

STRASBOURG CONFERENCE

A 30 year journey through mental health services.

1994-5 ; At the age of 16 I suffered from depression and experimented with LSD, Ecstasy, Speed and Cannabis. I believe this contributed to me mental illness coupled with my genetic inheritance ; my auntie suffered from Schizophrenia and committed suicide before I had the chance to get to know her.

1996:2001 I began my Bachelor of Science Degree at Manchester Metropolitan University and transferred to Bridgewater State University, Massachusetts, USA. I became unwell and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

2002: I am committed to a psychiatric hospital after yelling 'Sadam' and 'Osama' at the top of my voice at the cenotaph in Manchester city centre; believing if I looked at a map I could pinpoint their exact location. I was psychotic and believed I was Matt Damon. I was arrested by police after my outburst and later transferred to a psychiatric hospital. I sat up all night reading the Mental Health Act. In the morning, I believe myself to be the US President and start ordering people about. I refuse my medication and end up in seclusion after being restrained. I finally get an injection and everything calms down. I was discharged after several months.

2004/2006/2010/2024

I have had five admissions to Mental Health Services under section 3 of the Mental Health Act; always when I have been off my medication. I have learned the hard way that I will need psychiatric medication for the rest of my life.

In 2003/4 I studied Medicine at the University of Bristol and passed my first year but became unwell. I was on a Graduate Fast Track Medicine course (2 years in the space of 1) at the University of Bristol and passed all my first year modules and some of my second year. However, when I was studying for resits, I studied for 20+ hours a day and believed I was being recruited by MI5/6. I was committed again.

In 2005/6 I studied a Post Graduate Certificate Education in High School Science. Again, became unwell. I worked for several years in the National Health Service (NHS)

In 2010, I was given a different diagnosis of schizo-affective disorder which friends told me was an accurate diagnosis in relation to my symptoms. I served as a Trustee for Lancashire Mind, the mental health charity for several years.

In 2021, 11 years after my admission I took myself into hospital and was later sectioned as I was very unwell. This was quite a traumatic experience which included being left in seclusion for several weeks; spending both my birthday and England football team's biggest match of my lifetime :- the Euros Final in seclusion which we lost to Italy. I believe restrictive practice was overused in my case and was not really therapeutic. However, the medication was and I have been stable for three years on Clopixol and Sodium Valproate.

I currently see the Community Mental Health Team and support workers at my home.

I HAVE SPENT OVER TWO YEARS OF MY LIFE IN HOSPITAL.

To keep well now, I have a good work/life balance. I am an expert by experience for Choice Support (the charity who pay me) working on Care Quality Commission (CQC) hospital inspection interviewing the inpatients and speaking to staff and relatives. I am also a serving Public Governor for Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. Coupled with that I am a Patient Representative for the Royal College of Psychiatry and a Service User Representative for the University of Liverpool. I am a Public Advisor for the Applied Research Collaboration North West Coast. I am also an active member of research groups and panels.

To balance all this out, I exercise a lot. I walk about six miles a day and have reversed my Type 2 Diabetes and have lost nearly five stones in weight