



NHS Foundation Trust

Recovery stories

Individual Placement and
Employment Support Service



Tabitha

I became unwell in 1999. I was living in Westminster at the time and I started experiencing delusions. I thought that I was Noel Gallagher's bodyguard and I started to believe that people on the street were making fun of me. This got so scary that I went to the police station for help. They then took me to hospital. I was very agitated at the police station and I ended up being sectioned. I remember being out into a policeman's van. This was awful and I felt like a caged animal but I was very ill and not in full control of myself. I was scared and thought that I was going to be locked up for life. I accessed several different services once I became unwell.

When I came to CNWL I started to do a lot of courses at Westminster Adult Education and at Southwark College. My social worker referred me to the Employment Specialist as my consultant recommended that work might be good for me.

My consultant suggested that I might enjoy working within mental health. This meant that I could use my personal experience of recovering from mental ill health for some good. I applied for a job with a mental health charity with support from my employment specialist and was accepted onto the training. I completed the training and the workbook and then had a long wait to be matched with my first client.

I have been in my role for a month now. I need to stay very chirpy so that I can support my clients. It's great to earn my own money and I am now pursuing a career working within health and social care.

I have also completed a work placement at St Charles Hospital. I have co-facilitated groups on mastering your mood, connecting with others and Mindfulness. This has helped me in maintaining my own recovery and taught me how I can use my own experiences to help others.

To sum up I think the most important things for recovery are to get help from those around you whether that is professionals or friends and family, to keep active and healthy and also to keep occupied and do things you are interested in. I was interested in being employed and I now want to build up my hours and keep on learning.

Benny

I suffer from Bi-Polar Effective Disorder and it has taken me a long time to come to terms with this. The first time I suffered an episode was in my late teens. Many people around me, both family and friends were shocked to see this happen to someone as positive and outward going as myself but the truth of the matter was that I suffered from serious burn out from my school and social life that had caused something in me to not be right.

It has taken me many years since then to reach a balance both in the way in which I think and perceive myself and with the way I deal with my day to day life. I have had a lot of help along the way. If it wasn't for the support I have had from my mental health team, I wouldn't be the same person I am today.

University was very hard for me. Not really because of the workload but mostly because I had suffered another manic depressive episode in my first year there. The manic episode which I went through, lasted 8 months which resulted in me having to voluntarily drop that year and start all over again, which meant that my depressive episode happened while I was re-taking my first year in university. This is the time when I met a care worker called Simon and he would meet up with me on a week by week basis to see how I was doing and see how he could help to make me feel different about myself and to see things from a different point of view. This made going through the last few years of University a lot easier as he helped me reach a good balance on which to conduct myself.

Having graduated university, I went out in the big open world with a 2:2 and a keen desire to reach my goals. Little did I know but this was the time of the beginning of the recession and what that meant for graduates like me was that finding a job, any job would prove harder than the previous generation of graduates. It was an uphill struggle to find a decent form of secure employment. Although having found work here and there, starting off on an internship and then later on a 6 month contract and finding temporary work, I was unable to find a permanent position. I had to learn that in order to get what you want, you seriously had to go out and get it. This again proved for me to be an incredibly hard time.

I then had a period of 2 years of unemployment, I didn't suffer from any severe episodes of my mental health at this time but it still affected my job seeking, making it hard to stay motivated.

Even though things were again incredibly difficult I remember how much care I got again from the Westminster Mental Health Team as my consultant psychiatrist referred me to a Employment Specialist. Little did I know her help would be invaluable in giving me the support and confidence I would need to find not only a job, but the right job for me. Meeting her was very good for me, as I recall I had reached a very low point where I did not want to meet up with many friends as my situation wasn't getting any better. She introduced me to people of all ages who were looking for work in weekly and fortnightly artist network meetings in central London. I met people who were going through similar struggles and were in a similar position as me. These meetings really gave me a boost to try harder and push for more opportunities out there. She was a great support and gave me regular support on finding work, looking at opportunities available online and through her contacts. I felt so happy to have this support to look for work at a time when I wasn't feeling great about myself.

Since finding secure employment, I feel like a new person. I hate to sound overconfident or even patronizing to anyone reading this, but I feel like a new man. In ways such as the way I think, act and even the way I carry myself. I can't stress enough how much better I feel having found work. Now I am not shy to talk about my career or even what I do. Whereas before it was very much hiding the fact that I was unemployed, now I look forward to the opportunity to open up about my life. I feel like I walk more confidently and am not shy to speak to strangers, however funny that may seem, I really feel like a happier, more outward going positive person.

I really am glad to have found work and cannot imagine going back to a world of boredom, loneliness and significant signs of the onset of depression. I feel like my life has changed in such a great way that I hope I can encourage other people to do the same and find work. Because it really is worth it, it is a life changing process because it gives you the motivation, the purpose in life to achieve things you couldn't imagine achieving when you're alone at home. And at the end of it, even a monthly reward of a pay check, so that you can treat yourself and others. I hope this story helps you, as you can see that it can happen to anyone, not just me. As long as you put in some effort, put in some hard work as well as get the help you need to push yourself and achieve...you really can be a better person."