



KAY KENNEDY

AGE: 19 years old FROM: England - South West

“Social action is important because I don’t want a single other person to go through what I’ve experienced. People like me have to speak up and change the system.”

I’ve suffered from mental health issues for most of my life. It’s been a hard journey through children’s mental health services and adult services, including almost six years as an in-patient, until I was discharged last year.

Spending all my teenage years hundreds of miles away from home, I didn’t get much of a chance to get my views across. It’s hard to be heard when people only see your illness.

Now I want to share my ideas on how to make the system more nurturing and helpful. I believe that too many people with mental health disorders are trapped in hospitals, suffering, when community-based treatment involving family and friends would be much more successful.

Since I’ve got out of hospital, I’ve joined a youth involvement group where we talk about lots of different issues within University Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, including mental health.

I spend all my free time volunteering because it makes me happy. And when I smile, it immediately puts a smile on someone else’s face.

I currently volunteer at the Bristol Royal Infirmary, at a local retirement village and as a youth leader and first aider at St John Ambulance. I’m also training to be a youth leader for a learning disabilities service.

I often give talks to my peers in college about the stigma of mental health and encourage them to volunteer, too.

I’ve gained so much from doing more for my community. I’ve become much more confident and independent. I used to have a carer with me at all times, and now I don’t. And because I love caring for people, I’ve decided I want to become a nurse.

I believe there’s a reason I’m still here today. It’s to share my story and help other people with mental health disorders to have a voice.



ORGANISATIONS I’VE WORKED WITH

UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS BRISTOL NHS FOUNDATION, ST JOHN AMBULANCE, STOKE GIFFORD RETIREMENT VILLAGE, FOUNDATION FOR ACTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (FACE)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

LEADERSHIP, CONFIDENCE, COMMUNICATION, OPEN MINDEDNESS, EMPATHY

