

## *This is my story...*

My name is Gay and I am a Patient Volunteer with Dorset Community Pain service. Since becoming a volunteer I have trained as a 'Pain Coach.' Although I have yet to be paired with anyone the learning from this course is invaluable when I talk amongst people at the support meetings and when I am invited to meet patients who are undertaking the Pain Management Course. I hope I am able to encourage them by describing how far I have come in my own journey - both physically and emotionally. I am also involved in co-production. Co-production is a new concept for me being of the generation where patients were often not even included in treatment planning. I am impressed to see how effective the collaborative approach is in enthusing service users to understand and manage their conditions with support from clinicians and peers.

I was invited to join the clinical and support team to meet the CQC inspector when he was looking at the Dorset Pain Services. It was certainly a first for me and turned out to be a first for the inspector. He had never before met the service users at such a meeting. His response was very positive and he was very interested to hear our views on how the service works for us. Recently I met a non-executive director of the NHS Trust. He was looking at some of the 'Less heard about' services offered by the Trust and was, again, interested to hear of the volunteer involvement together with service user perspective.

I became involved with planning the new REC course , 'Introducing Pain Management.' I saw it very successfully delivered in East Dorset and am now scheduled to co-deliver in the North in May.

I sit on the steering committee and see such enthusiasm for constantly being at the forefront of pain services. So many people working so hard to help people maximise on their potential to live as full a life as possible alongside their pain. Their preparedness to 'think outside the box!'

Throughout this time I have met so many inspirational folks, both clinical and pain peers. I have grown in confidence, recovered my self esteem and empathy and, moreover, am always learning pain management skills from others generous enough to share their knowledge and experience.

I hope I have been able to contribute in a small way to promoting the service and I hope I have been able to encourage a few people to persevere with their difficulties and benefit from the support of the pain community. I also hope I help to make the clinicians, their support staff and service users feel valued.

*Gay x*