

In the community for the community

Better mental health care for Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington

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On 1 July, we begin a three-year journey to transform mental health care across Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington.



Find out how services are changing from these 12 people. Click here to watch our short video.



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How social workers help you to focus on recovery



Rebecca Neal explains how social workers can help you to focus on your recovery and staying well.

Many people living with mental illness will need social care services and community-based holistic support.

Some also have physical care needs and require specialist support to remain independent in the community. Others need help with housing, applying for benefits or finding work.

Everyone's recovery journey is unique. As a mental health social worker, I work collaboratively with people to ensure their care needs as well as their individual strengths are discussed, and support is provided where needed.

Employed by Camden Council, I'm embedded in the community mental health team in Kentish Town South. I work alongside psychiatrists, psychologists, specialist nurses and support officers employed by the NHS.

We provide a one-stop service for people with long-term mental illness. We offer clients easy-access care and support for their mental health, physical health and social needs.

The entire team meets every Monday morning at 9.30am to share information about clients and identify those who may need extra help. While we've different employers, we work as one team.

This means clients can ask any team member for help. As social workers, we step in to provide support for those with a wide variety of support needs. For clients, it means they can ask for help anytime without having to navigate an entirely new organisation or process.

I'm passionate about social workers being part of the mental health team. It's one of the reasons I work in the Kentish Town team. When my previous employer decided to move away from integrated teams, I decided it was time to change jobs.

I'm excited the integrated approach is rolling out across North Central London. It will make a big difference to people's lives.

Rebecca Neal is a care coordinator in Camden's Rehabilitation and Recovery Team.

Improve your mental health



Click on these links or search to find out more.

Courses

[Camden Recovery College](#)



Music for wellbeing

[Recovery College Online](#)



Videos for wellbeing

[Inclusion Barnet](#)



Volunteer

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The new care planning approach changed my life



Carol Joseph explains how the new DIALOG+ approach to co-developing mental health care helped her to get back on track.

I'm a mother with no living children. I've been on a journey for 13 years, battling major depression and despair to the point I contemplated suicide. I was traumatised beyond words for years.

By 2019 despite medication, counselling, and cognitive behaviour therapy, I remained stuck. Work was the only thing keeping me alive at the time. Unable to continue in my management role because of my illness, I relied on contract work for routine, to pay the bills and reduce my anxiety.

When my contract job ended, I started to go downhill. My GP told me St Ann's Hospital in Haringey was trialing a new treatment approach.

That's where I met Grace Lapwoch, from the Haringey North East community services team. She introduced me to DIALOG+. Grace was my key clinician and together, we used DIALOG+ to move beyond my painful way of living.

At my first appointment, I was asked to complete a short app-based questionnaire rating 11 areas of life – my medication, psychological needs, practical needs, mental health, physical health, friendships and relationship with partner, personal safety, accommodation, job, and leisure.

My lowest scores were job situation, mental health and relationships including family who wanted me to pull myself together. While I wanted to, I didn't have the emotional capacity to do so. I withdrew from family and friends which triggered a mental health crisis.

In my monthly appointment with Grace, we'd talk about one of my challenging areas. With Grace's help, I identified small actions to take before our next meeting. For example, I agreed to contact a local recruitment agency who could help me update my CV and prepare for job interviews.

This small step opened up new doors. Grace encouraged me to apply for a job at Clarendon Recovery College as a co-tutor expert by experience. I applied and was successful.

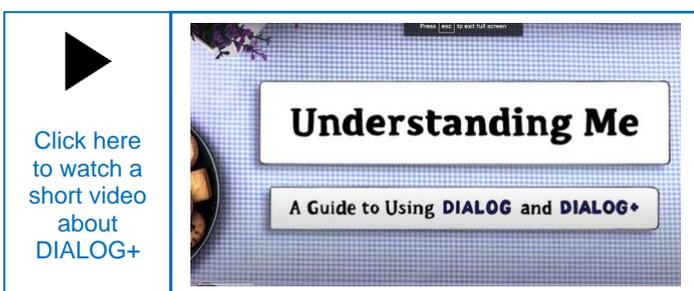
Working at the college inspired me to deliver co-production recovery well-being courses. I was later able to apply for a job as a project manager for Haringey Safe Haven, a crisis café, where I still work today.

My experience using DIALOG+ was brilliant and assisted a pathway to recovery. It empowered me to identify, for the first time, the specific areas of my life where I was stuck and needed help.

By breaking my challenges into manageable parts, I was able to identify actions and potential solutions.

It has changed my life for the better. My children would be so proud of me. I would like to thank Grace Lapwoch for her patience, compassion and believing in me. If it were not for her kindness and guidance, I would not be here today.

Carol Joseph is a project manager at Haringey Safe Haven.



Click here to watch a short video about DIALOG+

Meet the team

Alex Bretherton
Expert by Experience



Each month we introduce you to one of those helping to transform mental health care.

How do you start your day?

This morning, I woke up at 7.30am. I made coffee and exercised for 30 minutes - push-ups, burpees and ran up and down the garden a few times – before turning on my computer and starting work.

How are you helping to transform mental health care?

I work in the Barnet team as an expert by experience. I ensure changes are informed by the views of people who've used services in the past. I provide my own feedback of course, but I also source and coordinate feedback from others inside and outside the organisation.

How does that work in practice?

Well, this morning, I met the project team to review proposed KPIs (key performance indicators) to track the impact of these changes over time. After the meeting, I sent an email summary to other experts by experience inviting their feedback and asking them to share with others. I'll collate everyone's comments and feed back to the project team developing the KPIs.

How has the pandemic affected you?

When Covid hit, I was worried about how it might affect my mood. I've developed coping strategies. When I'm feeling low, I take the dog for a walk, do exercise or watch a favourite film. I've kept busy.

What did you enjoy most about living through a pandemic?

I've used the time to write nine books, science fiction novels inspired by my experience of schizophrenia. Each book is written from the perspective of a different character which reflects my experience of hearing different voices when my schizophrenia hit.

What are you looking forward to post pandemic?

We used to have regular barbeques with lots of friends and relations. I've missed the social interaction and am looking forward to everyone getting back together soon.